PHOTOVOICE FINDINGS



CENTERING COMMUNITY VOICES

ADVANCING WELL-BEING FOR PEOPLE AND PETS IN RED LAKE NATION THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

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Date: June 1, 2026

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We are deeply grateful to the research participants for sharing their wisdom and lived experiences with us.

We also express our sincere appreciation to our community-based research assistant, Caitlin Defoe, who supported with participant recruitment, co-leading the virtual participant photovoice discussions, data analysis, and the planning and execution of the photovoice exhibit.

This report was designed by CARE and Michelle Stidham.

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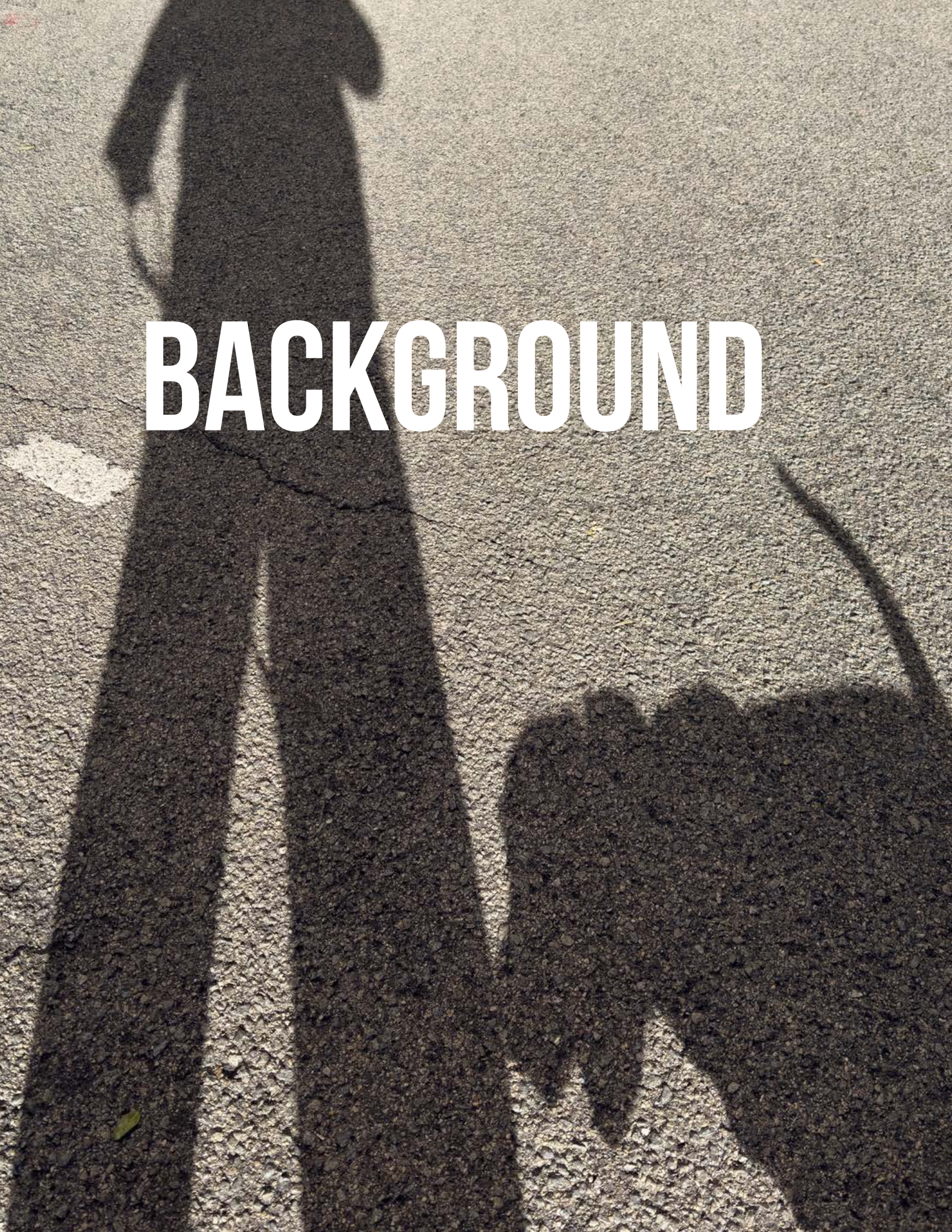
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BACKGROUND

There is limited research on the challenges and solutions associated with the free-roaming dogs (also referred to as reservation dogs or rez dogs) who live within and alongside Indigenous communities. There are even fewer studies that amplify the Indigenous cultural knowledge and community-led care practices that preserve the health and well-being of both people and animals. Broader systemic barriers for geographically remote communities, a nationwide shortage in access to pet support services (particularly veterinary care), and a lack of culturally responsive pet support service providers have made it challenging for tribal nations to manage their free-roaming dog populations and access veterinary care for their pets.

The purpose of the Red Lake Nation Human and Animal Well-Being (HAW) study was to explore these challenges and barriers in Red Lake Nation, identify community-specific priorities, and gather community-led solutions rooted in cultural responsiveness and community wisdom to address the challenges and advance health equity for people and their pets.

Integral to this study was the collaboration between CARE's Research and Development division, CARE's Community Animal Care division, and the Red Lake Nation community-based organization partners. Awanookwe Kingbird-Bratvold, CARE's Senior Director of Community Animal Care, Northern Tier, is Ojibwe from the Red Lake Nation in Minnesota. In addition to her role at CARE, Awanookwe is a proximate leader and founder of the Red Lake-based organization Awesiinyag (Animals) Are Loved. Since 2017, Awanookwe has worked within her community to create a healthy platform to showcase the people's ongoing love for their awesiinyag (animals) and to highlight Anishinaabe values and cultural teachings regarding all awesiinyag (animals). Awanookwe's proximate leadership was integral to the planning of this project and to inviting other Red Lake Nation community leaders and organizations to join the project as research partners.

Awanookwe shared that for years, she has been hearing from Red Lake Nation community members that people want to make changes in the community regarding pets and the free-roaming dogs. Further, community members desire long-term solutions. Acknowledging that there were many ideas from both the local government and the community members, Awanookwe saw the opportunity to initiate this conversation. As per Awanookwe, the intention was to do this project "in a good way, in the community, and on behalf of the community."

CARE and the research partners obtained formal support and approval for the project from the Red Lake Nation Tribal Council through a tribal council resolution in April 2025.

The HAW study takes a community-based participatory research approach, meaning that community leaders and individuals with lived experience are equitable partners in the research and are involved in decisions about every part of the research. The community partners involved in the HAW study are: Ombimindwaa, Red Lake Nation College, and the Red Lake Nation Department of Natural Resources. Photovoice was incorporated into the data collection phase of the project to complement the survey and focus groups as a visual, storytelling element.



WHAT IS PHOTOVOICE?

Photovoice is a powerful research and advocacy tool that was developed by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris in 1997 and is typically used to explore various public health and social justice issues. Photovoice is a collective storytelling process that is used to inform, engage, and organize community members to identify community-specific priorities and amplify community-led solutions. Through the photovoice process, lived experience is amplified into actionable knowledge. The photovoice process involves community members taking photographs in their community and providing a caption or story that describes what the photo means to them. The photographs are then discussed in groups and displayed in a community setting where they are used to raise awareness about community priorities and promote dialogue to generate change.

— Wang & Burris (1997)

METHODS

Formal research ethics approval and oversight from an institutional review board were not obtained. However, the research team is certified in human subjects research with vulnerable populations (CITI Program) and Indigenous/First Nations data governance (First Nations Information Governance Center). The project was designed to ensure the data collection procedures met the criteria for exemption, including minimal risks to study participants, confidentiality of participants and any identifying information, and there was no use of deception.

Written informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. Signed consent forms, interview audio files, and focus group transcripts were all stored in a password-secured data storage system hosted by Companions and Animals for Reform and Equity (GoogleDrive). The information gathered during this project is owned collectively by all of the research partners.

Data collection was conducted from March 2026 through April 2026. Photovoice participants were recruited using an interest list that was generated while conducting surveys and focus groups in Red Lake Nation in 2025. Inclusion/selection criteria included: being a Red Lake Nation community member, and having experience caring for pets and/or free-roaming animals in Red Lake. The research team recruited five participants total. The participants were responsible for engaging in three assignments and taking photos using their phone or digital camera according to the assignment topic. Three participants chose to complete the first assignment only. Two participants completed all three assignments. Participants received $100 per assignment completed, and $50 per meeting attended (4 virtual meetings total). Virtual meetings were held after each assignment, and participants were invited to share about their photos and engage in a structured group dialogue. The project lead generated a summary of the discussion after each meeting, and shared the summaries with the participants to verify and ensure accuracy. The participants were also invited to participate in the in-person photovoice exhibit that took place on June 25-26, 2026.



FINDINGS

TOPIC 1: FREE-ROAMING ANIMALS

For the first assignment, participants were asked to take photos according to two prompts:

- **Capture photos that demonstrate community care for free-roaming animals**
- **Capture photos that demonstrate a concern or challenge related to caring for free-roaming animals**

The participants shared that the photos often overlapped both prompts ("there's a challenge in here, but it's community care"), and because of this, the participants felt complex emotions.

COMMUNITY CARE FOR FREE-ROAMING ANIMALS

The participants shared photos that demonstrated members of the community caring for the free-roaming animals in Red Lake Nation by carrying pet food or offering any leftover food in their car to animals in need. There are many people in the community who not only provide food for animals, but also hay to keep the animals warm. There are also community members who care for other community members' pets. The participants noted that care for all animals is evident in the Red Lake Nation community, including wild animals. Many of the photos shared show that there are well-loved and cared-for animals in Red Lake Nation.



"This one is my neighbor's dog, her name is Bella. She usually comes around to get some food off of me. I love feeding her and many of the other dogs that come around."

- PARTICIPANT 5

There are many friendly free-roaming dogs that community members are familiar with. The free-roaming dogs frequent local businesses and restaurants. Some of these businesses will let the free-roaming dogs in to eat and sleep during the wintertime. The participants shared that seeing free-roaming dogs happy and relaxed, sleeping outside, and looking well cared for brings hope.

"This photo portrays a small pile of food being offered to a free-roaming dog in the distance. The free-roaming dog was quite literally skin and bones, and he was very scared and didn't eat until I left. This image portrays the reality that members of the community come to care for the free-roaming pets by carrying pet food - or offering any leftover food in the car - to an animal in need."

- PARTICIPANT 1



"This photo is of a free-roaming white dog in front of the Tribal Council building. The reason dogs will free-roam or stay near busy buildings is due to our community offering food and affection to animals as they enter or leave the building. This white dog, for example, has come to learn that busy buildings mean stable food and, for the most part, kindness."

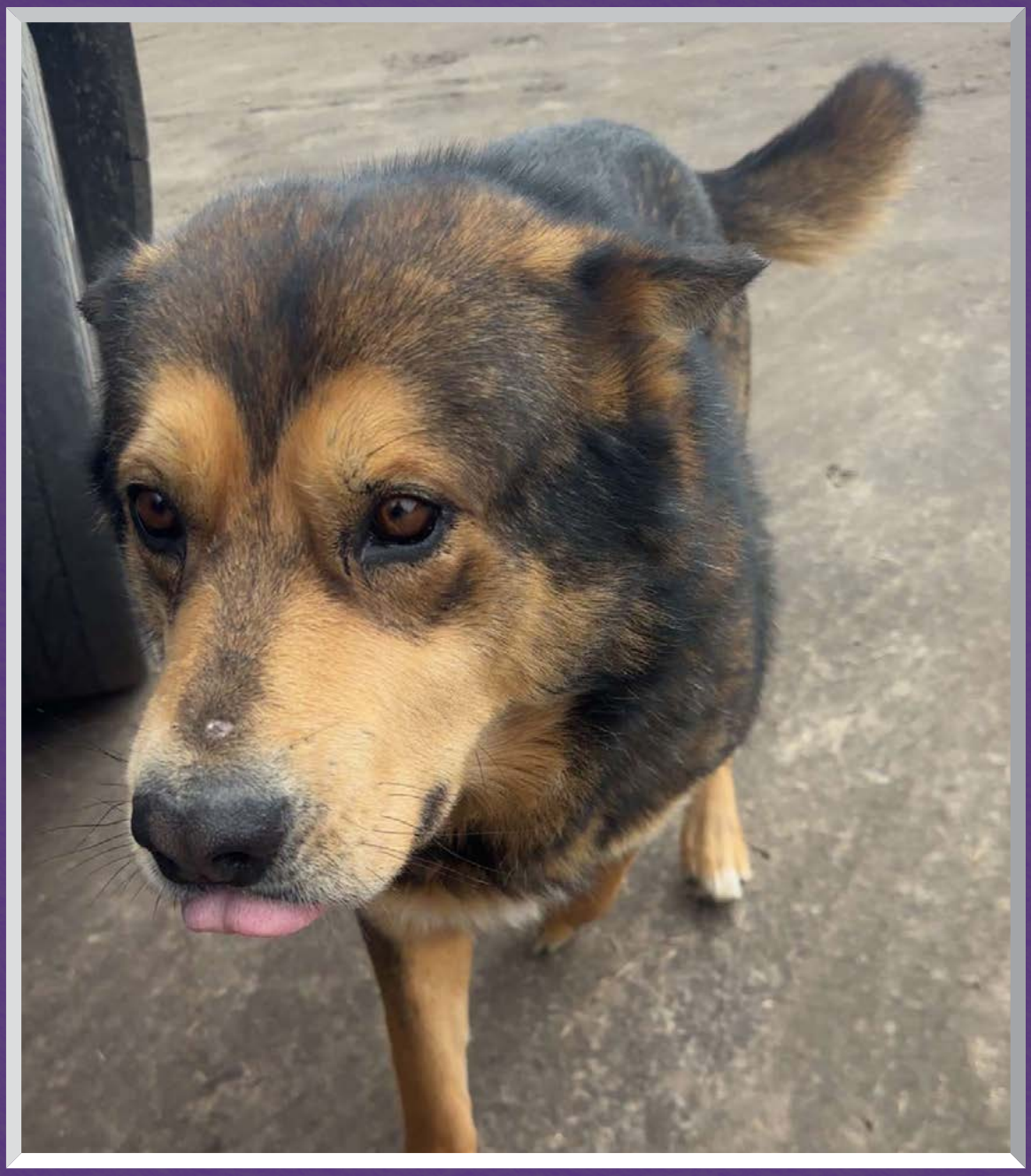
- PARTICIPANT 1





"[This] image I called lazy days because there are three dogs just laying around in front of the Red Lake tribal council [building]."

- PARTICIPANT 5



"This guy hangs out at Lorraine's Cafe. He often gets fed and cared for by the whole staff. He's very happy and friendly."

- PARTICIPANT 3

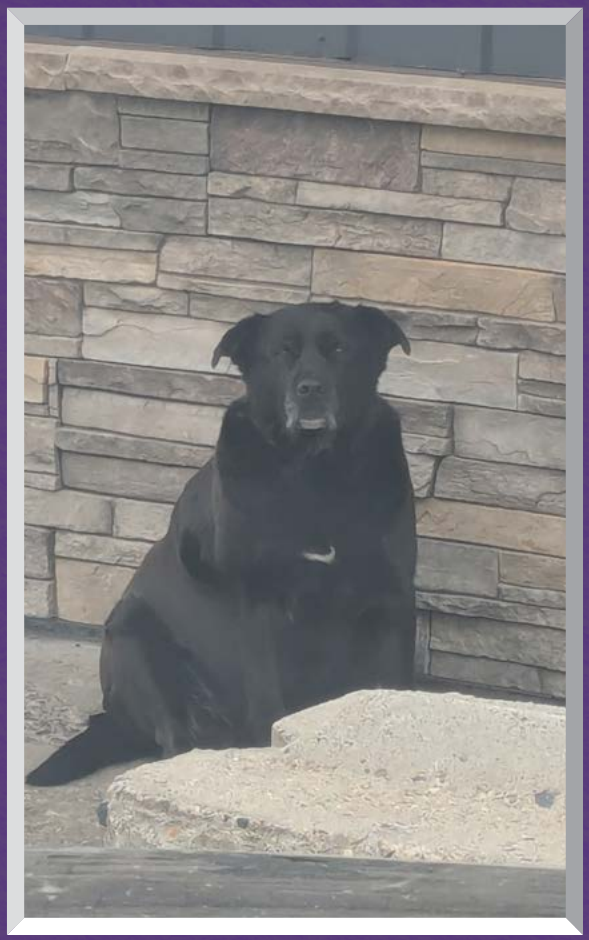
CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES RELATED TO CARING FOR FREE-ROAMING ANIMALS

The participants shared about multiple concerns and challenges related to caring for free-roaming animals in Red Lake Nation.

The health and well-being of dogs were noted as concerns, particularly related to nutrition and weight (both overweight and underweight). It was noted that overfeeding can happen with free-roaming dogs as they are often fed table scraps. Dogs will free-roam or stay near busy buildings because food is often available here, and humans provide affection to animals as they enter or leave the building. Participants noted that safety-wise, this is not always a good thing, as some dogs are not friendly.

"When I was on my way into a Redby store, I noticed a dog sitting next to the door. The reason I took the picture is because she looks chill and laid back but she also looks a bit overweight. My concern for her is that it puts a lot of strain on the body so maybe that's why she is sitting the way she was."

- PARTICIPANT 5



"I see two homeless dogs that are sleeping anywhere that is comfortable. There are a lot of homeless dogs looking for shelter or somewhere comfortable in the community. This photo makes me feel sad [and] makes me think of all the unsheltered dogs and animals that run around in the community. The animals in the community need somewhere safe and comfortable."

- PARTICIPANT 4



Concern was also shared about dogs roaming on busy streets and highways and the danger of them being hit by a car or truck: "[The dog] is offered food, but is also in danger of being hit by passing cars and semis" (Participant 1). Humans inadvertently encourage dogs on the road because they toss food outside the cars for free-roaming dogs. Participants shared that some drivers will intentionally speed up or swerve to hit dogs on the road. Participant 1 shared: "It makes me a little sad, because there were a couple of dogs that, when I was out and about trying to get photos, they were hit by a car, and they were on the side of the road."



"This image is of a nursing female dog. She was standing right next to the busy highway (Highway 89) where she is offered food but is also in danger of being hit by passing cars/semis."

- PARTICIPANT 1

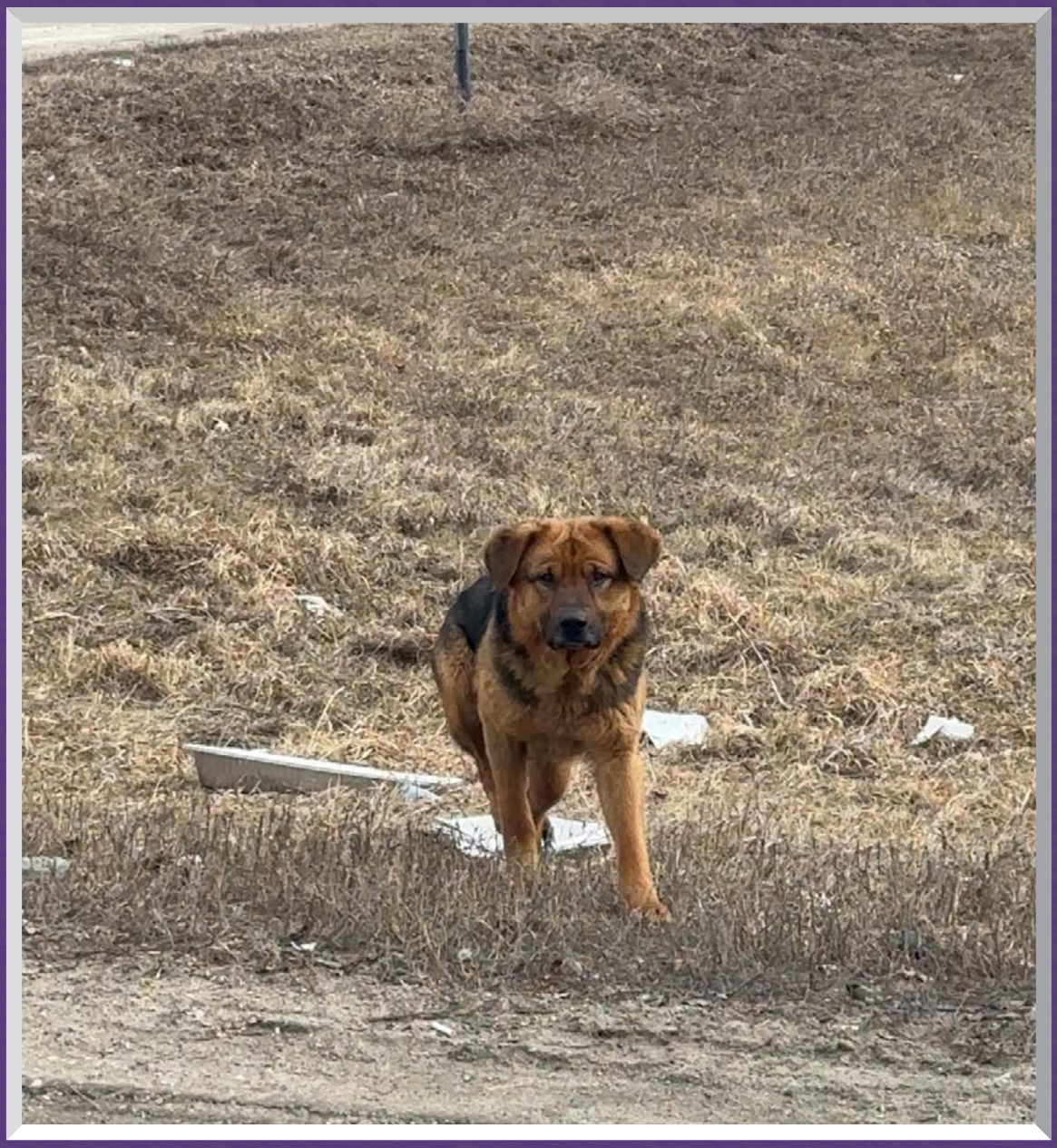
Safety for both free-roaming animals and humans was noted as a concern. It was shared that not all free-roaming animals on the reservation are friendly or docile. They will protect what they see as their territory and often create packs. Participant 1 shared:

> **"I was given advice from my older siblings, like, make sure you bring a stick, or a club, or a golf club, or something, and make sure you stand in the middle of the road, because that's the edge of their territory... don't make eye contact. [The photo] really just brought up rules that I was told as a kid."**

Concern was shared about dogs feeling comfortable walking into a home or restaurant if the door is open. Participant 1 noted that this is a safety issue for both humans and dogs, because you don't know the temperament of the dog, and "it might walk into someone's home or another business and get hurt, because no one's gonna... not everyone's gonna be nice about, like, shooing them out of the door."

Concern was also shared about community members seeing well-behaved and cared for free-roaming dogs and then allowing their dogs to roam freely too: "But someone's other dog may actually bite someone, and they're like, 'oh, well, we have other free-roaming dogs, why can't my dog roam? Why do I have to chain him up?'" (Participant 1).

Frustration was expressed towards pet owners who don't properly care for their animals and don't get their animals spayed/neutered because it contributes to the free-roaming animal population. The participants felt that more access to spay/neuter would contribute to a better community, but there was also an understanding that some people cannot afford to spay/neuter their pets or don't have transportation.



"I have heard a rumor that this dog's owner passed away, she has no owner, is in-tact and keeps having puppies. It's very disheartening to see, but she is nearly uncatchable. She hangs out at the junction of 89 & 1. People often throw her food."

- PARTICIPANT 3

There was also an acknowledgement of the generational and historical trauma that makes access to care for animals difficult:

"We're doing the best that we can, but animals are still suffering"

(Participant 1). Participants also noted that they'd like to take in more animals but are unable to because they already have multiple pets at home.

It was also noted that cats free-roam on the reservation, too, and their safety is often at risk due to dogs.



"The image is of an orange tabby cat who is free-roaming. I captured this photo to portray that it isn't just dogs that free-roam on our reservation. One of the challenges I wanted to portray is that most animals are hard to get close to due to mistrust of humans. When I took this photo, I had to chase off two dogs who were chasing this cat."

- PARTICIPANT 1

TOPIC 2: BARRIERS TO SUPPORTING PETS

For the second assignment, participants were asked to take photos according to two prompts:

Capture photos that demonstrate what you do to care for your pets

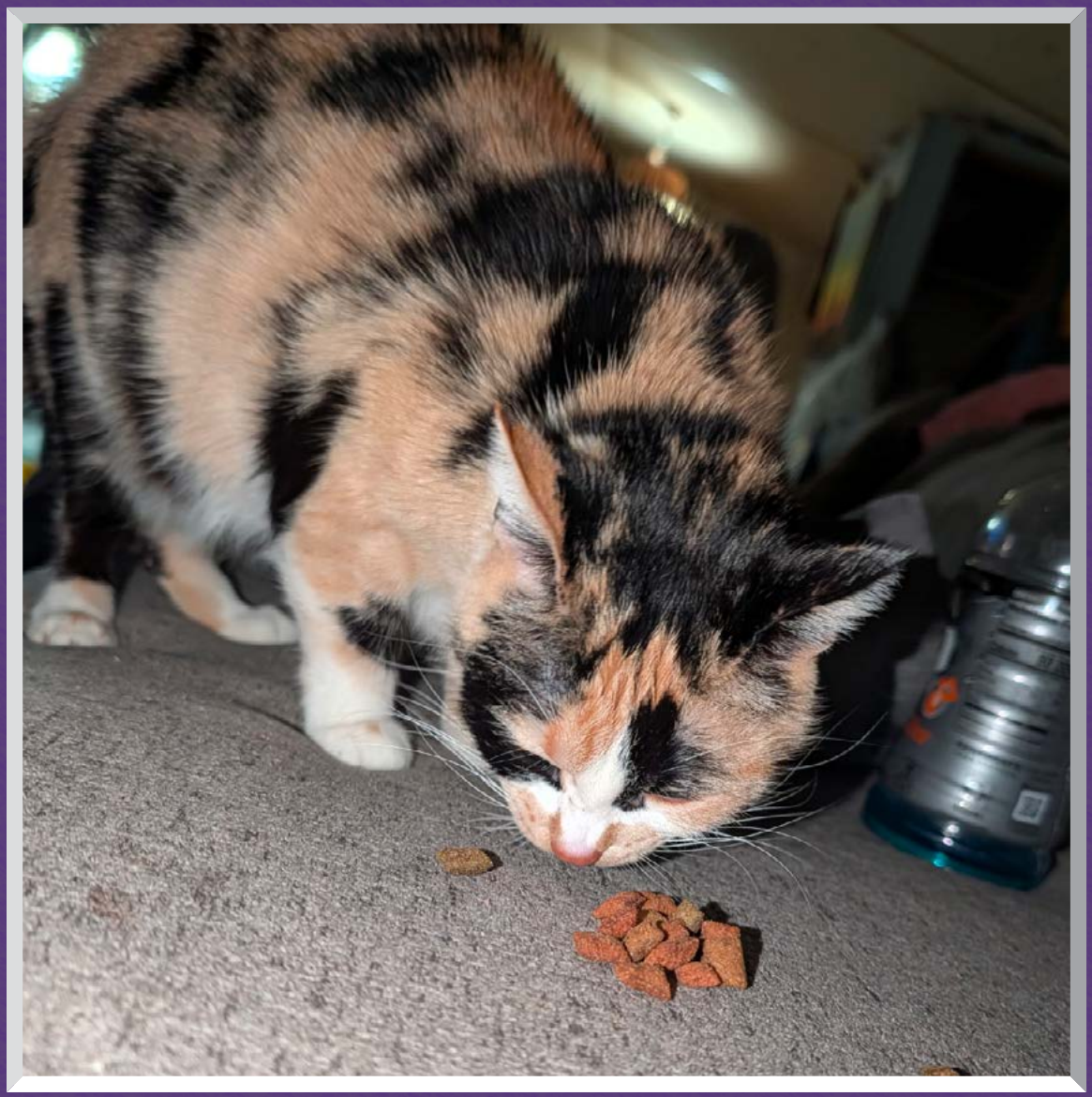
Capture photos that demonstrate the challenges to caring for your pets

CARING FOR PETS

Participants shared many examples of how they care for their pets. Participant 5 highlighted the trust and bond between themself and their cats, who have learned to come for treats, give affection as soon as the participant arrives home, and come back home after being outside. Their cats have preferences for where to sleep and relax, and have many cozy spots to choose from. The participant also shared that they have multiple nicknames for their pets. The participant feels content knowing that the cats see the human as their 'happy place.'

"My cat 'Kitty,' I took this photo because she is so content, especially when it comes to treats...she will eat pretty much anywhere. I chose the couch because she usually eats soft foods on the table, and this one was a semi-hard catnip treat. She trusts me wholeheartedly."

- PARTICIPANT 5



Demonstrated in the photo below, Participant 5 also shared an example of resourcefulness and care for pets, where their son made a homemade bed for their cat: "It's a used box with a foam piece pushed inside of it."



"My son's senior cat, she has three names and she actually comes to you when you call her either one: 'Big T', 'Teddi' or 'Teddibear'. So my son had a homemade bed made for her. It's a used box with a foam piece pushed inside of it. As you can tell, she is very comfortable with the bed he made her. She sleeps in it pretty much all the time."

- PARTICIPANT 5

Participant 5 shared about how they care for pets by taking in stray or unwanted pets: "She used to be my neighbor's cat, and she didn't want to go back. She was used to our house, so the previous owner just told us, do you want to have her? And I was like, yeah. My son takes care of her now. He loves her."

The participants also shared about how they provide enrichment for their pets, while ensuring their safety.



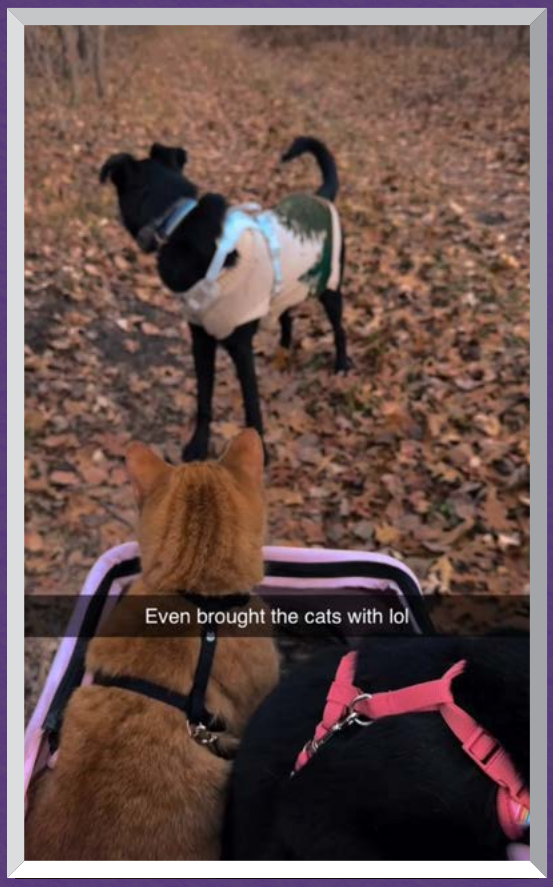
"This photo is of two cats on a cat tree. I took this photo to show that enrichment is one of my top priorities with my pets - on top of being extra and going as far as covering up one of them with a blanket because they appeared cold."

- PARTICIPANT 5

Participant 1 showed how they take their cats for walks in a stroller on the trails alongside their dogs or walk the cats with a leash/harness. The participant shared: "I want my pets to have more enrichment than just sitting in my home...they're indoor cats. I may make a catio, but I don't trust them to go outside unsupervised." Providing enrichment for their pets brings the participant joy as they feel "pretty happy that I'm getting them out there to get some fresh air, explore something new".

"This photo was taken while on a walk with two of my cats and my sister's dogs. They are pictured in a "cat stroller" with the top open so they can see the world a little clearer. I took this photo because although I may be a "cat lady" with the cat stroller, I want my pets to have enrichment that's more than just sitting in my home."

- PARTICIPANT 1



Participant 1 also explained that they have seen the benefits of traveling with their pets: " I like to think that it has increased the confidence of my cat, so that when they're exposed to new environments, they're not as stressed out. And so it really has helped them be more open to going to new places...she's able to see the world go by and not be scared of anything. So, I think it really just goes to show how much confidence that she's gotten, and so that makes me pretty content with that."

"This photo is of my orange cat on a car ride. When I have to go on long car rides with my pets, I will allow them to roam, with my supervision, so they aren't contained in a cramped kennel for too long. It has built confidence in my cats so that when they are exposed to new environments, they're not as stressed out."

- PARTICIPANT 1



CHALLENGES TO CARING FOR PETS

Several challenges to caring for pets were discussed by the participants. Barriers to accessing veterinary care, spay/neuter, and pet resources were highlighted. Participants also discussed a lack of trust in pet service providers.

When discussing the barriers to accessing support/resources, it was noted that there is a lack of knowledge of how and where to access supports: "I do think it has to do with a lack of education on where supports are, what the process is, how much is it gonna cost."

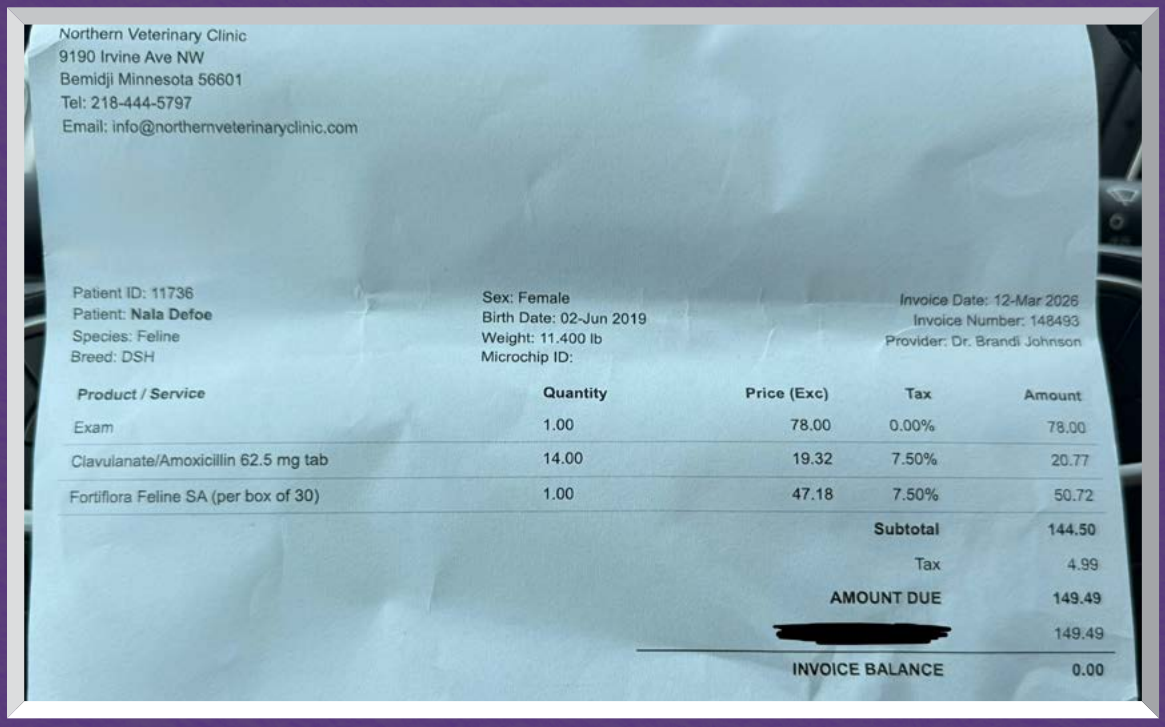
Cost is a major barrier highlighted by the participants. One participant said:

> **"We do have a clinic that comes down here and Rosie's Rescue. And a lot of people in Red Lake think it's really spendy. But if you go off-rez, it's way more. Money was the problem."**

Regarding the cost of veterinary care, Participant 1 explained: "It can be expensive to own animals. Like, this is just one vet bill. This isn't including their shots I have to do yearly, or if I ever get a new cat, the spay-neuter, or an accident, or something."

Since there is no veterinary clinic in Red Lake Nation and they are located in a remote rural area, the location, cost, and time needed to get to a veterinary clinic were noted as barriers to accessing veterinary care.

Participant 1 shared: "I also wanted to point out that this vet is in Bemidji…I think it's, like, 35-ish miles from Red Lake to Bemidji. And so, add on that I have to take off a whole afternoon from work if I want to take her to the vet. I gotta make sure I have the funds for it, the gas money, stuff like that. We're really isolated. We don't have a veterinarian in Red Lake."



Northern Veterinary Clinic
9190 Irvine Ave NW
Bemidji Minnesota 56601
Tel: 218-444-5797
Email: info@northernveterinaryclinic.com

Patient ID: 11736
Patient: **Nala Defoe**
Species: Feline
Breed: DSH

Sex: Female
Birth Date: 02-Jun 2019
Weight: 11.400 lb
Microchip ID:

Invoice Date: 12-Mar 2026
Invoice Number: 148493
Provider: Dr. Brandi Johnson

Product / Service	Quantity	Price (Exc)	Tax	Amount
Exam	1.00	78.00	0.00%	78.00
Clavulanate/Amoxicillin 62.5 mg tab	14.00	19.32	7.50%	20.77
Fortiflora Feline SA (per box of 30)	1.00	47.18	7.50%	50.72
			Subtotal	**144.50**
			Tax	4.99
			AMOUNT DUE	**149.49**
		[redacted]		149.49
			INVOICE BALANCE	**0.00**

"The photo provided is of a vet bill. Something that I'm sure most pet owners deal with. I had to take my orange cat to the vet due to odd behavior and it came out to $150. There is a financial burden when it comes to caring for pets - and when the reservation's poverty rate is 41%, the reality is that this can make or break a household."

- PARTICIPANT 1

Participant 5 followed by explaining "The last time my cat was seen [by a vet] was, four and a half years ago… [it's] very challenging, because you would think [the cost] would be kind of low, because I went to the Gonvik Vet. I cannot believe how much it was. When I got the bill, I was like, 'Oh my god.'

> **The challenge is that not a lot of people on the rez have the money or the transportation.**

Rosie's Rescue can help out a little, but when you try to surrender any type of animal, they're at their limit. And you would have to go farther out [to surrender an animal]."

It was also noted that one of the main sources of veterinary care in Red Lake Nation may be closing: "The closest we have is Red Lake Rosie's Rescue, but there's already talk that it's just becoming too much for the owner. And so they're trying to figure out who they're gonna pass it down to, if they can pass it down, or if it's just gonna dissolve," (Participant 1).

There is also a lack of trust and a fear of dropping pets off at a veterinary clinic due to past experiences of pets being taken without consent. Participant 5 shared: "I think that might be the thing that she's afraid of.

> **I want to get them fixed, but I don't want somebody to take them and surrender them and get paid for that.**

So, I told her, 'I am in contact with Karen [owner of Red Lake Rosie's Rescue]. She will let me know when there's a spay and neuter clinic, and all you have to do is bring them, drop them off, get them spayed or neutered, and then bring them back.' You know, they're good!"

Participants noted the challenges that come with a lack of access to spay/neuter: "These are 3 females… if they don't get fixed, that's 3 more litters multiple times a year," (Participant 1). The new litters from unaltered animals add to the difficulty of finding homes for pets: "Kittens and puppies are great when they're puppies, young and cute, but then when they grow up, there's less appeal to them for most families. For the most part, people don't really look in the long-term when it comes to taking care of their pets" (Participant 1).



"I got this photo from my older sister, and it's of her 3 kittens. The issue here is having too many cats. My sister had the same amount [of cats] as I did (3) before one of her cats got pregnant. Now her total is 6 cats. They might be cute as heck, but caring for this many is a struggle at times."

- PARTICIPANT 5

Other challenges that were discussed included caring for multiple pets with different personalities, getting cat food and treats, the responsibility of having pets while being a student, and pet supplies and enrichment taking up too much room in small living spaces: "We provide all these things for our pets, but we don't necessarily always have the room, especially if you live in a multi-family household or a multi-pet household" (Participant 1).



This photo is of a few pet beds and a pet toy. Paired with my own Squishmallows and the cat tree in the background. I wanted to portray that providing enrichment to my animals is tough when I have limited room. I will switch out beds and "hide-aways" to save on room while also providing enrichment with a "new" toy.

- PARTICIPANT 1

Physical challenges for older individuals taking care of pets were also discussed. Participant 5 explained that they support the elders in their life by bringing them cat food and treats. Supporting family members with their pets can be a challenge: "I can really relate to the challenge of the fact that you have to take care of this pet and basically co-parent this pet. I have family members who respect me and rely on me, as well. Even to the point of asking me to help get their pet neutered and pay for it" (Participant 1).

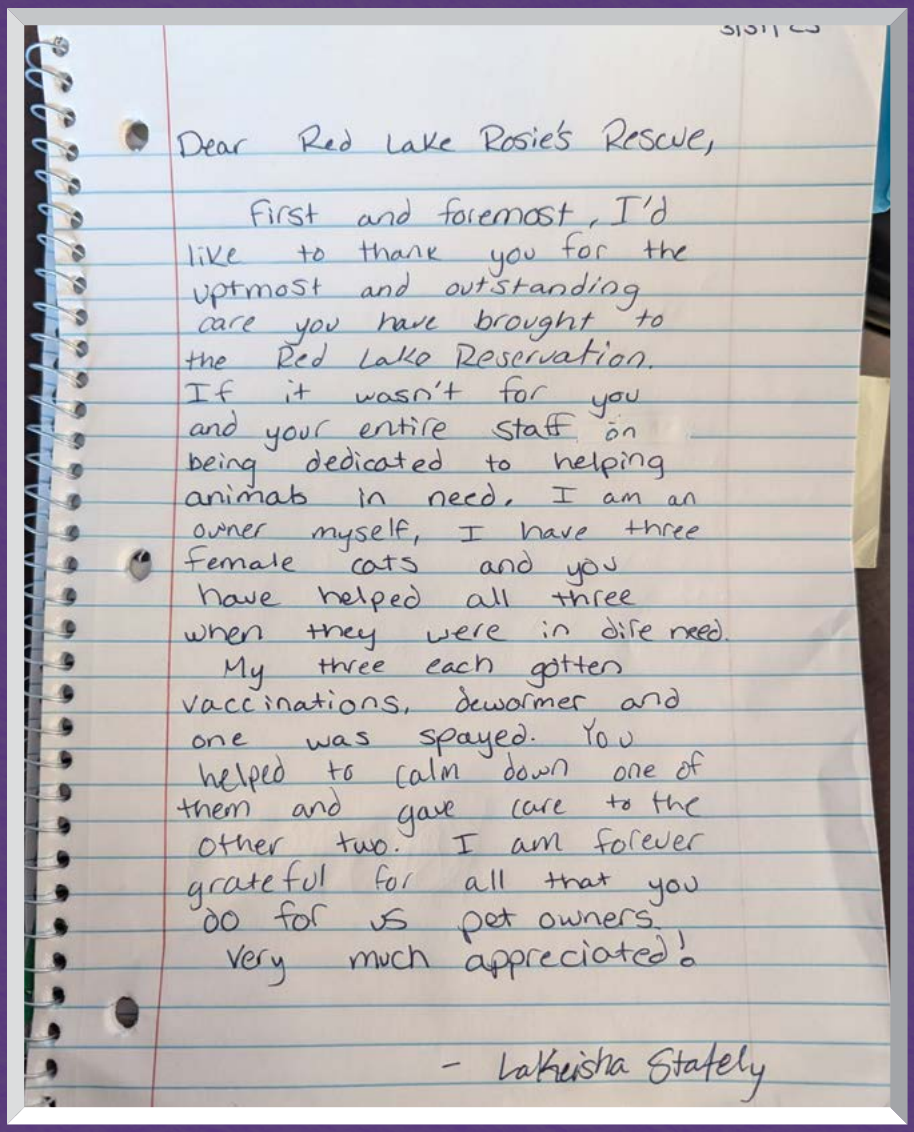
TOPIC 3: VISION FOR THE FUTURE

For the third assignment, participants were asked to take photos according to two prompts:

- **Capture photos that demonstrate hope for the future of animals and people in Red Lake**
- **Capture photos that demonstrate hope for the future of animals and people in Red Lake**

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF PEOPLE AND ANIMALS IN RED LAKE NATION

The participants shared that the organizations currently providing services in Red Lake Nation represent hope for the future of animals because this demonstrates care for animal well-being.



Dear Red Lake Rosie's Rescue,

First and foremost, I'd like to thank you for the uptmost and outstanding care you have brought to the Red Lake Reservation. If it wasn't for you and your entire staff on being dedicated to helping animals in need. I am an owner myself, I have three female cats and you have helped all three when they were in dire need. My three each gotten vaccinations, dewormer and one was spayed. You helped to calm down one of them and gave care to the other two. I am forever grateful for all that you do for us pet owners. Very much appreciated!

- Lakeisha Stately

"I wrote out this thank you note for Red Lake Rosie's Rescue because I know that they give every one of us in Red Lake hope for the future of animals. They make it so much easier for us to gain access to food sources and give us knowledge and resources when it comes to our animals. They are a tremendous help! I wanted to take this photo because it is a heartfelt note to an organization that is important on the reservation."

- PARTICIPANT 5

Participant 5 shared: "Red Lake Rosie's Rescue has helped when it came for me to surrender animals that weren't mine." This participant further explained: "This photo makes me feel grateful because I have had to surrender a lot of animals that weren't mine. The majority of them were cats and one dog. And I asked a lot of people online and they were like, 'Oh, why don't you call Rosie's Rescue?' It's all 'talk to Karen Good.' I know she can't do it herself, so she ends up having other people that will help. I'm grateful for them to be around here, because if I tried to do it anywhere off-rez, I don't think I can afford it." Participant 1 added:

> **"I think it is really important that we help remind the people who do have these small organizations to remind them that we are grateful for it, because they are a really big help for our free-roaming animals."**

The creative ways that people care for animals in the Red Lake Nation community is also a source of hope for the participants. Participant 1 shared:

> **"There's this hope that we kind of all come together as a community to tend to the animals."**

Participant 5 shared an example of this creative approach to community care, where their fiancé built a homemade shelter for their mother's animals.

Regarding hopes for the future, Participant 5 said: "My hope is for everyone on the rez to have some type of big structure that will house their animals. It can be [for] winter or all seasons. It would really benefit the animals in a way because I know not a lot of dogs or cats like the doghouses. They want a big enclosure for themselves."

Another example of community care that the participants discussed as bringing hope is feeding community animals. This is something that both participants engage in and observe community members engaging in. Participant 5 said: "For the last few years, I have been feeding strays. My fiancé calls me a crazy cat lady because there's always a bunch of strays coming to our house looking for food." Participant 5 also shared an example of a local veterinary clinic caring for free-roaming animals: "[In] Redby at the pet clinic…they have a little structure that you pour food in, and so a bunch of random dogs will come over and eat."



"I wanted to show you all what me and my fiancé did for his mother. This shelter is huge; we wanted it that way. I had bought 5 bales of straw for an elder and to help house her animals. It can house either a dog or a cat. The reason I chose this image is because we as a community could try to be more helpful and creative when it comes to building shelters for animals in need. Especially if they're an outside animal."

- PARTICIPANT 5



"I took this picture because when I am outside, I always hear a cat making a meowing noise. However, when I try to get close to him/her, they run away. At first, there was only one, but then another showed up. I have decided to feed them both. I throw at least two cups full of food on the porch. I know it looks a little messy, but it's the only thing I can do at the moment. You can call me a crazy cat lady because a lot of strays come to my house looking for food. I will continue to help with some nutrition. I plan to try another way to help them get food."

- PARTICIPANT 5

Another hope for the future that participants discussed was the idea of using technology to increase animal well-being and safety. In particular, Participant 1 shared about using a wireless GPS dog fence and collar system. They noted that cost can be a barrier. Participant 1 said: "Overall, the hope is to see fewer dogs on chains, so their world [isn't] literally just a 12-foot radius [...] My hope is that [we are] financially well-off as a community, but also just able to use technology so that we can have the animals not have such a small world."



"This image is of a Halo Collar, which is a wireless fenceless collar. I included this image because it's a way for individuals to use technology to keep their pets safe while giving them freedom to roam on their property without the need for chains and leads. The hope is for the use of technology to be used for the well-being and safety of animals."

- PARTICIPANT 1



"This photo is of Sage during a training exercise. Both of the dogs I live with are trained with basic commands so they will be safe when out in public. I hope that in the future the animals in Red Lake will be trained with basic commands so that there are fewer attacks or injuries to people and other animals."

- PARTICIPANT 1

Participants also discussed increased training for animals in Red Lake Nation to increase public safety. Participant 1 said: "My hope for this is that in the future, the animals in Red Lake would be more trained with basic commands. Preferably all animals, but obviously if there are animals that don't have any homes, or they're very free-roaming, and they don't go home often, at least the animals that are in homes. They would be more trained with basic commands so that there's less attacks or fewer injuries to people or other animals. Or even if a dog is going onto the road, you can yell [at] it to stay. If there's a car coming… just overall well-being and less injuries to animals and people."

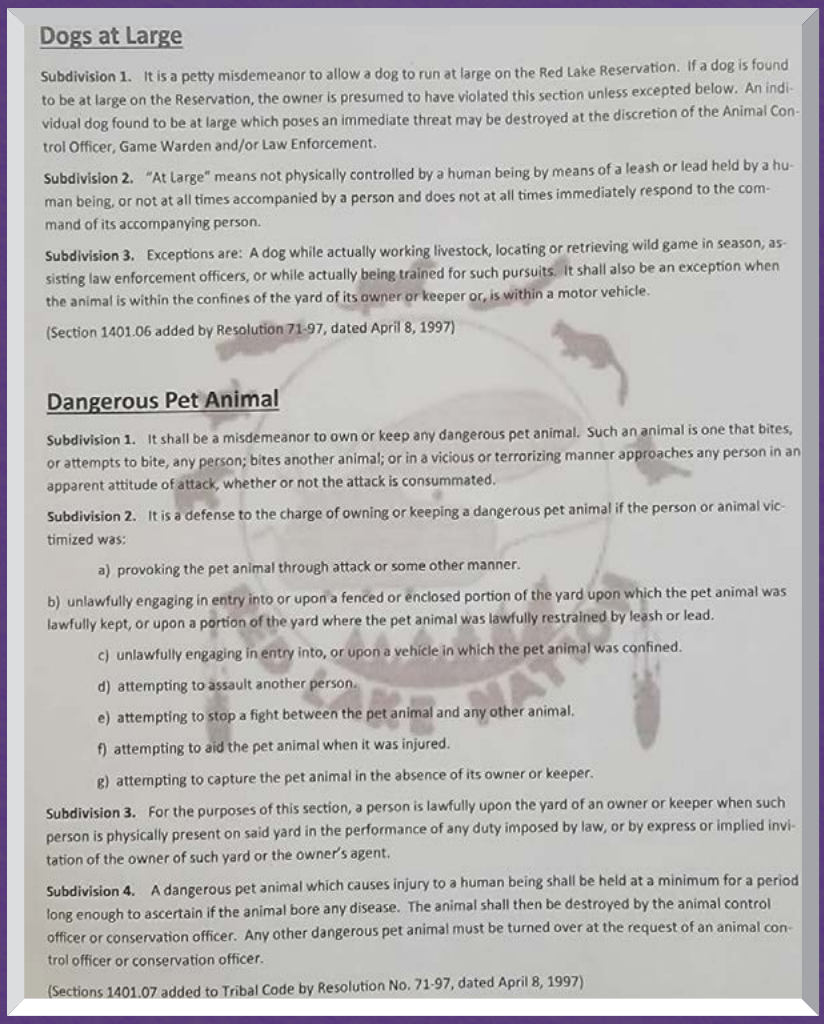
The participants also discussed their desire for more knowledge sharing about the benefits of play and exercise for animals. Participant 1 believes that this would "create a positive atmosphere around animals on the reservation, rather than just seeing them as someone who's coming to get into things. It's more like, 'hey, they just want interaction, let's throw a ball around.' Play and exercise are important for animals, and then [it] creates a positive relationship with those interacting with the animal." Participant 5 added: "There are a lot of dogs that are on leashes that I see. They're all usually chained to a tree, and they just look so sad. And I was like,'What is the point if you guys are gonna have an animal if you're just gonna chain [them] up the whole time?'"

CHANGES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE NEXT YEAR

Participants discussed many changes that they'd like to see happen in the Red Lake Nation community in the next year. The first was changes to policies regarding free-roaming dog management. Participant 5 shared:

> **"It is a petty misdemeanor to allow a dog to run at large on the reservation. The issue here is that a majority of animals run at large, and what does that mean for them? I think it would benefit everyone if the laws were rewritten in a different way."**

Participant 1 added: "I think Red Lake, as a community, needs to really come together to figure out how to handle a lot of these issues, because it's not talked about that much. And we just have a system in place that's been… It's been like this forever. I always had free-roaming dogs. We call them rez dogs. We have little packs of rez dogs who can be a danger, and so it is something that we need to come together and make sure that these animals are taken care of. I'm also against just putting down animals just because they don't have a home. But it is difficult because some of those animals that don't have homes are dangerous. And so, how do we come about fixing that? I think it really just goes to show that this is something that needs to be changed, but it's not really getting looked at."



Dogs at Large

Subdivision 1. It is a petty misdemeanor to allow a dog to run at large on the Red Lake Reservation. If a dog is found to be at large on the Reservation, the owner is presumed to have violated this section unless excepted below. An individual dog found to be at large which poses an immediate threat may be destroyed at the discretion of the Animal Control Officer, Game Warden and/or Law Enforcement.

Subdivision 2. "At Large" means not physically controlled by a human being by means of a leash or lead held by a human being, or not at all times accompanied by a person and does not at all times immediately respond to the command of its accompanying person.

Subdivision 3. Exceptions are: A dog while actually working livestock, locating or retrieving wild game in season, assisting law enforcement officers, or while actually being trained for such pursuits. It shall also be an exception when the animal is within the confines of the yard of its owner or keeper or, is within a motor vehicle.

(Section 1401.06 added by Resolution 71-97, dated April 8, 1997)

Dangerous Pet Animal

Subdivision 1. It shall be a misdemeanor to own or keep any dangerous pet animal. Such an animal is one that bites, or attempts to bite, any person; bites another animal; or in a vicious or terrorizing manner approaches any person in an apparent attitude of attack, whether or not the attack is consummated.

Subdivision 2. It is a defense to the charge of owning or keeping a dangerous pet animal if the person or animal victimized was:

a) provoking the pet animal through attack or some other manner.

b) unlawfully engaging in entry into or upon a fenced or enclosed portion of the yard upon which the pet animal was lawfully kept, or upon a portion of the yard where the pet animal was lawfully restrained by leash or lead.

c) unlawfully engaging in entry into, or upon a vehicle in which the pet animal was confined.

d) attempting to assault another person.

e) attempting to stop a fight between the pet animal and any other animal.

f) attempting to aid the pet animal when it was injured.

g) attempting to capture the pet animal in the absence of its owner or keeper.

Subdivision 3. For the purposes of this section, a person is lawfully upon the yard of an owner or keeper when such person is physically present on said yard in the performance of any duty imposed by law, or by express or implied invitation of the owner of such yard or the owner's agent.

Subdivision 4. A dangerous pet animal which causes injury to a human being shall be held at a minimum for a period long enough to ascertain if the animal bore any disease. The animal shall then be destroyed by the animal control officer or conservation officer. Any other dangerous pet animal must be turned over at the request of an animal control officer or conservation officer.

(Sections 1401.07 added to Tribal Code by Resolution No. 71-97, dated April 8, 1997)

"I chose this picture because of the Dogs at Large Subdivision 1. It states, "It is a petty misdemeanor to allow a dog to run at large on the Red Lake Reservation." The issue is that there is a majority of animals that run at large, and what does that mean for them? I think it would benefit everyone if the laws were rewritten a different way. This was posted in June 2023. This hit close to home for me, I had a german shep mix dog, his name was "Laine" and he was labeled as aggressive when in reality he was not. I was served this paper before, and it was a huge shock to me then."

- PARTICIPANT 5

Another change that the participants hope to see is the creation of a clinic and dog park in unused areas on the Red Lake reservation. Participant 1 said: "There's so much space that we have that can be used for other things, you know? A clinic, or even just a dog park. Something that really gets the community together and has a space that's designated for animals."



"There are so many areas of land that are unused on the reservation. I think within 2-3 years, there should be another clinic for animals, something similar to what's in Redby. I took this photo right next door to my home. But there are many other places that can be photographed as well. I just think having so much unused land is a waste when we could all come together and help the animals in need. Many are left with no home and no loving family to care for them. This caption is called the Future/Imagine because it would benefit everyone involved."

- PARTICIPANT 5

Participant 5 elaborated on the need and hope for another animal service clinic: "I never imagined that we would have a clinic in Redby. Because the majority of us, we all go to the Gonvick vet. And then others go to Bemidji for their veterinary care. So yeah, I was pretty surprised when I saw the Redby one. So I am very hopeful that they will build another building."

Hopes for a safer community for both humans and animals were also expressed. Participants shared about their desire to make the Red Lake Nation community safer by eliminating garbage being left on the ground and creating more awareness about the danger that garbage creates for animals.



"This photo is of trash I found in my backyard. I want to portray that this can be harmful to all animals, not just my own. I have a very food-driven dog - due to food insecurity when she was a stray - and she will get into all sorts of garbage and will eat anything that smells like food. With this issue, it is concerning what trash she gets into or what free-roaming animals bring into the yard. The change I would like to see is for a clean and safe environment where waste is handled properly so there is no risk to all animals."

- PARTICIPANT 1

Ideas that participants shared for how to drive this change included bear-proof garbage bins, public awareness and education, sharing stories about how animals have been impacted, incentives, and monthly group clean-up events.

Participants also hope to see safer coexistence with animals in Red Lake Nation. Participant 1 shared: "The change that I really want to see is creating safer coexistence, rather than possibly harming the animal intentionally or accidentally, so they won't go near these items. I know people in my life who would scare the dog away, or they would kick the dog just to get them out of something. I think taking these precautions, because they are animals, and they are going to get into things. But we, as humans, are capable of actually setting up something so that we can coexist safely."



"This image is of my compost with a fence around it (and if you look closely behind the shrub, there's a small fence around my garden). My husky loves getting into anything remotely smelling like food, so I have to take precautions so she doesn't get into anything dangerous. The change I would like to see is creating safer coexistence rather than harming the animal intentionally or accidentally, so they won't go near these items."

- PARTICIPANT 1

Participants also expressed a desire for more responsible pet ownership and compassion for animals without homes, including providing care for free-roaming animals, responsible pet ownership education, and solutions to address free-roaming animals.

Participant 1 said: "We do have free-roaming animals, and the only way that this issue is going to be resolved is by caring for them. And so, yes, let's put out some food. Let's make sure they have a safe space when it gets super cold in the winter. And then hopefully, down the road, which will probably be quite a ways down the road, is having a clinic where we can tag and release. But right now, just get that awareness that there are these animals who don't have proper care for them, and there are these animals who don't have homes. So let's focus on this, and then the next step would be to kind of control that population."



"This photo is meant to represent meeting the basic needs for free-roaming animals. I like to put a bowl of food (sometimes leftovers) and water outside next to the beds that my dogs use during the day. This photo represents the change I would like to see: more consistent care for free-roaming animals and also the compassion to care for those animals without homes."

- PARTICIPANT 1

A trap-neuter-return (TNR) program was discussed as a potential solution. Participant 5 said:

> **"With our overpopulation of animals, I would think this would be a benefit, and I would actually pay out of pocket to do this, because there are a lot of animals on the rez."**

Participant 1 added: "That would be more than a year down the road. I think right now, that education piece would be the first step to get there."

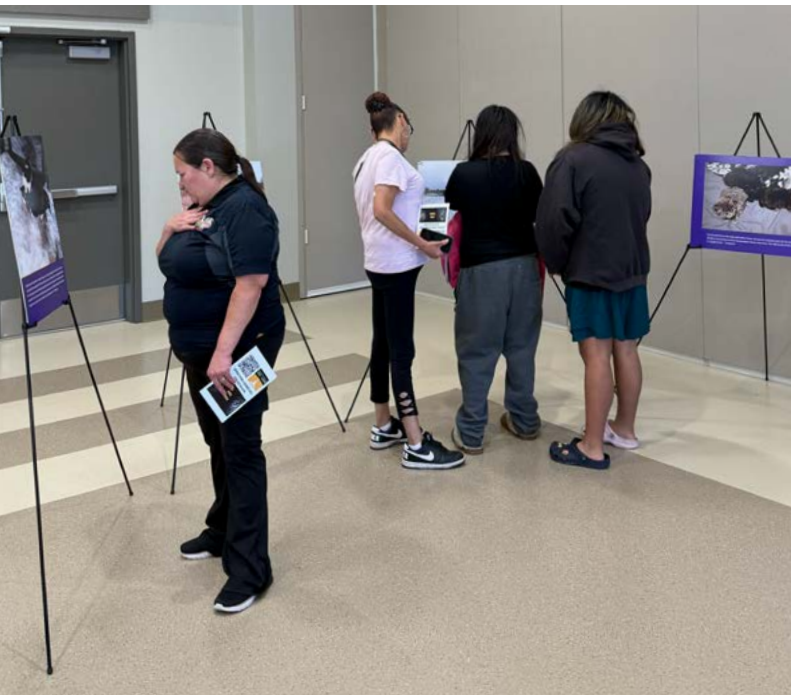
Discussing how information and knowledge could be shared with other pet owners, Participant 1 suggested public service announcements (PSAs) and having organizational affiliation and support:

> **"I think [organizations] being more a part of the community. Having a booth here and there, but also if something is put on, like a cleanup day. Or perhaps getting some food out there, like dog food or cat food. Having a name behind it…just spreading that, and then people are aware of the resource, and they're aware of what the mission statement is," (Participant 1).**

CONCLUSION

Photovoice was used as a storytelling tool as part of the larger Red Lake Human and Animal Well-being Study. The goal of the study was to explore the challenges and barriers regarding free-roaming dogs and access to pet care in Red Lake Nation, identify community-specific priorities, and gather community-led solutions rooted in cultural responsiveness and community wisdom to address the challenges and advance health equity for people and their pets. The photovoice assignments gave participants the opportunity to demonstrate how they care for free-roaming animals in Red Lake, but also the concerns and challenges that community members experience regarding free-roaming animals, particularly related to safety for both humans and animals. Participants reflected on how they provide care for their pets in resourceful ways, but also the challenges that come with providing pet care, particularly related to cost and being in a remote area. Finally, the participants shared their visions for the future, including their hopes for the future of animals and people in Red Lake and changes they would like to see happen in Red Lake in the next year. These hopes included a veterinary clinic in Red Lake, a trap-neuter-return program, changes to free-roaming dog policies, clean-up programs, knowledge sharing about how to care for pets, and continued care for free-roaming pets by providing shelter and food.

PHOTOVOICE EXHIBIT





On June 25th and 26th 2026, photovoice exhibits were held in Red Lake and Redby, Minnesota. The purpose of the exhibit was to share the findings from the photovoice project with the Red Lake Nation community, and to give the photovoice participants an opportunity to display and discuss their work. A selection of 8 images and captions were displayed, selected for their impactfulness. Information about the photovoice process and the Red Lake Nation Human and Animal Well-being Study was also on display. One member of the CARE Research division and one photovoice participant were present to discuss the exhibit with attendees and answer any questions. The photovoice exhibits were held alongside a resource giveaway hosted by CARE's Community Animal Care (CAC) division. Resources included free dog food and pet supplies, pet care information, and DirectCARE referrals for assistance with veterinary costs, as needed.

Attendees engaged with the exhibit and commented on having similar experiences to those documented in the photovoice images. They also asked questions about how the findings will be utilized, and what the next steps for the project are. Exhibit attendees were invited to write down their reflections on their exhibit.





These reflections included:

"I love all of this. Our pets are part of the community too."

"We need more awareness such as this. What an awesome thing for the community!"

"Long time ago, our elders told us that everyone used to take really good care of their animals. Idk where that teaching went? Our pets are like our family members - grateful to those who take care of their animals."

"Great exhibits/photos of the lives of our Rez dogs. We know you care."

"I feed 5 dogs at the Ponemah dump. 2 in Ponemah town. I always have treats and dog food in car."

"Amazing photos"

"Miigwech for giving the animals a voice"

"It shows the realness of the situation that we face w/ over population of unfixed animals"

REFERENCES

Wang, C & Burris, M.A. (1997). Photovoice: concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. Health Educ Behav. 24(3):369-87. doi: 10.1177/109019819702400309. PMID: 9158980.











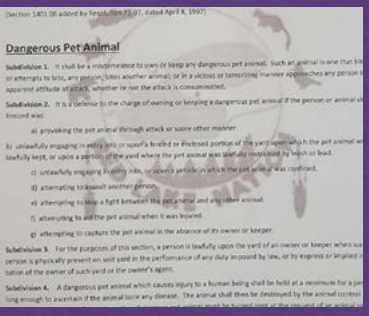






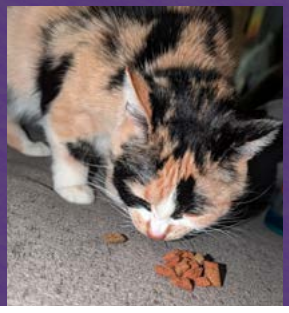


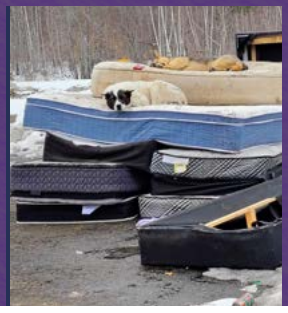
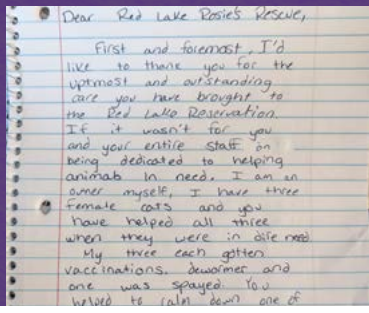




Dangerous Pet Animal









Dear Red Lake Rosies Rescue,

First and foremost, I'd like to thank you for the upmost and outstanding care you have brought to the Red Lake Reservation. If it wasn't for you and your entire staff on being dedicated to helping animals in need, I am an owner myself, I have three female cats and you have helped all three when they were in dire need. My three each gotten vaccinations, dewormer and one was spayed. You helped to calm down one of