

## **Rebecca Adamson**

After Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas in 1492, Native Americans societies were drastically changed, with their lands, cultures, and customs stripped away.

Rebecca L. Adamson is one individual who has worked to heal this history. Adamson founded the First Nations Development Institute (FNDI) to promote economic development in Indian Reservations. Believing that Native Americans should control their own schools, education, and economic destiny, she became a promoter of economic independence for tribes.

Early in her career, Adamson found herself on the Pine Ridge reservation (South Dakota), where in 1890 over 200 Lakota men, women, and children were casualties in the Wounded Knee Massacre. Pine Ridge has some of the highest poverty in the United States. In response, Adamson and the FNDI formed the Lakota Fund in 1985, which by 1997 had made over 300 loans to Lakota entrepreneurs on Pine Ridge.

Since 1970, Adamson and FNDI have worked directly with the tribes to develop economies independently without compromising their customs and beliefs. The FNDI has also raised and distributed millions of dollars in aid and investment to Native American organizations and businesses. Adamson has worked in all 50 states guiding the 234 recognized Native American tribes as well as "the smaller pueblos, Alaskan native villages, and non-reservation communities" to improve their physical and financial conditions. She particularly focuses on positive thinking and empowerment, declaring, "People who have been victims may have the attitude that it was never their fault, so they don't have to take responsibility. That is insidious. You have to create projects that lock in accountability because the aim is to build personal efficiency, an 'I-can-do-it' attitude".

Still alive and well today, Adamson continues to make a positive impact on the world around her.