

Subsistence at perennially low income levels is made possible by the surplus commodities which all but a few Pine Ridge Sioux receive, and by certain other benefits. The PHS hospital in Pine Ridge town provides free medical attention for residents of Pine Ridge town. One-third of the families on the reservation receive some form of welfare payment, according to estimates by a BIA welfare official. Half as many more are eligible for welfare payments, but are too proud to take them, according to the same official.

Subsistence is nonetheless an art. Relatives help one another in time of need, so, that goods and services are shared. If someone drives into Pine Ridge, his car is usually jammed with relatives and friends taking advantages of the ride to take care of their own business, or to visit friends. If one family has unexpected expense, such as having to finance a wake for a deceased member, members of the extended family customarily contribute whatever money, food and help they can, though perhaps going hungry later on. "Relatives first" often makes the Sioux undependable workers because, when called on to do so, they seldom hesitate to miss work to help a relative in need. Some white shopowners near the reservation reported that the Sioux learn very quickly, and are usually dependable on the job, but with no notice they may fail to appear for work for days or months at a time.

Many families leave the reservation in summer for ranch and farm labor jobs in Nebraska, or sign on migrant labor crews as far away as Washington State. Young men often leave and return to the reservation during the summer months to visit relatives on weekends or to live off their earnings for a week or so before looking for another job. Nearby ranchers complain that young Sioux are very undependable, but that men over thirty usually stick with a job. Men too old to compete for these jobs stay home and raise gardens, if they can get together enough money in the spring to buy seed. Among families living in Oglala, Oglala Junior, Payabya, and Calico, approximately one in five raises gardens. The ratio is much lower in Pine Ridge town, where there is little land available for gardening, and where the problem of stealing is greater. The ratio seems to be higher as one goes east on the reservation. People living in greater isolation from town were generally found to put more effort into gardening and home repair. As one man living in a community an hour's drive from Pine Ridge put it, "out here you have to learn to make do."

3. Impact of the Community Action Program

a. Early History of CAP

Neither the idea nor the phrase "community development" is new at Pine Ridge. In 1957 and 1958, mass meetings were held in many areas of the reservation to discuss needs and solutions to Pine Ridge Reservation problems. These meetings were organized by state agricultural extension workers, primarily C. D. Allen (who from December 1965 to June 1966 was the Director of The Pine Ridge Office of Economic Development) and Everett Jordan (presently Community Development Specialist), working in cooperation with community and tribal leaders. Participation was reportedly excellent, and many ideas were generated in these meetings. Many of the ideas were written down in hopes that a Government agency could be persuaded to give the economic backing most of the programs needed. The following resolution is an example of one community's ideas. The first two projects were intended to produce building materials to be used locally for self-help housing.

RESOLUTION

In order to foster and promote Community Development & Organization within our Indian people, it is basic and necessary that work program and projects be started on the Pine Ridge Reservation. It is apparent, that outside industries will not be able to come on to the reservation, due to road conditions, lack of freight facilities (railroad) etc. Work programs and constructive projects started by the Oglala Sioux Tribe, may be an incentive for outside industries to come in, as well as a Rural Development program.

Whereas, we of the Medicine Root Area, Kyle, S.D., organized in late 1956, and going into our second year of our Development program, are fully aware of the success or failure of our program, if work programs are lacking. We have started from the grass-roots and have made a good showing, and for the posterity of our program, constructive projects and work programs are essential.