The Heritage Center’s Gift Shop provides a needed source of income for local Native artists – and helps to preserve traditional crafting practices for future generations.

For many Lakota families on Pine Ridge, creating art is a core element of both cultural experience and economic necessity. Approximately 80 percent of reservation residents are unemployed, simply because there is no infrastructure to create jobs. More than half of households here rely on a home-based enterprise for income – and of those, nearly 90 percent create and sell some form of traditional art.

That’s where The Heritage Center comes into play. As part of its core mission, it has purchased and promoted the work of local artists for over three decades.

As the gift shop’s manager and buyer, Carmen Little Iron selects the pieces that will line the gift shop’s walls and glass cases – everything from intricate bead and quillwork, to carved artist jewelry, to vibrant rug quilts. Carmen regularly works with a pool of more than 100 artists from the local Pine Ridge community as well as from reservations across the region.

Her true goal, she says, is to help create sustainable sources of income for the Lakota artists who are keeping culture and heritage vibrant here.

“All the work we do is part of a broader mission for economic development on the reservation,” said Carmen. “Probably a third of the artists we purchase from survive solely by selling their artwork, and others use it to supplement other sources of income that aren’t enough to sustain their families. Our goal is to move toward economic self-sufficiency, and to honor and preserve traditional crafting practices for future generations.”

Meet Our Artists!
The Heritage Center has launched an outreach and awareness campaign called Howl with – which means “to speak with a good and beautiful voice” – to give artists a chance to share what inspires them to create. Each month features a new artist to discover.

Read their stories at www.redcloudschool.org/heritage/ourartists

Red Cloud Indian School
100 Mission Drive
Pine Ridge, South Dakota 57770-2100

Watch our new Video!
Red Cloud graduates are living generously and with compassion. One of his college essays – which was accepted at Yale University.

I first learned I was accepted at Yale in December and all I felt was pure happiness and excitement. And then I heard from Harvard, and I was just awe-struck,” said Jacob, who was also admitted to Cornell, Columbia, the University of Pennsylvania, Dartmouth, and Brown. “I don’t know exactly how I managed it – but I am truly thankful for where I am right now.”

Jacob credits his close-knit community – including family members, teachers, counselors, and friends – with helping him get this far. But staying connected to Lakota culture and heritage, he says, has been a foundation of his identity. At Red Cloud, he was able to begin learning the Lakota language for the first time. His grandmother spoke it fluently, but she passed away before he could learn from her. And now, as he leaves the reservation for college, he has every intention of carrying his culture and language with him.

“I’m going to a place where very few people know what it means to be Oglala Lakota. So I hope to impact the Lakota community by sharing my culture with others,” he said. “Getting an education, keeping my culture alive, and continuing to learn and speak the Lakota language – that’s all part of my plan.”

Jacob also plans to live out the Lakota virtues of Wačháŋtognaka, or living generously and with compassion. One of his college essays – which helped him earn admission to so many elite universities – focused on an experience he had picking up a hitchhiker and what it taught him about the power of kindness. He says he wants to “continue practicing kindness when I get to college” and in the years to follow. And above all, he wants to come back and serve his people on Pine Ridge, where hopes are so urgently needed.

Watch online today and support the next generation of Lakota leaders.
www.redcloudschool.org/education

Beating the Toughest Odds
The power of kindness. Jacob says he wants to “continue practicing kindness when I get to college” and in the years to follow. And above all, he wants to come back and serve his people on Pine Ridge, where hopes are so urgently needed.

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Shoshone Madonna II by Daniel McCoy, winner of this year’s Br. CM Simon, SJ Award.

Pourier ’08 – who developed the exhibition – spoke to the group about the ways her education at Red Cloud has helped fulfill her dream of a career in the arts. Through the generosity of those gathered, Red Cloud was able to meet a critical fundraising challenge – raising over $100,000 to support the annual cost of educating Red Cloud students.

Red Cloud Receives Federal AmeriCorps Grant

The Corporation for National and Community Service recently awarded Red Cloud AmeriCorps grants of nearly $250,000 to support students’ academic success in literacy and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). This year twenty-nine AmeriCorps members will support students through iRead, after school, and summer school activities, serving as teachers’ aides, library aides, and after school facilitators. Twelve members are recruited locally from Pine Ridge, and the remainder have come from across the country, from as far away as Connecticut and California. AmeriCorps provides an opportunity for members to serve others, gain work experience, and win an award to help fund their post or future educational costs.

On June 4, The Heritage Center opened its gallery doors for the 49th Red Cloud Indian Art Show – and welcomed visitors from the local community and around the world. Each summer, for nearly a half century, the Red Cloud Indian Art Show has celebrated the work of Native artists from tribes across North America. As the only show of its kind held on a reservation, it has emerged as one of the largest and longest running Native art exhibitions in the country.

“I’ve been almost 50 years, but the show’s mission is still the same to highlight the work of local and national Native artists and to share their incredible talent with the world.”

“We are so proud to have helped launch the careers of so many working artists, from right here on the Pine Ridge Reservation and from other tribal communities across the country,” said Mary Maxon, director of The Heritage Center. “We’re looking forward to creating more opportunities for Native artists to share their work – for many more years to come.”

You’re Invited! JOIN US TO CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF NATIVE ART

2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the Red Cloud Indian Art Show and you are invited to the celebration! Join us for the gallery opening on Saturday, June 2, 2018 to meet artists from Pine Ridge and across the country. On the last day of the summer, the show will run from June 3 to August 12.

Make plans now to experience the show – as well as the history and beauty of our campus, the Pine Ridge Reservation, and the surrounding Badlands and Black Hills. Visit www.redcloudschool.org/gallery or contact The Heritage Center at 605-867-8257 for more information.

Future college graduates. This spring, our high school seniors proudly walked across the graduation stage with an extraordinary education and a vision for their future. Your support does more than keep the lights on—it allows us to be innovative with our courses and programs and to create a world-class education that prepares our students to live successful, productive lives.

Healthy, Nourishing Meals. Our students are able to focus on their studies because they are not focused on their stomachs. Your support helps us provide a complete breakfast, a healthy lunch, and an after-school snack. Wóphila!

Economic Impact. The Heritage Center adds over $1 million into the local reservation economy by purchasing items from local artists and selling them through our internationally recognized gift shop. By supporting The Heritage Center’s work, you allow us to foster and encourage Lakota artists. Wóphila!

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