



Red Cloud Indian School

Pine Ridge, South Dakota

Winter, 2003

The Giving Way...

In average communities, schools exist to meet the educational needs of local children, little more. Sports teams, band concerts, the occasional theatrical event, these and like offerings complete the standard services. But, since Red Cloud Indian School's surrounding community, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, is hardly average, neither is Red Cloud. At Red Cloud, being of service to the community is at the heart of education. Fr. Peter Klink, S.J., President of Red Cloud, often points out "A Red Cloud education is an education of the whole person, mind and heart!"

Since generosity is a cardinal virtue in Lakota culture, it's a natural fit. Among available examples, School Superintendent, Fr. Tom Merkel, SJ, points to three school programs that involve students in community giving. They are the *Asniya* (to heal) program, a health and science education outreach that partners Red Cloud with Harvard University; *Neighborhood Outreach*, an annual service-oriented trip where students travel to an inner city neighborhood to assist in existing charitable programs; and *Operation Others*, a partnered effort with Creighton Preparatory School of Omaha,

Nebraska that provides 100 needy Reservation families with food for the Christmas holiday.

Each initiative involves community giving with a slight shift in emphasis. *Asniya* recognizes that students, too, are members of the local community, and seeks to provide them with basic health knowledge. They in turn, armed with that knowledge can be advocates for healthy life choices in their homes and communities. *Neighborhood Outreach*, a product of Red Cloud High School's own Theology Department, helps students to realize that they can be a force for positive change in other communities as well. Past trips to inner city neighborhoods in Chicago and Denver have been a revelation for some high school students. For students, *Operation Others*, now in its third year, grafts the ideal of generosity to practical acts within their own reservation community.

"The *Asniya* Program has been part of our school for 2 years and it's been a real success," said Fr. Merkel. "Last year, during the first 3 weeks in January we hosted a graduate dental student, Heather Gormley, from the Harvard Dental School," said Fr. Merkel. "I give *Asniya* credit for really enhancing our health program for freshman students. They

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Service is an integral part of the Red Cloud School programs, preparing tomorrow's leaders in service to others.



Ms. Gormley's time spent with the students gave them insight into the study of anatomy and physiology.



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do nice hands-on work – letting our students study and work with actual organs like a brain or a heart.



The medical students' influence on the Red Cloud students has led some to think about a future in medicine.

They also teach them about organ donor programs and their voluntary nature. They explain that they have the organ specimens only because it was the donor's wish to have their bodies donated to



This student takes the opportunity to learn more about the heart and its function.

science so that some good things could be learned. These organs belonged to a person, and that person belonged to a family. They are to be treated with respect.” This year, the *Asniya* Program brought two medical students from Ohio State University to the Red Cloud campus. Just as *Asniya* brings others in to help Red Cloud's community of students, Red Cloud's *Neighborhood Outreach* program connects Red Cloud to other communities. *Neighborhood Outreach's* mentor, theology teacher Jim Dippold, believes in it strongly. “This spring will be our fourth trip. For 2 years we took small groups of about 6 to 8 high school students to the Pilsen neighborhood on Chicago's south side. It was a service-learning trip that was also a cultural immersion into a Latino community in Chicago. Last year, the group went to Denver and did a similar

experience, getting immersed into a community there. This year they're going to go again to Denver.”

Dippold said the trips have always taken place around the Easter holiday, and the students and staff have driven to the cities. “Planning the trips for Holy Week is integral to the experience, and the students have really enjoyed it,” said Dippold, who believes it deepens the experience. Seeing how others live, how they manage the frustrations, problems and needs of their own communities – and helping out a little bit – can't but help our students grow,” believes Dippold.

“A couple of students helped to lead the second trip. After going to Denver their junior year, seniors Donnel Ecoffey and Stephanie Wince have helped plan for this year's return trip. In fact, several students have and will be helping to plan and serve as student leaders for the *Outreach* trips. Last year, seniors LaVeta Elk and Minnie Bordeaux both helped to facilitate the trip to Denver, a second trip for them. This year will be Donnel's third trip, and she will again help to facilitate as a student leader,” said Dippold.

Fr. Merkel's third example easily has the most immediate positive impact on the students and their community. “The *Operation Others* effort has tremendous appeal because it's meeting basic needs. At root, it's a food drive in Omaha at Creighton Prep, and an extension of that for them now is bringing food here,” said Fr. Merkel. “Part of what I like about it is that Creighton Prep and Red Cloud students work together to package and deliver the food to at least 100 needy families. So you have students from our school doing something to help their community in partnership with other youth. Another benefit is the interchange with students



“Operation Others” is an education inside and outside the classroom.

from another school within the network of 47 Jesuit secondary education institutions in the United States,” said the Superintendent.

As part of the Theology Department, Jim Dippold has been intimately involved with *Operation Others* as well. He explained some of its history. “This is our second year. The spring of 2001, Spiritual Formation staff members Bob Brave Heart and Pat Lynch visited Creighton Prep in Omaha, to consult with members of their campus ministry program. The director of Creighton Prep’s *Operation Others* program offered to extend the program to here and to help us get started with it.”

Operation Others has been going on in the Omaha area for 20 years. Started by Creighton Prep students, over time it has grown to include five additional Catholic schools in the Omaha area. Throughout the year the schools raise funds. Then on their “deliver weekend,” which is early to mid-December every year, they get boxes of food out to around 1500 needy families in the Omaha area.

Last year and this year, the Creighton group brought out a semi-truck load of food to the Pine Ridge Reservation. Red Cloud students were able to prepare and deliver family-sized allotments of food to over a hundred families. To determine those most in need, Red Cloud students contacted parish workers in every community. In other cases, students from those communities helped to come up with names.

“*Operation Others* is definitely something the students look forward to now, and the enthusiasm has grown,” says Dippold, “Now it’s time for the next step. Our goal is not so much to expand the number of families we help but to develop more student leadership here at Red Cloud with putting the program together. The hope is to eventually do all the fundraising and food purchasing locally. There’s also talk about the possibility of doing a similar food drive for sometime around this Easter.” Students in Red Cloud High School’s peer ministry class would plan and supervise the food distribution program. “The peer ministry students are really brainstorming a lot of possibilities,” said Dippold, “and I am confident that something good will result from the students’ efforts.”

Asniya, Neighborhood Outreach, and Operation Others: three of the ways that caring and sharing continue to be a way of life at Red Cloud. They are proof that, even with the season of giving concluded in most communities, giving continues here. After all, generosity is considered a primary virtue by the Lakota people, and Red Cloud Indian School is a Lakota community.



Creighton and Red Cloud students begin the morning, serving together as a team.



The student’s work is a small service to the poverty stricken communities, but their contribution is a great gift to the 100 families.



These students are models to guide a developing program that combines faith and social action. The students are giving back to the communities, while they in turn receive a gift much greater – serving together.

Debating the Future

Around mid October last year, on a cold and clear night, the lights of the Paul “Dizzy” Trout Fieldhouse were switched on. At 7 p.m. a sizeable crowd gathered in the Red Cloud High School gym for a vital contest.

The subject was the very future of the Oglala Lakota Nation, and how best to decide who were the men and women most worthy of leading the way. Moreover, Red Cloud High School students were in the center of the action. Before the night was over, the two candidates for Vice President of the Tribe, Mr. Dennis King and Ms. Eileen Janis, along with the two Presidential aspirants, Mr. John Yellow Bird Steele and Mr. Russell Means, had all expressed their admiration for the high quality of the proceedings.

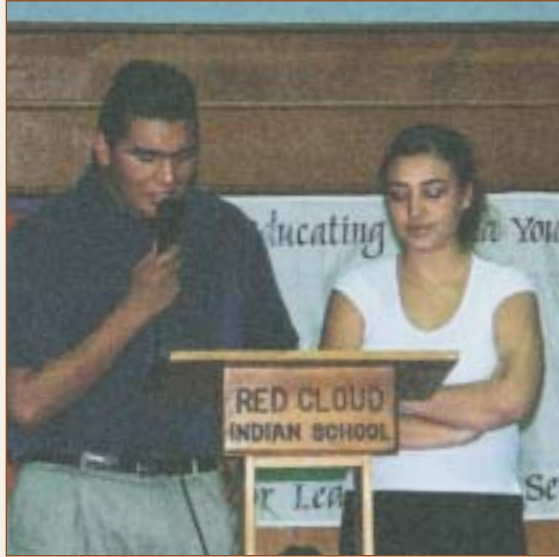
The event was the third bi-annual Red Cloud School Debates for candidates for President and Vice-President of the Oglala Lakota Nation. Tribal elections are held every two years for all legislative and most executive offices in the tribe’s government. For this election voter interest was unusually high, in part because nationally prominent Indian activist, Russell Means, an Oglala Lakota tribal member, was running for President. That night on the Red Cloud campus, voters received their first glimpse of the candidates under pressure. Red Cloud

students not only hosted the event, they also had crafted and then presented all the questions.

Since its debut in the fall of 1998, the Red Cloud Debate has gained a reputation for being tough, thorough, and fair. Proof of its positive effect is a slew of imitators that have sprung up since the last campaign. The debate was, once again, well attended, with the widely popular local Indian FM radio station, KILI, carrying the proceedings live to an audience that covered several surrounding reservations and the majority of western South Dakota as well.

Posing questions during the debate were Mr. Pourier, Ms. Big Crow, Ms. Little and Ms. Boltz, all students in Red Cloud teacher Peter Hill’s high school government class. The other students selected to ask questions of the candidates were Freshman Class President, Ms. Whirlwind Horse; Sophomore Class President, Mr. Janis; Junior Class President, Ms. White Butterfly; and Senior Class President, Ms. Goggleye. Co-moderators were Student Council President, Mr. Twiss and government student and Junior Class Vice-President, Ms. Zephier.

The questioners were divided evenly between government class



Mr. Twiss and Ms. Zephier began the debate with a welcoming introduction.

Debating, continued

students and student council representatives. Over several weeks, Hill's government class students handled all research, selection and phrasing of questions. The learning curve was steep, but exciting, reflected Matt Ehlman, Red Cloud teacher and Student Council mentor. Several weeks after the debate, panelist Wes Pourier still finds the experience extremely positive. "We spent a little over a month working on the questions, with a lot of our thoughts coming just from things that we noticed." Regarding the students' work, Ehlman said, "They went through several drafts of their questions concerning housing issues, health care, education, law enforcement problems and treaty rights. They wanted to ensure that their questions would elicit a thoughtful response and initiate a stronger debate."

Mr. Pourier's questions focused on health care on the reservation, more specifically: understaffing at the local hospital and its effect on quality of care. In hindsight, Pourier felt the debate gave

young Lakota men and women a voice and connected him personally to the political process for the first time. "After the last debate, I decided the debate is a good idea and that I would take part in the next debate. A lot of people came up afterwards and told us that our questions were very good. They said that out of all the debates they attended, ours was the best."

About those questions, Ehlman was careful to point out that, while only eight people were selected to ask the questions, the questions themselves evolved over the course of several discussions that involved the full participation of the entire government class. "The students really drove the debate, and I believe they really made the event a success."

Student Council President and debate moderator Twiss heartily agreed. "We spent a long time preparing, but I think it went even better than expected." Twiss also said it felt satisfying to be a part of a process traditionally reserved for adults. "I think we showed them that our voices should be heard as well."



Students learn the basic skills while helping to make a difference in their communities and Tribe.



Oglala Tribe candidates addressing the questions posed to them by the students of Red Cloud.



Investment for the future...

The day was cold and snowy and Red Cloud was the only school open for miles around. The school buses had safely transported the students to school and following morning classes, lunch was being served. When one of the students pointed out that several other schools were not having school due to the weather, Fr. Tom Merkel, S.J. our school superintendent said, "We are in the business of providing opportunity." How true that statement is! That opportunity exists in the form of a quality education of the mind and heart. As can be seen from the preceding articles, the students of Red Cloud, no strangers to poverty themselves, are learning to reach out and be of service – both in their own community and beyond.

The importance of generosity and sharing is not lost on our students. Not only do they participate in activities which help them to learn to be generous with their time and talent, but also they see and experience your generosity each day. Their day begins with the arrival of a Red Cloud school bus to bring them to school. Without a safe school bus many would not be able to travel the distances required to come to school every day. Attendance is so important to academic success. You help to provide that safe ride and the gas it takes day after day to travel the many miles. Being greeted at school by their teacher, they know they are cared for and will be challenged to do their best. "You can do it!" is a frequent refrain. At lunchtime your generosity provides a nutritious meal – the only healthy meal of the day for too many. In their classrooms, they use the books and technology which let them see beyond the borders of the Reservation and prepares them for the world of the ever-increasing computer society of which they will be a member.

We are doubly grateful for your support and help right now. It has been a difficult year (and continues to be), given the unstable market, slow economy, and threats of a possible war. However, despite all of that, the students continue to do well. At Creighton alone, thirteen returned for the second semester and seem to be doing fine there. That is the concentration at just one school. Others are attending colleges and universities across the country. At Red Cloud, the students are gaining the competence and confidence to follow their dreams. The success of

your giving is clear in the lives and achievements of all of our students and graduates.

To help insure the future of Red Cloud, I hope you will consider a gift of a lifetime – a Planned Gift – one that can give when you are not longer able to. No matter the size of a Planned Gift – Wills, Insurance policies and Retirement Plans, including IRA's, all are extremely important to the financial future and stability of Red Cloud.

Will or Trust gifts to Red Cloud are a true blessing to us. Whether the gift is a specific sum or a percentage of the residue, they are a great help to us. Your legal advisor may need some of the following information. Our legal name is Red Cloud Indian School, Inc. **Our address is 100 Mission Drive, Pine Ridge, SD 57770-2100. Should it be needed, our Tax Identification Number is 46-0275071.** Red Cloud Indian School is a tax-exempt non-profit, religious, educational institution according to a group ruling issued by the IRS to the United States Catholic Conference.

Making a planned gift to Red Cloud can be as simple as naming Red Cloud as a beneficiary of life insurance your family no longer needs or on your retirement plan which may save your family from paying income and estate taxes when you die.

All Planned Gifts – Will and Trust gifts, gifts of retirement plans, naming Red Cloud as a joint owner on a bank account or certificate of deposit, gifts of paid up life insurance policies – help insure a brighter future for the Lakota children of Red Cloud. They are very important to Red Cloud.

Thank you again for your generosity that the children see each day. Thank you too for helping to provide the opportunity for each and every student to have a brighter future. Your support is so important to us! Please give serious consideration to making a planned gift to Red Cloud. For additional information on how you can help Red Cloud with a planned gift, fill out that attached coupon and return it to me. *Lila wopila tanka* – many, many thanks, and may God bless you.

Fr. Peter J. Klink, S.J.

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