



Ruby and Dwight Bear Shirt, their pregnant mother, and five other family members live in one half of a converted government barracks. The barracks is on pilings, with no indoor plumbing or electricity. It is heated by a woodburning stove.

Inferior image abetted by sociological factors

by Susie Jenkins

Nebraskan Staff Writer
On the isolated, impoverished Indian reservations a major result of the life situation is immense social disorganization. This absence of community is mirrored on the Pine Ridge and Omaha-Winnebago reservations in the prevalence of alcoholism, educational problems, suicide attempts and weak family structure.
Surveys and research concerning the life of the Indians on Pine Ridge have been compiled by the Pine Ridge Mental Health Program, revealing that this prevalence is not "just the Indians."
Dr. Carl Mindell, former director of the Pine Ridge Community Mental Health program, writes in the Pine Ridge Research Bulletin: "This way of behaving in the world is not characteristic of Indianness, but of any people who have lived in similar circumstances i.e., city ghetto or Appalachia."
The result, according to the research done by the Health Service, is the development and perpetuation of a negative ethnic image, among all Indian residents, especially among the younger Indians.
"The younger Indian kids scare the hell out of me," said Dave Allen, VISTA volunteer in the Pine Ridge border town of Gordon, Neb.
"They are already defeated. They don't rebel, they regress. The imperialist culture has defined the Indian role, and this causes emotional problems," he said.
Allen voiced an opinion similar to those of whites and Indians working with social problems on the reservation.
Dr. Robert Schefsky treats reservation residents at the Winnebago hospital in Northeast Nebraska.
"Indian teenagers are in a shell," Schefsky said. "They see what is going on around them. They see

alcoholism in the family: they see their mother going to bed with their uncle.
"People who have gone outside the reservation to work have come back broken, so they think it is useless to try," he said.

RESEARCHERS AT PINE RIDGE have defined a "terrific" inferiority complex among Indians, especially Indian teens. Dr. Eileen Maynard, anthropologist with the Community Health Service, directed an intensive survey of Pine Ridge residents, the first of any kind at any reservation.
Dr. Maynard conducted a survey among both Sioux and surrounding white high school students, comparing attitudes toward Indian problems. One of the major important differences she discovered was a divergence in opinions concerning the reason Indians have greater problems than whites.
Seven per cent of the Indian students believed that prejudice of whites was a major reason for greater problems of Indians, while 56 per cent of white students made this the major reason for the Indian's situation.
Indian students named lack of education, drinking, and poverty as the three main causes for their failure to conquer their problems.
Even statements blaming the social or economic environment were amended by phrases of self-blame, Dr. Maynard wrote in her report.
The most negative statement was "Indians have greater problems because they're real stupid."
One Indian girl stated that Indians have more of a chance for success because "if he wants to go on to school, the Indian has everything paid for him."
"Indian adults sometimes characterize Indians as lazy and drunken," Dr. Maynard said. "The Indian child hears these statements, and may then observe this behavior and even though these traits are manifested by a small minority of Indians, it will reinforce the negative image of his ethnic group."

Tarpaper shacks typify reservation housing

Fire disasters strike frequently

by John Dvorak
Nebraskan Staff Writer

"These tarpaper shacks are unfit to live in, especially in the winter. It seems like the little children are constantly getting sick. We make daily trips to the hospital with kids from all over town. Worse than that the shacks catch fire easily. One of them burned down recently. No one knew it until the walls fell in, but three children were in it."
Clement Mitchell and Lawrence Cook, two members of the Omaha Tribal Council spoke sadly about the housing situation in their hometown of Macy.
An unincorporated settlement of 203, Macy lies at the bottom of a valley only a few miles from the Missouri River and about 30 miles south of Sioux City.

a private firm under the auspices of the Federal government. The homes are rented to Indians for varying sums.

"THE MORE YOU MAKE in salary, the more rent you pay," Cook continued. The government has promised more units, he added. At present only about 20 of the new homes have been built; it is only a dent in the problem."

Besides the dilapidated houses in Macy, there are a few stores, a gasoline station, a 50 year old school building, and several churches. The bright spot of the town is a not-yet-finished red brick Tribal Council Building, housing a gym and many offices.
"We are very proud of the new building," Cook said. "We paid for it entirely out of tribal funds."

Ten miles up highway 73 lies Winnebago, a larger town, population 682. The situation there is different. Housing is far better, and the town offers a business district, a high school, several churches, two missions and a larger federal housing development.

MISS BERNICE TEGLER, who operates one of the missions, said that the federal housing is indeed desirable, but units rent for \$65 to \$100. Is that appropriate rent for low income families? she asked.

The housing projects are well kept up, simply because they are expected monthly, she said.
The Indians don't have much pride in their homes, contrary to whites, she continued. Many homes have just the bare necessities, no rugs, little furniture. Lack of telephones, running water, and indoor plumbing is not unique.

Out west on the Pine Ridge Reservations, housing is also in bad shape. A complicated study has been made of the situation, so in many cases exact figures and percentages are available. For instance, only 40 per cent of the Indian homes have running water. About 60 per cent of the households have electricity.

SEVERAL FEDERAL PROGRAMS are in operation to try and remedy the situation. Operation Turnkey is a low cost housing project operated through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Money from the project can be used to fix, rent, or buy homes.

Marge Loffredo, VISTA worker from New Jersey, said, "This started four years ago. The Indians just keep filling out forms and nothing ever happens."
Perhaps living conditions could be improved, if the reservation had more of an economy.
"We're trying to bring some industry to the reservation. We don't have a spot developed yet, but we are competing with 16,000 other communities in the United States. Now, the only industry we have in Winnebago is a dog food plant which processes dead animals. It's strictly a day by day operation, however. If they have some work, they hire someone for a day."

THE SPEAKER WAS Sterling Snake, treasurer of the Winnebago Tribal Council.
"We are negotiating for a government loan to develop an industrial park in Winnebago," he reported. There has been little progress.

The reservation would not be a bad place for a company to locate, he continued. Land and a working force is available and a firm can take advantage of many tax breaks by building on the reservation proper.
"We need opportunities," Snake stressed. Winnebago's only industry has never employed more than ten people at a time, and then for only a short period.
Walthill, Neb., a town of 844 about five miles south of Winnebago, boasts the only real industry on the reservation. A plant makes hydraulic cylinders and thus far has been quite successful. Like federal housing, it is only a dent in the problem.

Opportunity, unemployment was a drastic problem, Snake said. In the past few years, unemployment has been curtailed. But not completely.

G. R. Branchaud, the Indian agent, agreed. "We are trying to make a study... sending social workers right into the homes and find out why a man who has a job decides to quit. We really don't know."
The Indian Agency has a many faceted employment assistance plan, but much of the assistance goes to help Indians get off-the-reservation jobs.



The Bureau has moved many Indians off the reservation, Snake said. However many come back sooner or later. "I don't want to move off, I want to see jobs here on the reservation," he said.

"I USED TO THINK that industry was the answer," said Dr. Robert Chaefsky, an MD at the hospital in Winnebago. "No industry has been forthcoming, but the next best thing happened some time ago."

A manufacturing plant in Sioux City which needed workers decided to transplant the Indians both to and from Sioux City by bus. "I thought that was the answer," Chaefsky said. "But you can count the Indians on the fingers of one hand who are taking advantage of the situation."

On the Pine Ridge Reservation, industry is a little more prevalent although unemployment is a big problem. A moccasin factory employs 102 people, 41 in the factory and the rest outside as lacers. The building is owned by the tribe which rents to the company.

"WE PAY THE MINIMUM wage and up," said Mort Tienfold, plant superintendent. "About 95 per cent of the workers are Indians, and they are excellent workers."
It seems, however, that the government is the real economy. Indians so depend on the government for jobs that an economic disaster would prevail if the government abandoned the reservation.

Unemployment figures run around the 30 per cent mark, depending on age grouping. More than 55 per cent of the young people 16 to 19 are unemployed. More than 45 per cent of the people between 55 and 59 are also unemployed.

Many Indians are employed at one time of the year, but spend several seasons out of work. Nearly 30 per cent of the Pine Ridge Indians work at seasonal employment. Potato and other crop harvesting are popular.

Tienfold said, "To me, jobs that have sound economic bases have to be the solution, if there is a solution. We have stop-gap measures, but they are not stable, viable and economically sound."

"IT'S NOT SAFE on the streets of Macy after dark. There are drunks and gangs. My uncle was beaten to death last year by a gang of people, right on the street. We don't have a sheriff. The nearest law enforcement officers are nearly 20 miles away."

Cook continued, "We are governed by two laws. This is a state reservation, so we have both county law and a state deputy."

It's not working out, he said. A county sheriff and
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A MODERN, GREEN water tower stands guard over the village but it hardly exemplifies the conditions surrounding it.

"I don't see how children can come out of some of those homes," said the director of the local Head Start center.

Dirt roads, car bodies and tiny unpainted bungalows seem to compose most of east and south Macy. Other houses are constructed of slats covered with tarpaper.

Some of our homes, Mitchell said, have tanks of propane for fuels. Telephones are rare. More than a few junk yards dot the tiny town. In places, car bodies are stacked right up to the exterior walls of the homes.



AND, ON A RISE IN the east part of town, on what would be a prime corner lot in Lincoln or Omaha, lies the snow covered, charred remains of the shack where three children lost their lives recently.

Miss Bernice Tegler, who has operated a Protestant mission in Winnebago for years, described one home. "Many homes are like this, she began. There are five children and five adults living in two rooms. Sometimes there is an attic or part of an upstairs, but even so, there is just no room to move around."

The situation is not 100 per cent bleak, however. The north part of Macy is like another world. About 25 brightly decorated new homes have been built and rented to families. The two story, frame dwellings would not look out of place in the Meadowlane or Belmont areas of Lincoln.

The new homes, according to Cook, were built by

BEFORE THE ADVENT of the Office of Economic



Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) live on the Pine Ridge reservation, teach residents basic community practices.