

# Wambli Ho, Voice of the Eagles: Special Report

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Wambli Ho News, Voice of the Eagles  
<http://www.wambliho.homestead.com/>

- \* Median income is \$2,600 per year with 85% to 95% unemployment
- \* Infant mortality rate 300% higher than the U.S. national average
- \* Diabetes and Tuberculosis rates 800% higher than the U.S. national average
- \* Elderly die each winter from hypothermia (freezing)
- \* At least 60% of the homes are severely substandard, without

water, electricity, adequate insulation, and sewage systems

- \* School drop-out rate is 70%

- \* Recent reports state the average life expectancy is 45 years old

while others state that it is 48 years old for men and 52 years old for women.

With either set of figures, that's the shortest life expectancy for any community in the

Western Hemisphere outside Haiti, according to The Wall Street Journal.

And the list goes on and on....

## Hidden Away, in the Land of Plenty....

### 2002 Current Statistics

### Concerning the Pine Ridge Oglala Lakota (Sioux) Reservation

(Compiled from recent political, government, and tribal publications)

Hidden away, dotted throughout the landscape of America, are the Reservations of the Indigenous People of our land. Mostly unknown or forgotten by the mainstream culture of the dominant U.S. society, the average United States resident knows little or nothing about these people other than what romanticized versions they see in movies and television or else in their nearest Reservation casino. Most assume that whatever poverty exists on a reservation is most certainly comparable to that which they might experience themselves.

And definitely, mainstream Americans are accustomed to being exposed to poverty. It has become nearly invisible due to its overwhelming presence everywhere. We drive through our cities now with a blind eye, numb to the suffering around us. Even more, we watch the televised reports of Third World countries, shake our heads and turn away, rightfully assuming that our government and our charities will help those in need all over the globe.

But the question begs: What about the foreign nations on America's own soil, within this country, a part and yet apart from mainstream society? What about the Native American Nations on America's reservations? Few mainstream Americans know anything about the people that live on these reservations and fewer still know or comprehend the unconscionable conditions present on

many of them. Oddly enough, the case could be made that more Europeans and Australians know and understand the cultures and conditions of our Indigenous people better than do the majority of mainstream Americans.

And what the Europeans and Australians know is that there are a number of very fortunate Native American Nations whose people are able to earn a very good living due to casino income, natural resource income, or from some other sources. They also know, however, that a staggering number of residents on Native American reservations live in abject conditions rivaling, or even surpassing, that of many Third World countries.

This report chronicles just one Nation, the Oglala Lakota (Sioux) Nation of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Yet the name and only a few details could easily be changed to describe a host of others. Dineh (Navajo), Ute Mountain Ute, Tohono O'odham, Pima, Yaqui .the list is long.

But despite nearly-insurmountable conditions, few resources, and against unbelievable odds, Nation after Nation of Indigenous leaders and their people are working hard to counteract decades of oppression and forced destruction of their cultures to bring their citizens back to a life of self-respect and self-sufficiency in today's world.

This report is not a plea for charity. It will also not detail the causes. It is simply hoped this report will serve to inform and cure the massive ignorance pervading the United States about its own Indigenous people. It seeks to dispel the illusions. For only by understanding, only through education, can prejudice be counteracted, mutual respect gained, and effective long-term cooperative solutions be found. But nothing can be accomplished if the issues remain unknown.

There are numerous non-profit organizations, all under-staffed and under-funded, trying to work with the Indigenous leaders to solve various facets of the problems existing on the reservations. It is not the purpose of this report to promote one organization over another as a solution. If the reader resolves to take a step to help, either monetarily or through volunteer work, it will be up to the reader to take the responsibility to investigate and find a reputable organization best suited to their talents, resources, and vision.

In the meantime, this report will serve simply to make public part of that which is hidden away in the richest country in the world.

> The Pine Ridge Oglala Lakota (Sioux) Indian Reservation sits in Bennett, Jackson, and Shannon Counties and is located in the southwest corner of South Dakota, fifty miles east of the Wyoming border.

> The 11,000-square mile (over 2 million acres) Oglala Lakota Pine Ridge Reservation is the second-largest Native American Reservation within the United States. It is roughly the size of the State of Connecticut.

> The Reservation is divided into eight districts: Eagle Nest, Pass Creek, Wakpamni, LaCreek, Pine Ridge, White Clay, Medicine Root, Porcupine, and Wounded Knee.

> The topography of the Pine Ridge Reservation includes badlands, rolling grassland hills, dryland prairie, and areas dotted with pine trees.

> According to the 1998 Bureau of Indian Affairs Census, the Pine Ridge Reservation is home to approximately 40,000 persons, 35% of which are under the age of 16. Approximately half the residents of the Reservation are registered tribal members of the Oglala Lakota Nation.

> The population is steadily rising, despite the severe conditions on the Reservation, as more and more Oglala Lakota return home from far-away cities in order to live within their societal values, be with their families, and assist with the revitalization of their culture and their Nation.

> Recent reports point out that the median income on the Pine Ridge Reservation is approximately \$2,600 per year.

> The unemployment rate vacillates from 85% to 95% on the Reservation.

> There is no industry, technology, or commercial infrastructure on the Reservation to provide employment.

> The nearest town of size (which provides some jobs for those few persons able to travel the distance) is Rapid City, South Dakota with approximately 57,000 residents. It is located approximately 120 miles from the Reservation. The nearest large city to Pine Ridge is Denver, Colorado located about 350 miles away.

> Some figures state that the life expectancy on the Reservation is 48 years old for men and 52 for women. Other reports state that the average life expectancy on the Reservation is 45 years old. With either set of figures, that's the shortest life expectancy for a community anywhere in the Western Hemisphere outside Haiti, according to The Wall Street Journal.

> Teenage suicide rate on the Pine Ridge Reservation is 150% higher than the U.S. national average for this age group.

> The infant mortality rate is the highest on this continent and is about 300% higher than the U.S. national average.

> More than half the Reservation's adults battle addiction and disease. Alcoholism, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and malnutrition are rampant.

> The rate of diabetes on the Reservation is reported to be 800% higher than the U.S. national average.

> Recent reports indicate that almost 50% of the adults on the Reservation over the age of 40 have diabetes.

> As a result of the high rate of diabetes on the Reservation, diabetic-related blindness, amputations, and kidney failure are common.

> The tuberculosis rate on the Pine Ridge Reservation is approximately 800% higher than the U.S. national average.

> Cervical cancer is 500% higher than the U.S. national average.

> Each winter, Reservation Elders are found dead from hypothermia (freezing).

> It is reported that at least 60% of the homes on the Pine Ridge Reservation are infested with Black Mold, *Stachybotrys*. This infestation causes an often-fatal condition with infants, children, elderly, those with damaged immune systems, and those with lung and pulmonary conditions at the highest risk. Exposure to this mold can cause hemorrhaging of the lungs and brain as well as cancer.

> Many Reservation residents live without health care due to vast travel distances involved in accessing that care. Additional factors include under-funded, under-staffed medical facilities and outdated or non-existent medical equipment. There is little hope for increased funding for Indian health care.

> Preventive healthcare programs are rare.

> In most of the treaties between the U.S. Government and Indian Nations, the U.S. government agreed to provide adequate medical care for Indians in return for vast quantities of land. The Indian Health Services (IHS) was set up to administer the health care for Indians under these treaties and receives an appropriation each year to fund Indian health care. Unfortunately, the appropriation is very small compared to the need. The IHS is understaffed and ill-equipped and can't possibly address the needs of Indian communities. Nowhere is this more apparent than on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

> School drop-out rate is over 70%.

> According to a Bureau of Indian Affairs report, the Pine Ridge Reservation schools are in the bottom 10% of school funding by U.S. Department of Education and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

> Teacher turnover is 800% that of the U.S. national average

> The small Tribal Housing Authority homes on the Pine Ridge Reservation are so overcrowded and scarce that many homeless families often use tents or cars for shelter. Many families live in shacks, old trailers, or dilapidated mobile homes.

> There is a large homeless population on the Reservation, but most families never turn away a relative no matter how distant the blood relation. Consequently, many homes have large numbers of people living in them.

> There is an estimated average of 17 people living in each family home (a home which may only have two to three rooms). Some homes, built for 6 to 8 people, have up to 30 people living in them.

> 60% of Reservation families have no telephone.

> Over 33% of the Reservation homes lack basic water and sewage systems as well as electricity.

> Many residents must carry (often contaminated) water from the local rivers daily for their personal needs.

> 39% of the homes on the Pine Ridge Reservation have no electricity.

> 59% of the Reservation homes are substandard.

> It is reported that at least 60% of the homes on the Pine Ridge Reservation need to be burned to the ground and replaced with new housing due to infestation of the potentially-fatal Black Mold, *Stachybotrys*. There is no insurance or government program to assist families in replacing their homes.

> Some Reservation families are forced to sleep on dirt floors.

> Many Reservation homes lack adequate insulation. Even more homes lack central heating.

> Without basic insulation or central heating in their homes, many residents on the Pine Ridge Reservation use their ovens to heat their homes.

> Many Reservation homes lack stoves, refrigerators, beds, and/or basic furniture.

> Most Reservation families live in rural and often isolated areas.

> The largest town on the Reservation is the town of Pine Ridge which has a population of approximately 5,720 people and is the administrative center for the Reservation.

> There are few improved roads on the Reservation and many of the homes are inaccessible during times of heavy snow or rain.

> Weather is extreme on the Reservation. Severe winds are always a factor. Traditionally, summer temperatures reach well over 110°F and winters bring bitter cold with temperatures that can reach -50°F below zero or worse. Flooding, tornados, or wildfires are always a risk.

> Many of the wells and much of the water and land on the Reservation is contaminated with pesticides and other poisons from farming, mining, open dumps, and commercial and governmental mining operations outside the Reservation. A further source of contamination is buried ordnance and hazardous materials from closed U.S. military bombing ranges on the Reservation.

> The Pine Ridge Reservation still has no banks, motels, discount stores, or movie theaters. It has only one grocery store of any moderate size and it is located in the town of Pine Ridge on the Reservation.

> Several of the banks and lending institutions nearest to the Reservation were recently targeted for investigation of fraudulent or predatory lending practices, with the citizens of the Pine Ridge Reservation as their victims.

> There are no public libraries except one at the Oglala Lakota College.

> There is no public transportation available on the Reservation.

> Ownership of operable automobiles by residents of the Reservation is highly limited.

> Predominate form of travel for all ages on the Reservation is walking or hitchhiking.

> There is one very small airport on the Reservation servicing both the Pine Ridge Reservation and Shannon County. It's longest, paved runway extends 4,969 feet. There are no commercial flights available.

> There is one radio station on the Pine Ridge Reservation. KILI 90.1FM is located near the town of Porcupine on the Reservation.

> Alcoholism affects eight out of ten families on the Reservation.

> The death rate from alcohol-related problems on the Reservation is 300% higher than the remaining US population.

> The Oglala Lakota Nation has prohibited the sale and possession of alcohol on the Pine Ridge Reservation since the early 1970's. However, the town of Whiteclay, Nebraska (which sits 400 yards off the Reservation border in a contested "buffer" zone) has approximately 14 residents and four liquor stores which sell over 4.1 million cans of beer each year resulting in a \$3million annual trade. Unlike other Nebraska communities, Whiteclay exists only to sell liquor and make money. It has no schools, no churches, no civic organizations, no parks, no benches, no public bathrooms, no fire service and no law enforcement. Tribal officials have repeatedly pleaded with the State of Nebraska to close these liquor stores or enforce the State laws regulating liquor stores but have been consistently refused.

> Scientific studies show that the High Plains/Oglala Aquifer which begins underneath the Pine Ridge Reservation is predicted to run dry within the next thirty years, possibly as early as the year 2005, due to commercial interest use and dryland farming in numerous states south of the Reservation. This critical North American underground water resource is not renewable at anything near the present consumption rate. The recent years of drought have simply accelerated the problem.

> Scientific studies show that much of the High Plains/Oglala Aquifer has been contaminated with farming pesticides and commercial, factory, mining, and industrial contaminants in the States of South Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

> The Tribal nations are considered to have sovereign governmental status and have a government to government relationship with the United States. The Oglala Lakota Sioux Tribal government operates under a constitution consistent with the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and approved by the Tribal membership and Tribal Council of the Oglala Lakota Sioux Tribe. The Tribe is governed by an elected body consisting of a 5 member Executive Committee and an 18 member Tribal Council, all of whom serve a four year term.

Author's Note:

If you wish a list of the resources and publications used for this report  
Please contact Stephanie M. Schwartz, Editor  
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