



2023: A Year to BLOOM & GROW

The 2020s have been a difficult time for the people of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe. Covid-19 greatly impacted the communities of the reservation as attested by a death rate that was 16 times the national average. As residents forge into this new year, a theme at Diamond Willow Ministries, both at the Ikce Oyate Christian Center and the Tokata Youth Center, has been one of RENEWAL, HOPE, and GROWTH, a time for rebirth. John 10:10 has been a great encouragement this year, "I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly."

Ikce Oyate Christian Center - Growth Spiritually

The focus of Sunday worship in 2023 is Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, not just gaining knowledge, but to also GROW into a closer relationship with God. The communities on the Crow Creek Sioux Reservation have been greatly impacted by historical injustices and trauma, and now generational poverty and addiction challenges. Jesus offers true healing, freedom and peace.

There is slow and steady GROWTH in numbers of people coming to worship and bible studies over the past year. Attendance has increased at worship from an average of 41 in 2022 to 55 in 2023. Wednesday night Bible Study attendance has grown from 17 in 2022 to an average of 21 in 2023. Easter Sunday there was a huge turnout of 86 folks which included 2 families that came to church for the first time since Covid-19. The impacts of this pandemic will be seen for a generation, but there is some return to normal as folks desire to come together to sing praises, learn, worship and GROW.



Young Adults - Bible Study Prospers

Here on the reservation, it has always been a challenge for those in their 20s and 30s to find and plug into a group of peers that will encourage and challenge them to GROW in their relationship with God and each other. In 2023 the number of young adults that meet on Sundays after worship service at the Ikce Oyate Christian Center has GROWN and DOUBLED in size to be a consistent group of 13 young adults. They

each bring a dish (potluck style) and visit about their week. After a meal, they join together in studying the Bible and praying for each other. Each one is encouraged by time spent together!



Tokata Youth Center – Growing Impact

Although the GROWTH is primarily in the realm of spiritual, emotional, and mental healing, there are some quantifiable numbers as well. There are now OVER 460 youth enrolled for programming at the new Tokata Youth Center! It is so exhilarating to witness the youth literally pouring out of the yellow school buses and excitedly running into the Tokata Youth Center. Just the sheer numbers are impressive, but the true growth and beauty is seen in the countenance of the K – 12th grade youth's faces.



Bearing Fruit – Max Big Eagle



It is always exciting to plant a fruit tree this time of year. It is the hope of bearing fruit that propels the gardener to plant, water, fertilize and care for the tree as it GROWS and matures. In the same way it is so satisfying to see some of those that were once youngsters, now matured and bearing fruit. Max Big Eagle is one such person. Max is a Program Coordinator at the Tokata Youth Center even as he completes his degree online at Indian Bible College (Flagstaff, AZ).

There is a strong core of teens meeting weekly in the Tokata Youth Center, growing in their knowledge and love for God. To encourage them more, Max has recently taken the initiative to start a Saturday Night Youth Group for high school students. These teens are faced with tough daily decisions, but they are yearning for, and having in-depth spiritual discussions and truly experiencing personal GROWTH.



Max says, “The purpose is to invest back into the teens and now on Saturdays they can have the option to be in a Christ loving place where they can hang out with friends and have pizza, pop, and chips as well as a devotional study.” It is exciting to see such personal GROWTH and how it spurs-on GROWTH in others as well!

Youth Mentors – Taking the Lead

There is a special group of nine high school youth that work at the Tokata Youth Center as Youth Mentors. They are mature teens mentally, spiritually, and emotionally and have a desire to serve. They are high school students themselves, but most have grown up attending Tokata Youth Center programming, and now are giving back through their part-time after-school Teen Mentor jobs.

Two of the Teen Mentors, Stephan and Hailee, have stepped-up to the point where they are the first “back-ups” to lead Tokata Youth Center programming when a permanent staff member is not at work. Hailee can now supervise the game room when Andrew Thomas is away, and Stephan is able to run the games and activities in the multi-purpose room should Max Big Eagle be gone. It is awesome that these teens have GROWN to the point that they are able to serve in this role. They are looked up to by the younger youth and their peers, which enables them to step into these advanced roles.



Tokata Initiative Capital Campaign Update!



Giving towards the Tokata Initiative facilitates much needed GROWTH as well. We are now at 49% funding toward the 3-year goal. The majority of the remaining 51% need is the \$2 million dollar construction loan. **The construction loan matures and will then require monthly mortgage payments beginning in October 2024, just 18-months from now. Nobody wants to see that happen!** Paying off the construction loan will allow a quick transition back into the normal debt-free mode of operation. All time, energy and finances can then continue to go directly to serving and empowering the youth of the Tokata Youth Center. The ministry will be reaching out to churches, businesses, foundations and folks over the coming months to specifically address this financial need.

TYC Amazon Wishlist - Send a Tangible Gift

Using Amazon Wishlist is a convenient way to send in-kind gifts directly to the Tokata Youth Center that fulfill current needs. Choose from food items for TYC youth evening meals, kitchen supplies, craft/art materials, games, and more.

To access the **TYC Amazon Wishlist** use this QR Code.



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