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**Because We Grow**

Trinity White Plume just turned 13. Like the gardens she has newly learned to plant and tend, she is growing in extraordinary ways.

Where Trinity lives on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota — roughly the size of the state of Connecticut — there is but one grocery store. Moreover, Oglala Lakota County, where the reservation is located, has the lowest per capita income in the country and consistently ranks as the poorest county in the nation.

During the pandemic, what was already a food desert has become even more so, heightening the challenge of food accessibility for Trinity’s family and all the families living in Pine Ridge. Thanks to gifts from One Great Hour of Sharing, the garden projects of *Owe Aku* (pronounced OH-WAY AH-KOO) are making a difference.

Owe Aku is a grassroots, nonprofit organization that puts people in charge of their own food supply, nutrition, health and well-being by reclaiming ancestral wisdom and teaching Lakota history and culture. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) partners with Owe Akuthrough the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP), supported by gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing.

For the Lakota, there is a strong spiritual connection between the land and the people. “Although traditionally we’re not an agricultural people, we have evolved into wanting to preserve the land, and preserve the people on the land, by beginning our garden project,” said development director Kent Lebsock. “We thought the best way to do this is with the families, and especially young people.” And thus was born Ama’s Freedom School, which encourages youth to learn not only about growing food, but also about the medicinal and ceremonial plants that have been used for generations.

Trinity is a young, emerging leader with the potential to carry the program forward for many years. She attends and assists with every class and workshop put on by Owe Aku, and, in turn, she and the other students have begun to teach their families. Trinity is also proving herself to be gifted in other areas that benefit the reservation by helping with bookkeeping and other office work.

“I want to learn my traditions from Ama’s Freedom School so that I can keep them alive for the future generations,” she says. With our support, we believe that she indeed will continue to grow and make a difference.

Gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing helps address the root causes of hunger in places around the world — places like the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and others where food security is a serious need. Please give generously, for when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

***Let us pray~***

*God who plants gardens and tends people, make us gardeners with you and all those who need food. May what we give, what we preserve and what we grow make lives of nourishment for all. Amen.*