Since 2008, the Little Shop of Physics (LSOP) has had a special relationship with the Oglala Lakota tribe on the Pine Ridge Reservation. We have brought the LSOP Hands-On Science Experience to the reservation twelve times, and have seen every school on the reservation at least once, leading to a special tribal proclamation designating the last week in November as Oglala Lakota Nation Little Shop of Physics week.

The cornerstone of our relationship has been our partnership with Oglala Lakota College (OLC), a tribal college based on the Pine Ridge reservation. Each year, OLC helps us identify schools to visit and recruits volunteers to help with our visit. And, each year, OLC sends a team of faculty and staff to Colorado State University (CSU) to build projects for the OLC traveling science program modeled on LSOP. We also work with OLC each summer to present a 3-day workshop on science instruction for current and future teachers.

A few years ago, we started having folks from Pine Ridge join us for our annual Open House, the biggest event of the LSOP year. At this event, we set up over 300 hands-on science experiment stations and invite the public to join us for a day of science fun. This year, over 10,000 people attended, and the 15-person-strong team of OLC faculty, staff, and students melded seamlessly with the CSU faculty, staff, and students, working together to put on this event. The OLC team wasn’t assisting—they were co-participants in this amazing event, and put on a special presentation of Lakota Star Knowledge that was much appreciated by the local community.

Travel to campus and participation in the event was made possible by a generous grant from the Halliburton Foundation, and this was acknowledged in all promotional materials.