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## Transit Program Celebrates 20 Years

FORT YATES - **To celebrate 20 years of success, the Standing Rock Public Transportation Program (SRPT Program) is hosting "TRANSIT DAY" on Tuesday, September 1, 2009.** The public is invited to an Open House from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Transit Center bus garage which is located at the new Sitting Bull College Campus along Highway 24, Fort Yates, North Dakota. Tours of the facility will be given and a free lunch will be served.

The first annual Transit Day is intended to recognize the dedicated leaders of Sitting Bull College that envisioned, created, and supported the transit program as well as the partners that have helped to further develop and promote the services.

The beginnings of the Transit Program are the result of a vision of former Standing Rock College President Dave Archambault I who believed that, ***"the College has a very important role for the future of the reservation and it is the duty of the College to work and put our energies toward constructive activities for the people that are not only related to higher education."***

In 1999, under the leadership of Sitting Bull College President Ron His Horse is Thunder, the program was expanded so that ***all of the Standing Rock tribal communities would have access to public transportation.*** This expansion was accomplished by forming a successful partnership with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council. President His Horse is Thunder was also responsible for securing a \$1.2 million Congressional appropriation to construct a new Transit Center to house the program.

The SRPT Program has continued to flourish under the leadership of Sitting Bull College President Dr. Laurel Vermillion and as a result in 2007, the Transit Program was awarded the "North Dakota Innovative Transit Agency of the Year". Dr. Vermillion believes that it is critical to continue to invest in transportation for the reservation for social and economic reasons stating, ***"public transit guarantees mobility and access for individuals that do not have transportation, it provides an immeasurable quality of life for our people by connecting people to jobs, training, medical appointments, social activities and other personal needs."***

Currently, the SRPT Program is funded by Sitting Bull College, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, North Dakota & South Dakota Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration. The Program provides services to 14 communities as well as Prairie Knights and Grand River Casinos. Additional services include twice weekly trips to Pierre, Rapid City and Sioux Falls, South Dakota and twice monthly trips to Eagle Butte and Sturgis, South Dakota and Fargo, North Dakota.