

## First Nations Fund

*By Bruce and Sheryl Dowlin*

Before retiring to Idaho from Minnesota in 2005, we were involved with Native Americans for 20 years. We were part of a sustained effort at reconciliation between two Native American nations (the Dakota Sioux and the HoChunk Winnebago) and the Minnesota residents. Our objective was to heal the wounds of a brief but bloody conflict in 1862 which cost 1,000 lives and ended with a mass hanging in Mankato.

We witnessed both blunders and successes in these reconciliation efforts and believe that we eventually gained wisdom in how to respectfully interact on a long-term basis. Our unplanned immersion in Native American culture truly enriched our lives and has led us to seek similar opportunities in Idaho.



Native American spirituality resonated with us and we were privileged to learn from both men and women. We were impressed by the Dakota belief that every act of everyday life is a prayer in action. They have no word for religion. We were also impacted by the belief that what is done today affects the next seven generations.

The annual Boise State University Intertribal Student Organization Pow Wow provides a unique cultural learning opportunity for non-Indian Boise community members. Visitors' enhanced awareness and understanding of Idaho Native American cultures is a first step toward building a bridge between Native American and non-Indian cultures. BSU Native American students have

demonstrated their interest in building such a bridge through their concerted efforts to plan and host the only annual Native American Pow Wow held in Boise.

To do this, they are challenged to raise \$15,000 to cover the expenses for this event. Intertribal Student group members are working hard to raise the needed moneys for the April 2009 cultural event. Fundraising strategies include selling raffle tickets, Native American calendars, pow wow shirts, advertising space to local businesses for the program, and buttons at other pow wows



All donated moneys raised by Intertribal Organization students will be matched by Boise State University. Therefore, BUUF members' acts of generosity and kindness will be doubled.

One BSU Native American woman, Tai Simpson, responded to the news about BUUF members' donating funds for their cultural event: "Thanks again for this opportunity to embrace diversity and build cross-cultural bridges. This is what this is all about."



Contributing funds to the Boise State University Intertribal Student Organization [helps](#) cover the travel expenses for the 2009 Spring Pow Wow.

Thanksgiving season provides us an opportunity to reflect on the complex relations between Native Americans and the dominant culture. It will also be the first step in building a cross-cultural bridge between our church and the first nations of Idaho.



*Story ideas and material for BUUFworks! may be submitted to [masonmorfit55@gmail.com](mailto:masonmorfit55@gmail.com)*