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Dear Plenty Friends,

“Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race. Even before there were large numbers of Negroes on our shore, the scar of racial hatred had already disfigured colonial society. From the sixteenth century forward, blood flowed in battles over racial supremacy. Moreover, we elevated that tragic experience into a noble crusade. Indeed, even today we have not permitted ourselves to reject or feel remorse for this shameful episode. Our literature, our films, our drama, our folklore, all exalt it.” — Martin Luther King, Jr.

Twenty years ago we wrote: “Any objective assessment of the condition of the human species today leaves little doubt that we are in need of a serious re-evaluation of our habits of consumption and management of natural resources. In our time, the stewards and caretakers of the values and principles we need to adopt, for the sake of the world, are most commonly found among the most materially poor and subjugated populations on the planet — the indigenous peoples. We learned this first living among the Maya— if indeed we were to accomplish anything in our passion to make the world healthier and more fair, kinder and more peaceful — a key would be our partnership with the indigenous people of the earth.”

It’s heartening to report that Plenty is still working with the Mayans in Guatemala and that, over our history, we’ve had partnerships with a wide variety of indigenous peoples like the Caribs of Dominica and St. Vincent, the Oglala Lakota of Pine Ridge, the Kekchi and Mopan Maya and Garifuna of Belize, the Mohawks of Akwesasne, NY, the Wailaki of Round Valley, CA, the Huichols of Mexico, and the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw on the Gulf Coast of Louisiana. However, it’s disheartening to see that the genocide that Martin Luther King was talking about has only continued. Today it’s a genocide of poverty and neglect.

AP April 13, 2015 Pine Ridge Reservation: “On Dec. 12, a 14-year-old boy hanged himself at his home on the reservation. On Christmas Day, a 15-year-old girl was found dead, followed weeks later by a high school cheerleader. Two more teenagers took their lives in February and two more in March, along with several more attempts. The youngest to die was 12.”

Plenty has supported community projects at Pine Ridge since 1985. The residents of the Reservation are among the poorest people in the US. With unemployment stuck above 85%, over-crowded, sub-standard housing, poor diets, and life expectancies under 50 years, there’s not very much to look forward to. If we had more funding we could do much more, but in the meantime, what we can do is keep supporting the home gardens project, which offers better nutrition to the people and something real and fun to do. We’re planning to bring some of the younger children and their parents to the Farm for a Kids To The Country experience this summer, something we’ve wanted to do for a long time. Every winter people die on Pine Ridge because they are unable to stay warm in their houses. Last winter we hired some Lakota workers to fix up substandard houses with better insulation, windows, and roofs, and we want to keep doing that. This would be another project where a little funding could go a long way and potentially save lives. The people we know on the reservation don’t ask for anything. They just endure the hardships. When they pray, in sweat lodges, during sun dances and in Native American Church meetings, they don’t pray for themselves. They pray for the world.

In this new Bulletin you’ll find updates about Plenty’s work in Guatemala and El Salvador, on the Gulf Coast and Pine Ridge, and in Belize, as well as with Books To Kids and Kids To The Country (which we just realized is 30 this year). Lots of good things happening, as always, and we thank you.

Sincerely,

Peter Schweitzer
Executive Director



Enclosure: Plenty Bulletin