
South Dakota Legislature



Senate Commemoration 815

*Introduced by: **Senators** Foster, Bordeaux, Duhamel, Larson, Mehlhaff, Nesiba, and Schoenfish and **Representatives** Bartels, Duba, Emery, Moore, Nelson, Perry, Pinnow, Pourier, Reisch, Stevens, and Wittman*

A LEGISLATIVE COMMEMORATION, Recognizing and honoring the twenty-fifth anniversary of the First Peoples Fund.

WHEREAS, the First Peoples Fund was founded in 1995 by Jennifer Easton as a donor-advised fund of the Tides Foundation. In 2003, the First Peoples Fund was established as a nonprofit organization headquartered in Rapid City, SD. The mission of the First Peoples Fund is to honor and support the Collective Spirit of First Peoples artists and culture bearers. The First Peoples Fund works with American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian artists and culture bearers in South Dakota and across the country; and

WHEREAS, the First Peoples Fund helps Native communities heal and thrive by supporting cultural practice and entrepreneurship, including community and youth development programs, training, mentorship, grants, awards, and fellowships. The First Peoples Fund's theory of change is a relationship-based, collective system of local and regional arts ecosystems rooted in ancestral knowledge, inclusive of environment, spirit, people, and lifeways. The First Peoples Fund's long-term goal is to see thriving Indigenous arts ecologies everywhere that lift culture bearers, tradition keepers, and artists as transformative community leaders and voices leading community change; and

WHEREAS, the First Peoples Fund and local partners are making a significant impact in this state through artist-centered programs on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, including the Rolling Rez Arts bus, Oglala Lakota Artspace, and Dances with Words youth development program; and

WHEREAS, the Rolling Rez Arts is a state-of-the-art mobile art space, business training center, and mobile bank that travels across the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. In 2016, the Rolling Rez Arts began delivering art, business, retail, and banking services that were previously inaccessible to artists and culture bearers living and working on the reservation. The Rolling Rez Arts is the result of a partnership with Artspace, Lakota Funds, Lakota Federal Credit Union, and nonprofit partners and foundation supporters, all coming together to infuse new energy into the local creative economy; and

South Dakota Legislature



WHEREAS, the Oglala Lakota Artspace is the first community arts facility on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in Kyle, SD, that fosters a collaborative and intergenerational environment where artists can learn, share, and grow their businesses. The facility features a recording studio, classroom, artist studios, and outdoor market space. The Oglala Lakota Artspace Artist-in-Residence Program supports Oglala Lakota culture bearers and artists working in the continuum of Lakota art, developing their practice, exploring connections, and building collaborations with local artists and community; and

WHEREAS, the Dances with Words program is a youth development initiative of the First Peoples Fund that works with young people, adult mentors, high schools, and nonprofit partners to empower participants to become engaged students and community leaders through literary work, spoken word, and other art forms:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT COMMEMORATED, by the Ninety-Eighth Legislature of the State of South Dakota, that the Legislature recognizes and honors the First Peoples Fund on its twenty-fifth anniversary.

