



# The Center Pole

Empowering Youth to Promote a Just Future

FALL 2013



Dear Friends,

The Center Pole is an indigenous grassroots organization, located in the heart of the Crow Indian (Apsaalooke) Reservation, in rural southeastern Montana. We provide hope and resources to very low income, at-risk, underserved Native American reservation children for their educational dreams to come true. Center Pole activities include language, heritage and arts as well as practical life skills to strengthen children from within as well as provide access to college and other educational opportunities beyond the reservation community.

We also provide for basic needs of children, ages 0 to 18, through our community thrift store and community food bank. Having basic needs met- food, warm clothing, school supplies and blankets-is essential for full participation in learning. But the Center Pole does not stop there. We are directly involved in children's life journeys and their comprehensive development into happy, healthy adults.

The Center Pole also works for systemic change within this community for self-reliance and sovereignty and provides opportunities for greater understanding of Native American communities by the general public.

In this newsletter, you will see examples of projects and activities that reflect our commitment to raising hope and increasing possibilities for Native reservation youth. It is your determined commitment to our work and your generous contributions that allow us to fulfill our mission. We thank you and ask for your continued support so that we can sustain our current programs and serve more of the very low income, at-risk, underserved Native youth.

With deepest gratitude,  
Peggy White Wellknown Buffalo  
Founder

Susan Kelly  
Founder



## Program Highlights

- *Exploring Arts and Culture*
- *Encouraging Healthful Living*
- *Increasing College Access*
- *Providing Basic Needs*
- *Teaching Self-reliance and Sovereignty*
- *Modeling Environmental Stewardship*
- *Fostering Social Justice*

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# Arts and Culture



In August, six students, ages 9-11, from the Crow Indian Reservation traveled across the country to attend Shrine Mont camp in Orkney Springs, Virginia. Keyan, Landin, Jackie, Daivyon, Jameson and Manuel traveled from Montana to Washington, DC in a van, visiting sites across the country and gaining practical life skills in the process.

All six of the youths received scholarships to Art camp from Shrine Mont. These students were chosen for their outstanding grades, school attendance record and excellent behavior over the past school year.

The 1800-mile trip across the country took four days. Since it was a first time away from home, the experience was scary, exciting and educational. The students learned money management, travel etiquette, appropriate behavior, personal safety, teamwork, and a lot about the expectations and responsibilities of mainstream America. They learned about geography, changing time zones, reading maps and paying tolls. They visited the largest water park in the world in Wisconsin and rode the metro and saw the monuments in Washington, DC. They stayed in the Washington area with Center Pole chaperones at a private home.

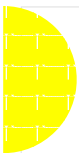
The Center Pole has sent Native students to Shrine Mont for

the last 15 years. For them, the Shrine Mont experience is excellent for building confidence and independence. Shrine Mont provides an active, loving, supportive, happy, spiritual environment and an excellent first step for Native reservation students to prepare for further education and professional training away from a home later in life. Success for these students comes from being able to thrive beyond Indian country and by building relationships and confidence. The Shrine Mont experience disrupts the cycle of poverty and helplessness for these students and can change the course of their lives.

Landin, Keyan, Jackie, Daivyon, Jameson and Manuel loved Shrine Mont. Among the highlights: the food, especially the butt buns, hearing an elk whistle outside the cabin, and learning to sleep with the windows open at night. In Crow culture, you close up your house at night to protect yourself from spirits.

We would like to thank Paris Ball and her staff at Shrine Mont as well as all those who supported this experience, including Immanuel Church on the Hill Outreach and many individuals.

*If you would like to help with next year's project, please send your donation to the Center Pole, earmarked for Shrine Mont.*



**Peggy Wellknown Buffalo to Receive Accolade from Dalai Lama**

## Leadership

February 2014- Peggy Wellknown Buffalo, Executive Director of the Center Pole will be acknowledged in San Francisco as an "Unsung Hero of Compassion". She is among 48 recipients from around the world who will be given an accolade by the Dalai Lama. The award honors those who work tirelessly to make positive change.



# Exercise and Sportsmanship



The Center Pole was pleased to partner with Unity Hoops ([www.unityhoopsbasketball.org](http://www.unityhoopsbasketball.org)) again this summer. The mission of Unity Hoops is to use basketball as a common language to build healing relationships with and among Crow reservation youth, to instill within them a greater sense of control of destiny, and to empower them to create a more just and sustainable future for their people.



The strength of Unity Hoops in Indian country is that it recognizes the existence of historical trauma and its impact on the path to success of Native American students. David Dean, Creator and Director of Unity Hoops, has a personal approach that is patient, flexible and creative, an approach that works well within Crow culture. The program emphasizes individual person growth and the development of communication skills, along with mastering skills naturally imbedded in basketball. Many thanks to community members and other volunteers who came forward to assist David Dean as a staff.



David Dean also attended the International Traditional Games Conference ([www.itgs.org](http://www.itgs.org)) and is looking for ways to incorporate traditional games into Unity Hoops.

This year we included the students as part of our strategic planning sessions for the future. A very timely visit by Shoni and Jude Schimmel, stars of the University of Louisville basketball team, excellent Native American role models for Unity Hoops students, helped make the sessions a huge success.

# Volunteers and Donors: Our Heroes



We are extremely grateful to everyone who has helped us recover from both the flood and hurricane force winds that caused extensive damage to the Center Pole property. Generous donations helped us fix our furnace, water pump, septic tank and water heater and dry out the basement and water damage in the buildings. Apparently, ground water also damaged our underground electric lines and last winter, two years after the flood, the power went out in two buildings, shutting down our radio station and coffee shop.

This August, volunteers from Montana Indian Ministries came to our rescue and restored electric power to one building with a promise to return this fall and complete the other building. They also repainted the thrift store and repaired a gash in our warehouse, caused by the hurricane force winds this past spring that also blew down our horse barn and our playground. We would also like to thank volunteers who helped hunt buffalo and butcher beef for the community. Other special thanks: Trinity Episcopal Church in Connecticut who helped us reopen our food bank and provided food monthly for the community; Christ Episcopal Church in Wyoming for supporting our thrift store; Immanuel Church and Shrine Mont camps in Virginia; Dr. Patrick Todd (DDS); International Traditional Games Society; Govinda Dalton; Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples; Social Justice Fund; David Dennard; Bruce Plummer; Vicky Turner; Justin Bighair; Montana Indian Ministries; Donna Chimera; Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer; Patti Cass; Jackie Robinson; Page Sullivan and many, many community members who help everything happen on a day-to-day basis.

## How You Can Help Sustain and Grow Our Important Programs

The average cost per child for travel and food to Shrine Mont is \$500

The average cost per child for basketball camp is \$60 per week

The cost to supply the Center Pole Food Bank is \$125 per week

### ***Our wish list:***

Winter fuel assistance for Center Pole ◦ Sprinkler tent for Unity Hoops

Construction materials and labor to:

1) Rebuild our barn and our playground 2) Build 2 new cabins to house our volunteers 3) Repair leaks in roof

School Supplies ◦ Book bags ◦ New blankets ◦ New Shoes ◦ Disposable Diapers ◦ Soap and other Basic Toiletries

*The best way to help us is to make a tax-deductible, cash contribution. Make checks payable to Center Pole or Kelly Foundation (our educational arm) and mail to 4653 S. 36<sup>th</sup> St., Arlington, VA 22206 or make a credit card donation through our secure website at [www.thecenterpole.org](http://www.thecenterpole.org). We also appreciate frequent flyer coupons to be used for our students.*



## The Center Pole

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The Center Pole and The Kelly Foundation  
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Send us your email address to receive updates about the Center Pole and its community work!

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