

LEERA

Little Earth Residents Association

Mission Statement

Build self-esteem and instill self-determination in the Little Earth of United Tribes families.

The Little Earth Residents Association (LEERA) promotes resident involvement in the community, positive social development and American Indian cultural values by operating a number of programs for the residents of Little Earth. Operating as a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization, LEERA provides a variety of services to Little Earth residents, helping make the community a safe and secure environment in which families can thrive.

LEERA administers the Little Earth Food Shelf, providing more than 10,000 pounds of food annually to more than 250 families in the community. The Food Shelf focuses on helping residents make healthy food choices, an American Indian tradition.

The Little Earth School Attendance Initiative is an effort on the part of LEERA to reinforce the value of education. By fostering communication between families and schools, the School Attendance Initiative has seen a 40-60% percent reduction in unexcused absences among the children of Little Earth.

LEERA plays an important role in helping residents connect with resources available to them through its Resident Services Intake and Advocacy group. It also helps residents resolve disputes with one another in a way that promotes traditional American Indian values.

The Residents Association organizes regular cultural events promoting American Indian culture and traditions, showing how these ancient traditions tie into the modern world. LEERA-sponsored feasts and its annual Mothers Day Pow Wow celebrate the Little Earth community's common values and are important dates on every residents calendar.



Lori Ellis

American Indians face unique challenges moving from their home reservation into larger cities. Alienated from the support and wisdom traditionally provided by their tribal elders, they often live lives without connection, like immigrants in a land their ancestors once called home.

Lori Ellis moved into the Little Earth community with her family in 1976 after years of living in over-crowded, dilapidated housing in other parts of the Twin Cities. After moving into her own home at Little Earth in 1982, Lori became more active in the community. Inspired by the tireless efforts of her mother's friend Elaine Stately, she has held a variety of positions at LEERA over the years and participated in the formation of the Little Earth of United Tribes Housing Corporation and the Little Earth Neighborhood Early Learning Center.

Lori continues to work with her neighbors and friends to build the native-focused programs and services at Little Earth. She has seen the community emerge from trying times and is determined that the support she and her family received at Little Earth be available to future generations.

"Living at Little Earth gives us the opportunity to live in a traditional way and live in the city. We're able to balance the past and the future. And there is no way I want to leave this Earth without seeing the dream of Little Earth realized."