

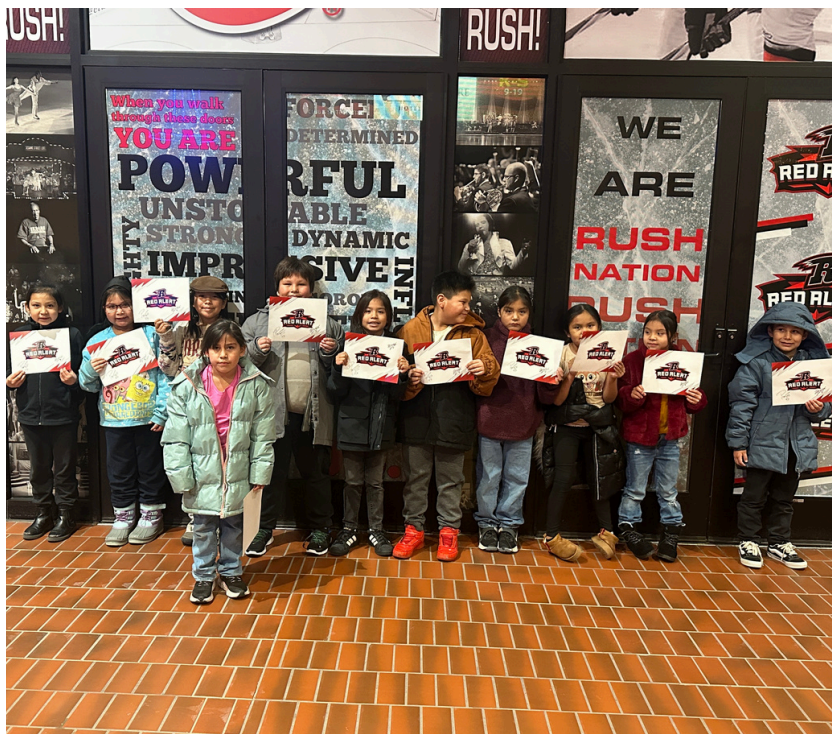
FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN-HE SAPA Winter 2025 NEWSLETTER

Friends in the Field

Our Friends of the Children–He Sapa youth and mentors were able to take a tour of the Rush Hockey facilities! A huge THANK YOU to the Rush team for welcoming us in and taking time to talk with our youth about the sport, teamwork, and what it takes to play at a high level.

Did you know? Hockey’s origins are deeply connected to First Nations people in what is now called Canada. Indigenous communities played early stick-and-ball games on ice long before the modern game of hockey was formed, making this experience even more meaningful for our youth.

Wopila thǎŋka (many thanks) to the Rush for helping create such a powerful and memorable experience for our kids!



Pictured: Program youth participating in the Rush Facility tour

In the spotlight

Mentorship recognized on the national stage

“I want to share everything I know with them, and they do become nephews,” he said of the seven other boys he mentors. “Their parents become sisters, brothers, even their siblings are also nieces and nephews. It creates a bond that will last a lifetime.”



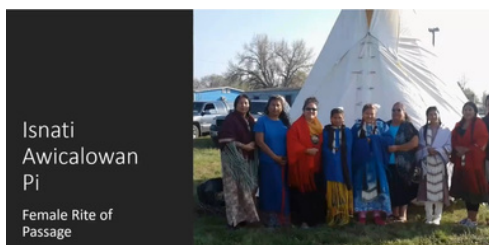
We’re proud to share one of our youth and mentors were interviewed by The Imprint! The Imprint is an independent, nonprofit daily news publication dedicated to covering child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health and educational issues faced by vulnerable children and families. The article, titled “Powwows, Sundance and Horseback Rides Bond Pine Ridge Kids and their Mentors” captures the relationship between Coleman Eagle Elk and our program youth, SG.

Read the article here:
<https://imprintnews.org/top-stories/powwows-sundance-and-horseback-rides-bond-pine-ridge-kids-and-their-mentors/>

Words of Woksape

Culture isn’t what we do, it’s the heart of who we are

The Lakota way of life guides us in achieving our mission at Friends of the Children – He Sapa. Using these values as a basis for decision-making can pave the way in which we live our lives providing balance and meaning. Enjoy our most recent installment of our Traditional Teachings online series from respected Elder Richard Two dogs “Interpreter of the Sacred”. Find these teachings and more on our [official Youtube Channel!](#)



FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN-HE SAPA



Message from our Executive Director

From the desk of the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we begin 2026, I'm grateful for the momentum our community has created together. Your support has allowed us to serve our families and kids turning our mission into daily action.

This past quarter, we focused on strengthening our Relatives numbers and filling vacant positions. Because of you, we've seen more consistent mentoring and helping the Oglala Lakota Nation site. We also laid important groundwork for the rest of the year, including launching a new partnership that will provide for our ever-important Literacy project. This will help upgrade technology, provide literacy materials to build our efforts in making sure our Lakota Youth meet their academic goals.

Our directors and our mentors are looking forward another successful quarter. And we look forward to being present and intentional, no matter what.

Thank you for believing in this work and in the people we serve. Together, we are making a meaningful difference.

With gratitude,

Walt Swan, Jr.

Executive Director

Friends of the Children- He Sapa

Upcoming events

Exciting things are happening with us in the future. Check out our upcoming events, we would love to see you there!

Drum Group Practice: We will be hosting drum group with our program youth and their families every Thursday from 3:30-4:30 pm at our new office location!

February 23rd, 2026: Join us virtually for our next culturally teaching from Richard Two Dogs, the topic will be "Conflict conformation" Email tgreyhorse@friendshesapa.org for the Zoom invite

Behind the scenes

We have moved office locations! We are excited to announce that our new location is at 330 Knollwood Dr, Rapid City, SD 57701. If you are in the neighborhood stop on by and stay for a cup of coffee.

Did you know?

This newsletter we are highlighting our outcome area of Learning and Education.

For the 2026 year we are focusing on Literacy. Research shows a direct link between literacy and a child's future earning ability. Youth being literate is central to our mission of breaking the cycle of generational poverty.

Be on the lookout for future Newsletters for a deep dive into each of these outcome areas!

Never miss a moment

We revamped our social media presence! Follow like and share each of our pages, a little support goes a long way in supporting this work
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsHeSapa/> Instagram: @friendshesapa X (Formerly known as Twitter): @FOTCHeSapa

Partner Highlight

Friends of the Children – He Sapa is honored and deeply grateful to receive generous funding from the Good Relatives Collaborative. Their support strengthens our mission to walk alongside Indigenous youth and families with long-term, unconditional, professional mentoring grounded in Lakota values.

This funding helps us continue building relationships based on love, empowerment, and connection, ensuring our Wakányeja have the guidance, stability, and opportunities they deserve.

To the Good Relatives Collaborative: thank you for believing in our work and for investing in the future of our children, families, and community. Your partnership reminds us that when we come together as good relatives, we create powerful, lasting change.

Lila Wopila Tanka Good Relatives Collaborative!

GOOD RELATIVES
— C O L L A B O R A T I V E —