



### From the Heart of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

#### **Mitakuye Oyasin - we are all related**

***Many Blessings!***

*by Verola Spider*

Our 2009-10 school year was a very good year. It went by too fast it seems. We start each day with a prayer, all holding hands we pray "Tunkasila, anpetu ki le un wopila, Mitakuye Oyasin" = Grandfather, we are thankful for this day, all my relations.

The children have a lot of fun working with beeswax, some model animals and some model foods. They are talking about what they make and are excited about their little creations. The children like to draw their families and houses. Others are just making different designs and mixing all the colors on paper. They helped make pizza and enjoyed every minute of it. Kneading dough and shaping and putting on the cheese and pepperoni was a lot of fun for them. We also baked chocolate chip cookies; they were very tasty even when they were all different sizes and shapes. It was a very good year. We are teaching more Lakota language and the children know what a Sunka is (dog) and Igmu (cat). Our stories are told in Lakota with a Unci (grandmother) puppet. We need materials to make more puppets that fit the Lakota stories. Although this is my first year in a Waldorf teaching, I attended trainings in Boulder, Colorado. This is called LifeWays and a lot of the training is for Waldorf teachers. I have also visited the Denver Waldorf School and gained a lot of knowledge on how the Waldorf Schools operate. Laurie Clark who is my mentor visited me and our Lakota Waldorf School and children for one week. She taught me the rhythms of how the children learn. She is a big help and is my new friend. She and her husband Tom are the most positive and good hearted people I have ever met. They treat me like I was someone special; many heartfelt thanks to them. I also met Lyn Welch, she visited our school and helped in the classroom. Lyn is a long time Waldorf teacher and was real helpful in teaching me.

Our new school year of 2010-11 has begun and we have a new teacher who happens to be a young man that is eager to learn. I am helping him learn about the Waldorf ways of teaching. It is a blessing to have a male among us as we are badly in need of male teachers.



**Hello my name is Tabor White Buffalo**, I am twenty-six years old and I am the kindergarten teacher here at The Lakota Waldorf School. I grew up on The Standing Rock Reservation located on the northwestern side of South Dakota. I am Hunkpapa Lakota and very proud to be a fluent speaker of my native tongue. Presently I am taking college courses in the evenings after work. I am thrilled to be working with our Lakota youth and every morning when I wake up I cannot wait to get to work. It's funny our jobs are called work because to me this is so much more than a job, it does not feel like work, it's so fulfilling to watch the children learn. So far I have taken a Waldorf class here at OLC (Oglala Lakota College) but I am excited to learn more about the Waldorf methods and cannot wait for the opportunity to take more training. As part of my continuing training with the waldorf schools I will be traveling to The Waldorf School in Denver Colorado and be observing, and helping the kindergarten teacher.

## **Swiss High School Project on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation**

*Ray Fleetwood, Class Teacher, Atelierschule Zurich, volunteer with the Lakota Waldorf School*

Beginning in the spring of 2009, I began along with my 12th grade the rather exciting task of planning an extraordinary social practical on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The idea for such an effort had already begun to take hold in the class by the end of 10th grade, when a popular student in the class, Isabel Stadnick's eldest daughter Celestine, decided along with her family to return to the reservation. As project sponsor, I assumed responsibility for logistical, financial coordination. Isabel Stadnick, of the Lakota Waldorf School, gratefully took on the task of organizing the work itself, as well as our accommodations on the reservation. All expenses had to be covered by donations, collected through both private channels and through public events hosted by the students, showcasing their enthusiasm, cooking skills and growing expertise on Pine Ridge and its unique challenges. There was a Lakota Culture Evening with food and entertainment, and one active mother even organized a generous dance-event with all proceeds flowing directly into the project. A single sponsor could be found to cover the considerable material and labor costs for the planned work on the reservation. After months of planning and shortly before traveling to South Dakota, excitement mixed with self-doubt could be heard in the class. The success of such a project depends in large measure on the incalculable; on the attitude of the participants, and on the Lakota with whom the class would have most of its contact. It was a terrific stroke of good fortune that the coordination of our daily work and the technical expertise for construction and renovation projects at the Waldorf Kindergarten were in the capable hands of the very congenial Bailey One Horn. Through Bailey, Isabel Stadnick and the Board of Directors of the school, the class was able to make many enriching acquaintances, to attract positive attention back on the Waldorf School and to gain access to important aspects of Lakota life.

The class came away overwhelmed by the strength of Lakota culture and its spiritual base, particularly impressed by the strength of community on the reservation despite poverty and despite the challenges posed by a chain of historical events designed to destroy the fabric of Lakota civilization. The students, through their tireless efforts, were able to exceed the planned work on the Lakota Waldorf School. They constructed a retaining wall to deflect

snow and rainwater from the back of the school house, renovated parts of the playground, built a fireplace, covered woodpile, painted and decorated parts of the interior and exterior walls, demolished an unfinished straw-bale house, salvaging valuable construction materials which were then used in new decks and walkways around the main building. Aside from the work at the Waldorf School, the class painted the interior of the Kyle Senior center in a weekend action. We hope the future will bring many of us back to the doorstep of the Lakota on their Pine Ridge Reservation, where we may once again have the chance to work, listen, observe and to learn.



## **The Lakota Waldorf School**

*Mitakuye Oyasin, We are all related*

*by Laurie Clark and Patrice Maynard*

The Mid-States Shared Gifting Group awarded AWSNA a grant that would provide two visits to the Lakota Waldorf School in Kyle, South Dakota on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The visits to this school were to determine the status and the level of sustainability of this school and to find helpful supports for its future development. Tom Clark (a long time teacher at the Denver Waldorf School) and Laurie Clark (Tom's wife and a long time Kindergarten teacher at the Denver Waldorf School) received a call from Patrice Maynard (the Outreach and Development leader of AWSNA) to see if they would be interested in joining her and participating in such a project. They were in the midst of planning a half-year sabbatical and were honored to add this to the list of plans. Our first visit was in October of 2009 for three days. When we walked into the classroom, we met Verola Spider, the Lakota teacher. Verola spent these days working

with Laurie Clark in making the room more inviting and discussing the needs of the young child. She had many years of teaching experience and was taking the Lifeways training in Boulder, Colorado. Laurie and Verola were quick friends, comfortable with one another immediately, and they found commonality in their love of being with small children. Both shared humor and flexibility. These days of mentoring and coaching Verola in the classroom had Laurie demonstrating circle, cooking and baking, coloring, beeswax modeling, and story time. The children are given a hot breakfast and lunch and a snack before they go home at 3pm, so there is a lot of cooking to be done! We all marveled at the strength and energy that the children had. They are unusually beautiful children - open, and unburdened by material possessions. Our three day visit in December of 2009 was spent deepening what we had begun in October. We worked together to find ways to incorporate the Lakota language into the everyday life of the kindergarten day. We decided to have a parent evening and a community dinner for all of the families. The children helped us to prepare the meal during the kindergarten morning. The community of the Denver Waldorf School had donated food, winter outerwear of all sizes, blankets and toys for the children, which Laurie packaged carefully for each family to have as a gift. There was much laughter, goodwill and fun that evening and a beautiful, traditional Lakota, honoring ceremony for the three visitors.

While Laurie Clark spent each day in the classroom, Patrice Maynard and Tom Clark spent long hours with the development coordinator, Isabel Stadnick. Tom and Patrice worked with Isabel and discussed the procedures that were in place for managing the school, fundraising, budgeting, and hiring practices. The financial records and practices were also reviewed in detail. The bookkeeping and accounting for the school is done by a C.P.A. in Rapid City and the gifts are deposited directly through PayPal or direct deposit into the account set up for the Lakota School. The program is fail safe and thorough. They also spent time with the board members of the school, discussing a master plan for future development. Tom and Patrice also made two visits to the Education Department at the Oglala Lakota College (OLC) that is in close proximity to the

Lakota Waldorf School. They met with the Chair of the Education Department, Tom Raymond, An experiential way of educating children with a spiritual basis has commonality with the Lakota ways. We spoke of many things and recognized together the original intention of the school in 1992, which was to build the Lakota Waldorf School as a genuine Lakota school, using Lakota language and rich culture as its heart. The Board has been working on the WECAN study and is making steady progress on this.



For two weeks in September of 2010, an introductory course was taught by Patrice Maynard and Tom and Laurie Clark about Waldorf Education. This was hosted by Oglala Lakota College at the Pajuta Haka College Center in Kyle, South Dakota. This course, which was financed through an independent foundation, introduced the basic philosophy that stands behind the curriculum and provided descriptions of kindergarten and grade school along with artistic, kinesthetic, and scientific activities. Participants painted, made lanterns, drew with crayons, modeled with clay and beeswax, wove crowns, experienced electrical and chemistry demonstrations from the upper grade school science curriculum. Circle work from Kindergarten and the early grades graced all lessons. There were a total of ten participants some including practicing teachers, homeschool teachers, along with board members of the Lakota Waldorf School. During the final recall session Mabel One Horn explained that her back and knee pain were eliminated because of Eurythmy. Others remembered the hand game Tabor White Buffalo taught us, the different stages of development of the child. Three qualified individuals have come forward from this group to

be fully trained and we are working now on a program over three years that will dovetail with the culture of the Lakota, be recognized by the Oglala Lakota College, adopted by our Waldorf Teacher Training Institutes, and will give the Lakota School the trained teachers it needs over time. The future looks challenging and promising. We could all see together in the two-week course what Waldorf Education could give to the people of this beautiful and destitute land.



#### Highlights of the year 2009/10; Wopila Tanka !

- Thank you, to the volunteer students from the Atelier School Zuerich, Switzerland.
- We were chosen by the First Nations Development Institute for the Strengthening Communities Fund (SCF). Through his grant and our new partnership with First Nation Development institute we receive training and technical assistance in building and developing our organization. Wopila!
- Thank you to the Mano Foundation in Switzerland! Through their generous gift the kindergarten building received a new roof and we are able to remodel the little red house.
- Wopila; to Mercurius-USA, their generous donation of school supplies, painting paper, felt and much more will enable the children to do all the crafts they enjoy so much.
- Wopila for our Garden grant from the Rudolf Steiner Foundation Finance to start a Biodynamic garden for the school and wopila for the contribution of seeds for that garden from High Mowing Seeds in Vermont
- Wopila to all the people and Foundations who support us so generously and continuously.
- Also throughout this school year we were intensively mentored and working with AWSNA and WECAN. Through their help and work we

were able to make tremendous progress in all areas. Thanks to all of you!

- Thank you to the Waldorf foundation, Germany, for their generous donation.



**We need your help!** The school bus has to run many miles every day, we provide the children with warm, healthy meals, and a peaceful, safe environment. Crafting, play time and painting are part of the daily activities. The school/kindergarten is located near Kyle, a community in the middle of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, in the Medicine Root (Pejuta Haka) District. Since this school does not receive any funding from the government, it depends entirely on donations and gifts.

#### Every donation is highly appreciated!

We wish to thank all the people who support our dream of having a Lakota Waldorf school on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. We thank you all for helping us in the past and we hope you will help us in the future. **Pilamayayapi ! Thank you**

Please send your gift to:

**Lakota Waldorf School**  
**P.O. Box 527**  
**Three mile creek**  
**Kyle, South Dakota 57752, USA**  
**Telephone: 605-455 2487**  
**email:info@lakotawaldorfschool.org**

*Wakan tanka unya wastepi !*

*May the great spirit bless us all !*