



Ribbon cutting for RAI expansion, October 30, 2024



RURAL AMERICA INITIATIVES

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Rural America Initiatives
2112 South Valley Drive, Rapid City, SD 57703
Phone: 605-341-3339 Fax: 605-341-2314
www.ruralamericainitiatives.org



Ateyapi students at
Black Hills Reptile Gardens



Miss South Dakota reads to students

Ateyapi Community Advisory Group:
Lifeways, Rapid City Area Schools Indian
Education, Principals from North and
West Middle Schools, and
RAI Leadership Team



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Photos courtesy RAI staff, Gemma Lockhart and Williams and Associates.

Hau Mitakuyepi... Hello Relatives,

2024 has been a good year! We launched a \$4 million capital campaign last year to add eight classrooms to our school. The need for our services grew at a faster rate than we anticipated, and we were at capacity soon after we opened in 2019. Rapid City's population is growing, with the Indigenous population growing even faster. Add to that the fact that many early childhood education centers closed during the Covid pandemic, and anticipating the population growth the Ellsworth Air Force Base expansion is expected to bring, we knew we had to expand.

We hoped to be able to welcome students to their new classrooms this fall, and we are happy to report that we have met that goal. We held a ribbon cutting for the expansion classrooms on October 30, and welcomed children to their new classrooms on November 4.

Thanks to gifts from the federal Head Start tribal program which provided about half of our funding; our major donors: The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, the JT Vucurevich Foundation, the Larson Family Foundation, NDN Collective, Elevate Rapid City, Black Hills Surgical Hospital, Scull Construction, Dave and Deanna Emery, the Wayfarer Foundation, Black Hills Federal Credit Union, and the generosity of so many members of our community, we were able to complete the construction debt free!

The expansion seamlessly blends with the original building, due to the excellent work of Williams & Associates Architects of Spearfish, and Scull Construction of Rapid City.

Our programs continue to exceed expectations thanks to the excellence of our staff. Our Head Start programs received the highest ranking possible from the federal Head Start office in Washington, DC.—something that is not easy to do!

We are optimistic about the future, and we are so grateful that you are on this journey with us. Wopila Tanka Icicupi! Thanks to all of you for your support and goodwill!



RAI Executive Director-
Bruce Long Fox



RAI Board Chair-
Carol Marshall-Coon

MISSION

RAI seeks to create community change by role modeling positive, healthy, alcohol and drug free lifestyles incorporating Lakota/Dakota values. Families and children we teach now will have a lasting impact on future generations. We seek to strengthen individuals, families, and the Native community in Rapid City.

VISION

Rural America Initiatives provides the highest quality services to eligible Native American families acting as a catalyst for the development of healthy, sober, self-sufficient Native American families.

MOTTO

Envision your grandchildren. Walk the Red Road today!



Ateyapi students visit sacred Bear Butte

Spiritual leader Richard Moves Camp



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairperson: Carol Marshall-Coon, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe
Home Health Care Provider

Vice-Chair: Kati Pechota Oglala Sioux Tribe,
Teacher Wilson Elementary Rapid City Area Schools.

Treasurer: Tammy Valdez, Rosebud Sioux Tribe
Real Estate Specialist, BIA Pine Ridge

Monica Schmidt, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe
Teacher, retired

Denise Murphy, Three Affiliated Tribes of ND
Indian Child Welfare Expert

Charles Durrell Robertson, Jr. Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe,
Attorney

Kathy LaBonte, Oglala Sioux Tribe
Registered Nurse



OUR ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM



Bruce Long Fox
Executive Director



Anne Reddy
Head Start Director



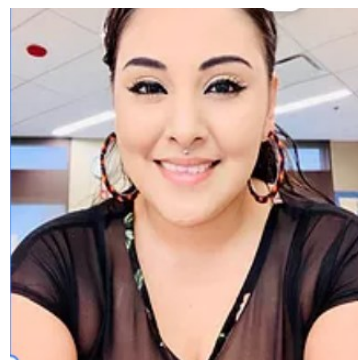
Priscilla Yellow Horse
Lakota Site
Supervisor



Penny Marsh
Dakota Site Supervisor



Larae Arroyo
Head Start Manager



Jessica Yellow Boy
Early Head Start
Manager



Rhonda Yankton
Lakota Language
Coordinator
Master Speaker



Stephanie Savoy
Ateyapi Coordinator



Robert Yellowhawk
Assistant Business
Manager



RAPID CITY LOCATIONS

HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START

2112 South Valley Drive
Rapid City, SD 57703
605-341-3339

LAKOTA LANGUAGE

612 Crazy Horse St.
Rapid City, SD 57701
605-791-0387
and in individual schools

ATEYAPI PROGRAMS

Held in individual Rapid City middle schools

CROW CREEK SIOUX RESERVATION

HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START

1008 Burton Stepp Loop
Ft. Thompson, SD 57339
605.245.2337 or 2185



RURAL AMERICA INITIATIVES ... CHANGING LIVES THROUGH EDUCATION SINCE 1986

WHAT IS RURAL AMERICA INITIATIVES (RAI)? A Native American-led 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization formed in 1986 to help the most in-need Native American families in Rapid City, South Dakota. RAI employs approximately 90 people, 90% of whom are Native American, is led by Executive Director Bruce Long Fox and is governed by a 7-member tribally enrolled Board of Directors.

WHO DOES RAI SERVE? Approximately 800 at-risk children and their families in Rapid City, as well as Head Start and Early Head Start students on the Crow Creek Reservation. Our Head Start programs' priority target population is "transitional" families, those who move from area reservations to Rapid City within the past year. These families are looking for greater opportunities, but instead too often have difficulty in finding employment, housing and services. Priorities are children who are without homes, in foster care, or whose caregiver is incarcerated.

HOW DOES RAI SERVE? Through educational programs that address the needs of the whole family: early childhood development programs Head Start and Early Head Start, serving poverty-level children pre-natal through age 5 and their families, Ateyapi (Lakota for "fatherhood"), a positive role-modeling mentorship program in Rapid City's middle schools, and a Lakota language program including Lakota immersion classrooms. Services are delivered in an accordance with traditional cultural values.

HOW IS RAI FUNDED? Primarily by federal grants through the Department of Health and Human Services Programs, grants from State and local organizations, and donations from private individuals. Less than 1% of RAI's operational funding comes locally from United Way of the Black Hills, and is the only Native American-led United Way partner agency. RAI's Head Start programs are funded through the tribal track of the federal Head Start program.

WHAT IMPACT DOES RAI HAVE ON OUR COMMUNITY? RAI Head Start programs help increasing number of poverty-level children ages 0-5 get healthy starts and begin their school careers with the same skills and abilities as other children; gives poverty-level parents and caregivers the life skills they need to be good parents, become educated, employed, and provide stable homes for their families; RAI's Ateyapi programs help children in middle school stay in school, give them confidence and the tools necessary to live healthy, successful lives; RAI provides mentoring assistance to the Rapid City Area Schools (pre-Covid worth approximately \$350,000 per year); RAI employs approximately 90 people with stable jobs and benefits, and provides a significant positive impact on our economy.



OVERVIEW

Rural America Initiatives (RAI), the largest, non-profit, continuously operating Native American organization in Rapid City, is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization. Founded in 1986 to partner with Native American families to strengthen the development of healthy, sober, self-sufficient lifestyles, it has been the most effective service provider for the most at-risk Rapid City families for over thirty years. RAI addresses the needs of the most vulnerable Native American families who suffer from chronic, pervasive poverty and have restricted access to services. We do this through programs for children from pre-natal through middle school, reaching over 800 children and their families annually. Over ninety percent of our full time staff is Native American.



Our programs include Early Head Start and Head Start programs, the Ateyapi (Lakota for “fatherhood”) positive role-modeling mentorship program in middle schools in Rapid City and a Lakota language program including Lakota language immersion classrooms. RAI also operates Early Head Start and Head Start programs on the Crow Creek Reservation in South Dakota.



Our activities

are alcohol and drug free
and prioritize the
Seven Lakota Values:

Respect (Wauonihan)
Generosity (Wacante Ognake)
Wisdom (Woksape)
Humility (Wahwala)
Compassion (Waunshila)
Service: "helps the last
one" (Wawoihakikte)
Honesty (Wowicake)



One target population for RAI is “transitional” families, those who move from area reservations to Rapid City looking for greater opportunities for their families. Many of these families do not find the opportunities they hoped to find. Many are one paycheck, one health crisis or one bit of bad luck from disaster. If this happens, these families are at risk to end up in shelters, living several families to a motel room, on the sofas of friends or relatives, or on the street. They can fall between the cracks of traditional services, and may be the most at-risk for alcohol and substance abuse, domestic violence, teen pregnancy and lifestyle-based preventable diseases such as childhood obesity and juvenile diabetes.

PROGRAMS

EARLY HEAD START (age prenatal-3)

HEAD START (age 4-5)



ATEYAPI
Rapid City
Middle Schools



HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START

Head Start/Early Head Start is a federal program that promotes the school readiness of children ages birth to 5 from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social and emotional development. RAI's prenatal to age 5 Head Start program provides educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to children enrolled in a federally recognized tribe and their families. Services are designed to be responsive to each child and family's ethnic, cultural and linguistic heritage and each child's and family's specific needs.



According to a study done by Purdue University, by the age of four, children in poverty generally hear 30 million fewer words than middle class children. This impacts their lives, including success in education and employment, and an increased risk of incarceration. Children without a good start to their education in their early years would have to read 96 books a day for 14 years to make up the gap—something that is impossible to do.

According to the Center for American Progress, children without early childhood education are:

- 25% more likely to drop out of school,
- 40% more likely to become teen parents,
- 50% more likely to require special education classes,
- 60% more likely to not attend college, and
- 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.

Early childhood intervention is a strong tool to address serious problems at their root, and Head Start has been proven to be an effective vehicle for these efforts. Without RAI's Head Start programs, survival would be more difficult for transitional families.



RAI's Head Start program has consistently scored among the highest in the nation and in 2024 received the highest rating possible from the federal Head Start tribal program. Our Head Start teachers and teacher mentors are required to have an Associate's Degree or higher. Our teacher assistants are required to have a Child Development Associates (CDA) credential in pre-school, and our Early Head Start teachers and teacher mentors are required to have a CDA in an infant/toddler setting.

Each center has a variety of services and options available to families: part-day or full day and school year or full year. Breakfast, lunch and snacks are provided. Transportation is available. Cultural and language curricula for the Lakota/Dakota language are used, and developmental screenings are regularly administered.



RAI Head Start Director Anne Reddy attended the National Head Start Association Fall Leadership Institute in Washington, DC, advocating for Head Start and Early Childhood Education



RAI engages parents in their child's learning and helps them progress toward their educational, literacy and employment goals. Parents are welcomed into our program and our Parent Policy Council representatives are involved in shared decision making with RAI's administration and Board of Directors.

Parent Meetings are held at least once a month throughout the school year. Activities include an annual Art Expo, science fairs, elders and veterans honorings, powwows and more, often in conjunction with RAI's Ateyapi program. Feeding large numbers of families and community members is always a component of our programs and events. Incentives are provided to parents who support our curriculum within the home.

Parents are the backbone of every Head Start program.

**We estimate that we save our families at least \$1200 per month
in child care and transportation costs,
or \$14,400 per child each year.**

Moreover, our program addresses the needs of the whole family. There is great disparity in the unemployment rate in Rapid City between Native people at 40% and non-Natives at 2%. Having a job changes lives and changes communities. It is our priority to cultivate teachers from among people whose children have been in our Head Start program, and we provide job-skills training in early childhood development. Over half of our teachers and aides in our Head Start programs began as clients.

For detailed data on our Head Start Programs please visit our website:
www.ruralamericainitiatives.org, PIR report





Ateyapi Background:

The Ateyapi Youth Mentoring Program was developed by RAI in 1994, and currently serves over 500 students in the Rapid City Area School District annually. RAI employs mentors in this program; young men and women who themselves strive to practice sober, healthy lifestyles respectful of their cultural tradition. Ateyapi is based on positive role modeling because we believe that children learn more from actions than words. Individuals chosen to be mentors are trustworthy, empathetic, supportive and patient. They encourage and motivate youth to stay in school, envision successful, productive futures, and give them the tools to get there.



South Middle School Ateyapi students took 3rd place in the He Sapa Handgames Tournament

Ateyapi Middle School: Keep It Real

The Keep It Real Program replicates an Evidence Based Program for at least 500 American Indian Youth per year for five years in Rapid City. The primary purpose is to reduce unwanted teen pregnancy and high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STI's).

The Keep It Real Program is provided in three unique settings: 1) four Rapid City Area Middle Schools during school hours, 2) four after-hours sessions, and 3) at Abbott House, the only therapeutic foster home program in the city.

The Keep it Real Program (KIRP) 1) provides American Indian and other middle school youth with knowledge, skills, and exercises for making health decisions, promoting healthy relationships, and reducing risk behaviors using evidence-base and medically accurate curriculum and activities; and 2) collaborates with the Rapid City public and nonpublic middle schools, community youth organizations, health care providers, caregivers, and other youth-serving organizations to assist and support the delivery of the program and respective activities within the Rapid City area (schools, home, and neighborhoods).



Ateyapi Summer program

LAKOTA LANGUAGE PROGRAM:

New Beginning (Othókaha Těča)

Fluent Lakota speakers are aging and dying. The majority of the younger American Indian generation is not learning Lakota, and the language is at risk for becoming lost. Lakota people who can think, understand, and speak in the language have a deeper sense of Lakota lifeways and culture. A sense of pride in their culture helps children's self-esteem, and helps them achieve success in life and in school.

Infants, toddlers, and children in their first five years of life establish the foundation for all future learning and living. Young children who have the opportunity to learn the Lakota language from birth may develop advanced language skills that are sustained for a lifetime and that truly preserve the language. Research shows that young children, given adequate exposure to two languages can achieve competence in both. Dual language learning has been shown to improve cognitive functions in most children.

The primary services of this program are to: 1) provide intensive training and practice for early childhood classroom teachers willing to provide the immersion language model, supported by an organizational teacher certification system and financial incentives; 2) establish five immersion classroom pilot programs (one for each developmental level of children), 3) provide additional opportunities for training for other teachers (24 hours mandated), 4) provide Lakota language instruction yearly to children in the immersion classroom pilot programs, 5) modify teacher and child assessment processes already used to incorporate measurement of Lakota language competency, 6) incorporate Lakota language learning within the existing Creative Curriculum for all P-5 children, 7) offer parent training in person and remotely so families can support their children's Lakota learning, 8) work with community partners so children who "graduate" from the Prenatal to Five Lakota Language Program can continue their Lakota language learning, 9) sustain successful components of teacher training and immersion classrooms within RAI, and 9) assist area programs who wish to replicate this project.

Classes are given to RAI staff, parents and community members. For those who are unable to attend in person a zoom class is available. Chrome notebooks are available for those who need them. Gas and food cards are provided for parents who attend all week.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Our beautiful new facility opened in 2019.

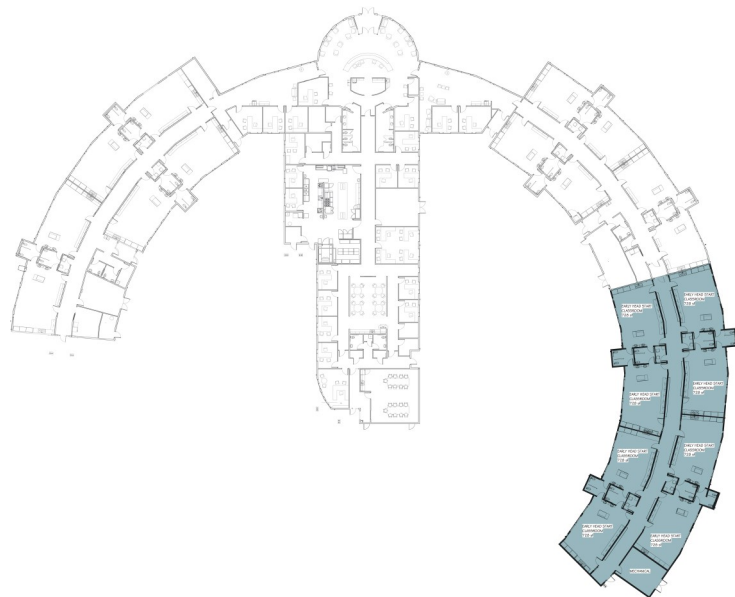
Though we planned for growth, by 2023 we had to expand!



The school was built with extra classrooms, to give us room to grow. We always knew that we would have to expand, and the building is designed for that. Over time classrooms will be added, completing the circular footprint of the building to resemble a Medicine Wheel. What we didn't realize is that we'd have to expand so soon. Because several early childhood education centers closed due to Covid, because Rapid City's population is growing at a fast rate, and our Native population is growing at an even faster rate than the non-Native population, and because of the anticipated population growth due to the Ellsworth Airforce Base expansion and other factors, we reached capacity quickly and had a waiting list pages long.



We launched a campaign to add eight classrooms to the our twelve original classrooms at a cost of \$4.1 million. The campaign was successfully completed in the fall of 2024, giving us the capacity to serve 64 more children and their families. In November, 2024, we were able to welcome students to their new classrooms. The campaign was fully funded and we are debt free!



RURAL AMERICA INITIATIVES
HE SAPA, EARLY CHILDHOOD
SITE PLAN

SITE PLAN



WILLIAMS &
ASSOCIATES
ARCHITECTURE, INC.



Drawings courtesy of Williams and Associates

EXPANSION LEADERSHIP TEAM



Paulette Davidson
President and CEO
Monument Health



Jack Kaup
CEO Black Hills
Surgical Hospital (Ret.)



Jim Leach
Attorney



Jack Lynass
President and CEO
Black Hills Community Bank



Scott Reiman
Market President
First Interstate Bank



Jim Scull
Vice President
Scull Construction



Bruce Long Fox
Executive Director
Rural America Initiatives



Deborah Gangloff
Development Consultant

FINANCIALS
RURAL AMERICA INITIATIVES
FINANCIAL REPORT
For the Year Ended December 31, 2023



Rural America Initiatives

Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2023

The accompanying notes are an integral part of this financial statement.

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CURRENT ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 2,719,524.86
Employee Loans Receivable	13,432.50
Grants Receivable	332,630.71
Current Portion of Pledges Receivable	199,799.38
Prepaid Expenses	<u>125,605.45</u>

Total Current Assets 3,390,992.90

PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

Equipment	418,293.55
Leasehold Improvements	289,378.04
Vehicles	1,413,681.43
Buildings	8,439,185.67
Construction in Progress	411,552.39
Land	<u>495,751.31</u>
	11,467,842.39
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	<u>(2,930,562.81)</u>

Net Property and Equipment 8,537,279.58

OTHER ASSETS

Beneficial Interest in Assets Held by Others	73,291.47
Pledges Receivable	390,528.00
Capital Credits Receivable	<u>40,404.63</u>

Total Other Assets 504,224.10

TOTAL ASSETS

\$ 12,432,496.58

CURRENT LIABILITIES	LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
Accrued Payroll		\$ 157,229.45
Accounts Payable		92,577.67
Payroll Taxes Payable		9,382.90
Retirement Payable		4,078.53
Deferred Revenue		<u>848.54</u>

Total Current Liabilities 264,117.09

NET ASSETS

Without Donor Restrictions	10,016,514.21
With Donor Restrictions	<u>2,151,865.28</u>

Total Net Assets 12,168,379.49

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

\$ 12,432,496.58

Current Audit Findings and Questioned Costs Section I – Summary of Auditor’s Results

Financial Statements:

Federal Awards:

Internal control over major federal programs:

Material weakness(es) identified?	____ Yes	__X__ None Reported
Significant deficiencies identified?	____ Yes	__X__ None Reported

Type of auditor's report issued on compliance for major programs: Unmodified Any audit

findings disclosed that are required
to be reported in accordance with
2 CFR 200.516(a)?

____ Yes __X__ No

Type of report the auditor issued on whether the financial statements audited were

Internal control over financial reporting:		
Material weakness(es) identified:	____ Yes	__X__ None Reported
Significant deficiencies identified?	____ Yes	__X__ None Reported
Noncompliance material to financial statements noted?	____ Yes	__X__ No

prepared in accordance with GAAP: Unmodified

Identification of Major Federal Programs:

Assistance Listing Number **Name of Federal Program or Cluster**

93.600

Head Start Cluster - Early Head Start, Head Start, & COVID Head Start

Dollar threshold used to distinguish

between type A and type B programs:

Auditee qualified as low-risk auditee? ____ Yes __X__ No



SELECTED MAJOR PARTNERS, FUNDERS AND CONTRIBUTORS:

- US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
- Administration for Native Americans (under HHS)
- Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (under HHS)
- Office of Head Start (under Office of the Administration for Children and Families/HHS)
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- United Way of the Black Hills
- First Interstate Bank
- Black Hills Community Bank
- Black Hills Surgical Hospital
- Dave and Deanna Emery
- Black Hills Federal Credit Union
- John T. Vucurevich Foundation
- Gwendolyn Stearns Foundation
- Jim and Mary Scull
- Scull Construction
- Black Hills Energy
- Chad and Allison Carpenter
- Dana Dykhous
- Elevate Rapid City
- Wayfarer Foundation
- NDN Collective
- Larson Family Foundation



COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS (Partial list)

- Rapid City Area Schools
- Working Against Violence, Inc. (WAVI)
- Indian Health Service
- Crow Creek Sioux Tribe
- West River Mental Health (formerly Behavior Management Systems)
- Cornerstone Rescue Mission
- South Dakota Department of Social Services/Child Protection Services
- Native Women's Health Center
- Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Education
- South Dakota WIC Program
- Career Learning Center
- Birth to Three Connections – Part C
- Badlands Head Start: Prenatal to Five
- United Sioux Tribes
- Pennington County Housing
- Lakota Homes
- Mommy's Closet
- Feeding South Dakota (Food Bank)
- Early Childhood Connections
- Native Sun News
- Home Slice Media
- KEVN/KOTA Television
- Gary Farmer, musician, actor
- Hopa Mountain Foundation
- Abbott House



Rapid City Fire
Department and
Police Officers visit
Head Start students





Ateyapi students decorate van for Native American Day parade

Together we are giving our children a brighter future

THANK
YOU!



MEET THE KITCHEN STAFF



MEET OUR KITCHEN TEAM! THEY ENSURE THAT ALL OUR CHILDREN ENJOY HEALTHY, FRESHLY PREPARED MEALS EVERY DAY. GOOD NUTRITION IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN ORDER FOR THEM TO HAVE HEALTHY BODIES AND MINDS!-

Back - Ashley Whiteshell, Sandra Torres, Shawn Sierra
Front - Cheryl Noisy Hawk (Nutrition Manager), Alora Black Elk



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CHANGING LIVES THROUGH EDUCATION SINCE 1986