SHEDDING LIGHT
ON THE END TO NATIVE GENOCIDE

“How Can Architecture Stop a Genocide of Indigenous People?”

CONTEXT

The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation has seen historical trauma. Located roughly 75 miles southeast of the Black Hills in South Dakota, Pine Ridge has received international attention for its incredible despair. Plagued for generations by a series of broken treaties with the U.S. Government, the Oglala Lakota have been left in a mere fraction of their original homeland. The legacy of the white Pine Ridge has been overshadowed by poverty and an academic chasm. With each passing generation, spiritual and cultural values seemingly become lost as a never-ending battle of conformity to the modern world has left its mark on the indigenous people.

This thesis exposes a bitter truth of historical prejudice while providing a solution to end the extinction of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The concept of a cultural center in the heart of Pine Ridge will seek to educate and shine light on Lakota American history. This option will utilize traditional Lakota practices and rituals, combining cultural influences and a safe haven for those struggling with the long-term effects of forced assimilation. The center will provide a sense of hope and purpose, breathing life back to the Oglala Lakota.

RED CLOUD INDIAN SCHOOL

“So often the narrative of the Pine Ridge Reservation is that of deep and immense poverty, of incredible violence or sadness. But Red Cloud is a pocket of hope. I think that's exactly what we provide here, is hope for the future. And the tools, in order for our students to open those doors.” (Maka Akan Najin Clifford)

The Red Cloud Indian School, located roughly five miles North of the Pine Ridge, serves 600 Lakota children and families on the Pine Ridge Reservation in western South Dakota. Extreme poverty is a reality on the reservation and continues to affect the overall development of the Oglala Lakota and their city. As one may expect, the quality of the infrastructure and cleanliness of the reservation is of major concern. However, there are exceptions to this norm and the Red Cloud Indian School campus works diligently to expand this notion.