

For Immediate Release

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### **New Program Addresses Lakota Language Crisis through Compensation**

*REDCO announces a three-year pilot program with the goal of revitalizing the critically endangered Lakota language*

SICANGU MAKOCE, Oceti Sakowin – Today the Rosebud Economic Development Corporation (REDCO) announced plans for a new language preservation initiative that will pay learners an annual salary to become fluent Lakota speakers. The new program aims to reduce barriers for citizens of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate (Rosebud Sioux Tribe) to learn the language and pass it on to future generations.

“As Lakota, our true wealth is our cultural perpetuity, and our culture cannot exist without our language,” said Wizipan Little Elk, the CEO of REDCO. “For generations, our ancestors were forbidden – even beaten – for being their true, authentic selves. This program represents a step toward reclaiming our identity.”

Surveys conducted on the Rosebud Reservation have quantified the urgency behind preservation efforts. “The data shows that if we continue with the status quo, our language will be functionally extinct within a generation,” said Little Elk. “Many fluent speakers have been lost to COVID, so bold action is required now if we want to carry on our way of life.”

The program – Lakolya Waoniya, which translates roughly to “Breathing Life into the Lakota Language” – has secured startup funding through a generous philanthropic gift from an anonymous partner and will begin accepting applications in the coming months.

REDCO is actively recruiting for two full-time positions: a project manager who will shape the initiative and oversee the execution of the project; and a fluent Lakota speaker to serve as the educator for the program.

For more information, visit [www.sicangucorp.com/lakolya](http://www.sicangucorp.com/lakolya).

### **About the Rosebud Economic Development Corporation**

REDCO is the economic development arm of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and is based on what is commonly known today as the Rosebud Reservation in southcentral South Dakota. REDCO leads an ecosystem of organizations working in tandem to create systemic change grounded in Lakota values. REDCO primarily focuses on enterprise and policy, while its sister organizations Sicangu CDC ([www.sicangucdc.org](http://www.sicangucdc.org)) and Tatanka Funds ([www.tatankafund.org](http://www.tatankafund.org)) focus on grassroots community development and asset building, respectively.

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