

NRC HISTORY

In 20 years, NRC has evolved from a fledgling nonprofit to an organized charity with a clear mission, a passionate team, and effective programs. Since we began focusing exclusively on the reservations, and Program Partners became trusted advisors about the needs in their communities, our evolution has been solid. Our biggest testament to this is a steady growth of Program Partners and the knowledge that they view NRC as a consistent resource they can count on.

The road to now has been paved with many lessons and improvements. Here are a few:

- As a result of providing food and then clothing, we started to learn about other needs on the reservations and how to help address them.
- We shifted our focus from serving individuals to serving reservation community-based institutions (which we now call Program Partners). By doing so, we exponentially increased our reach into the communities and the number of lives we could impact.
- By partnering with reservation programs, we also became more familiar with the service structure on the reservations. This taught us about programs available to work with and the importance of supporting local determination.
- Learning about the service structure also helped us identify the service gaps and create new services that would help fill them. As a result we launched many services ranging from gardening to infant care to preventative healthcare – all based on the products available to us and the products being requested by the reservation programs.

Adding services also meant adding more partners, and this necessitated even more growth for NRC:

- First, we needed more inventory. Early corporate donations from Matthew 25 Ministries helped NRC grow its product availability and the number of people we could serve. Prior to this, NRC purchased everything for cash, usually at retail prices.
- Second, we had to increase our storage space and inventory. We grew from a rented office and storage space to two program offices with two 40,000 sf warehouses in SD and AZ. These locations make for cost-effective logistics and distribution to over 75 reservations.
- Next, we needed more equipment to warehouse and distribute goods. This took us from shopping carts and pickup truck beds to warehouse equipment, large box trucks, and semis that truck out distributions 52 weeks a year. It also took us from serving the Navajo reservation and 3 Sioux reservations to serving over 75 reservations a year.
- NRC also needed to put into place a process and forms for requests from partners, just to manage and track the new volume. With that, we also added partner reporting for the accountability of the goods going out. These processes also helped dissociate NRC from the perception of being a give-away charity; our partners were required to plan, organize, and recruit volunteers for events and then report on their outcomes.
- Eventually, all of this moved NRC from a position of everyone on staff doing whatever was needed to hiring staff with specialized skills. To maintain our high service quality to the reservations and partners, we needed specialized semi drivers, warehouse staff, outreach, partner support, and program managers.

Overall, NRC is more cost-effective than ever, and our growth lets us serve nearly 900 Program Partners. Our strength lies in remaining focused on effective programming and in being a consistent resource to Indian country.