

-Tribes of Dakota- Rosebud Reservation: Domestic Violence

The White Buffalo Calf Woman was believed to have brought the canupa or peace pipe. Many Lakota people also believe that one of the first teachings of the White Buffalo Calf Woman was respect for women and children.



Photo by Henry Hines

Ironically, a report from the U.S. Department of Justice indicates that Native American women experience the highest rate of violence of any group in the country. ([U.S. Dept. of Justice - Violence Against Women](#))

Nearly 30 years ago, Tillie Black Bear started the White Buffalo Calf Society. The organization provides shelter and direct services for women. The first women's shelter in Indian Country was founded in Mission, S.D., by Tillie Black Bear in 1977. Some believe that an increase in traditional ways is the key to creating a positive change in peoples' lives.



Listen to the following in your classroom.

[Domestic Violence \(8:53\)](#)

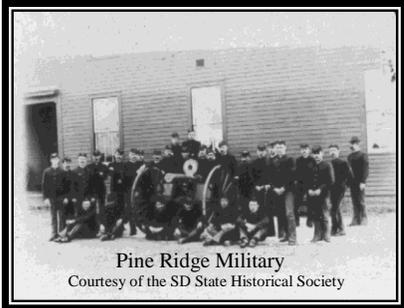
By Julia Monczunski

Reflection, Research, and Discussion (research and discuss one or all of the following)

1. Tillie Black Bear founded the first women's shelter in Indian Country in 1977. Black Bear is described by Verna Mato Estima as being "a strong, courageous, inspiring woman..." Do you know someone in your life who is inspiring; whom you look up to for guidance and advice? Is this person older than you? Why does an increase in wisdom and guidance usually coincide with an increase in age? What makes an inspiring person and how can you become a good role model whom people go to for advice and guidance? ([Click on the following program about a great role model from Brookings, S.D.](#))

There is an expression that states that everyone must learn from their own mistakes. For example, before prom, many schools invite quest speakers who have experienced a debilitating alcohol-related accident or have lost a loved one to an alcohol-related accident to visit with the students about their experiences. Why do many of these inspiring presentations fall on deaf ears?

To learn more about drinking and driving problems in South Dakota ([Parents Matter/Teens, Drinking and Driving.](#))



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2. According to Jace De'Cory, a professor of Native American Studies at Black Hills State University, "Lakota culture is based heavily in values of cooperation and communal living..." If this is true, then why do Native Americans have some of the highest rates of domestic violence in the nation? Do you feel the suppression of Indians and the attempt to eliminate the Indian culture contributed to the current levels of violence or do you believe the problems always existed on some level? How can domestic violence be reduced?

3. How has the White Buffalo Calf Society which runs the women's shelter in Mission incorporated healing and native tradition into their program? How have the roles of Native American women changed over the years?



Try This

(Take home project - group or individual)

1. "Sweat: The Healing Process" The following hands-on activity is a great multidisciplinary assignment that incorporates healing, cultural understanding, history and fine arts. This would be an ideal assignment for a student to work on with family. The students and their families will gain an appreciation and understanding of the traditional sweat.

A sweat is a traditional Native American healing ceremony performed in a sweat lodge. In the program, Verna Mato Estima commented, "... women come to the shelter with a lot of mixed emotions and hurt feelings and broken spirits and so a sweat lodge is good" She continues, "It's good for them to sweat so that they can pray and heal themselves and find that refuge within themselves". The following SDPB productions describe a traditional Lakota Sweat: [Dakota Digest](#)/ ["Live and Remember"](#).

Many traditional ceremonies like the ghost dance and the sweat seemed peculiar, unnecessary, and threatening to the white settlers. Many of these misunderstandings still continue today. Your students should realize that a sweat isn't much different than many current methods used today to relieve tension and stress. For example, many of my friends play basketball to relieve tension and boy do they sweat. The sweat and exercise releases impurities and tension, which helps rejuvenate the body. Basketball may be more accepted than performing a sweat, but to me sitting in a sweat lodge seems less threatening and



unusual. Ten people trying to put a ball into a round piece of metal with a net hanging off of it would have seemed kind of strange and intimidating to Native Americans 120 years ago.

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Process

Your students will construct a model of a traditional sweat lodge. A list of suggested materials is shown below. You can decide whether you would like to use the suggested materials for your student models or let the students' imaginations guide the projects.

Materials used in example:

- Plywood 2' x 2' x $\frac{3}{4}$ "
- 7-10 flexible braches (approximately 2'-3' in length - cut to fit)
 - Hedge trimmers / small saw
 - Drill to make holes in plywood for branches
 - Glue to secure the branches (hot glue used in example)
- Brown cloth - cut in shape of buffalo skin (approximately 1 yard)
- Dirt for floor / cut grass for area surrounding lodge
 - Used Elmer's to secure
- Small rocks that represent the heated stones that are carried from the fire into the sweat lodge to provide the heat
 - Small orange Christmas light (fire) / small sticks and rocks

A photo album of an example lodge can be accessed by clicking on the following link. ([Sweat lodge](#)) The sweat lodge model was constructed on a 2'x2' piece of plywood. The seven branches used for the main support of the lodge were cut from a lilac bush. Fourteen holes were drilled into the plywood. The diameter of each hole was a little larger than the diameter of the branches; hot glue was used to secure the branches into the holes. Elmer's glue was spread on the plywood and then covered with dirt for the floor and cut grass for the area outside of the lodge. The lodge was covered with small pieces of brown cloth cut into the shape of buffalo hides; hot glue was used to attach the small hides. The fire pit used to heat up the stones was made by gluing small rocks and sticks together. An orange Christmas light was inserted through a hole drilled in the center of the fire pit.

The final step is the most important. Each student will make a "Sweat Letter." The Sweat Letter will include a list of five problems Native Americans have experienced since their first encounter with the white explorers. An example would be the suppression of the Native American language. This can be a simple listing or more of an in-depth research activity. The Sweat Letter should also include five problems the student is experiencing. An example may include a car accident or a death of a grandparent. The Sweat Letter should then be placed in the sweat lodge.

Your students should realize that a Sweat is a traditional ceremony preformed by Native Americans. The sweat cleans the mind, body, and spirit helping relieve problems and tension they are experiencing.