



Growing up on the Rosebud Reservation, Veronica Valandra always dreamed of serving her community through her church. That dream came true when she became the Director of Native American Ministries in the Diocese of Rapid City. Veronica spent over a decade working to “ensure the needs of Native Americans in the Church are recognized, understood and addressed.” Now, as Red Cloud’s new Pastoral Coordinator, she will bring her commitment and wisdom to Pine Ridge. Red Cloud Country sat down with Veronica as she reflected on her experience in Native ministry and on her hopes for the future.

LEADING THE WAY IN NATIVE MINISTRY

Veronica Valandra

Red Cloud Country: Veronica, welcome! What drew you to this new role?

Veronica Valandra: I’ve always wanted the opportunity to work for the Church on a very local level—to interact each day with individual parishioners, to visit the sick, and to work with those who cannot leave their homes. Really to bring the Church to those who need it most. And now I’ll finally be able to do that in local communities all across Pine Ridge. I’m so glad to be here.

RCC: Talk about what it means to be involved in Native ministries. What has inspired your work?

VV: Native people represent a very important voice in the Church, and that voice must be heard, understood and welcomed. A lot of my work has focused on educating non-Native people, helping them to understand the Lakota ceremonies and blessings that are part of an inculturated Mass. There are still those who aren’t completely comfortable when we bring a drum group, or sing

the four directions song in Mass—and that includes some Lakota elders, who were taught you had to choose between Mass and your Native beliefs and practices. It is critical for us all to recognize that bringing Native culture into our faith only makes it more rich and beneficial.

RCC: You’ve also advocated for Native Catholics around the country.

VV: Back in 1987, Pope John Paul II came to the U.S. and spoke about the importance of celebrating Native culture and allowing it to enrich the Catholic faith. To support the Pope’s vision for inclusion, I had the chance to serve as one of three Native American representatives to the Conference of Catholic Bishops’ National Advisory Council from 2006 to 2009. It was wonderful to have a stronger voice for American Indians in the Church. But still, we had to constantly educate our peers. Many people from all types of ethnic groups still believe that Native Americans live in tipis and ride horses. We emphasized that in the United States there are over 550 different tribes, each with its own unique culture and gifts.

RCC: There are significant challenges facing Catholic parishes today. What can our community do?

VV: I think one important step we can take is investing in training programs for Lakota lay leaders—to bring new, Native leadership into the Church. Recently, I spoke with a young man who felt he had a strong calling to be a deacon. We need to encourage and support people like him.

RCC: With such a range of challenges, where do you want to begin?

VV: Right now, my main priority is just to listen. I want to be visible and supportive to pastoral staff, and to listen to parishioners and begin to understand their needs and concerns. Only with that understanding can we build a vision for how the parish moves forward.



Veronica Valandra in front of Holy Rosary Church.

wopila!

Among the Lakota people, gratitude is one of the seven basic virtues. Another is generosity. Red Cloud is humbly grateful for your generous prayers and gifts that provided:



dear friends,

As I write to you today, American flags across the state of South Dakota fly at half-staff to honor Oglala Lakota Chief Oliver Red Cloud, who died on July 4 at age 93. A fourth generation descendent of our founder and namesake, the historic Chief Red Cloud, Oliver Red Cloud was a fierce defender of Native treaty rights and Lakota culture. Like his great-grandfather, Oliver Red Cloud devoted his life to advocating for his people.

Chief Oliver’s passing is a great loss for the Lakota, but also for our entire Red Cloud Indian School community. He believed, as his great-great-grandfather did, that education is crucial to empowering the Lakota people. Over the decades, he offered his friendship and counsel and supported our efforts to provide a high-quality, holistic education to Lakota children here on the Pine Ridge Reservation.



Chief Oliver shared our core mission of inspiring the next generation of Lakota leaders—strong young people prepared to create positive change in their local community, across the nation and around the world. It is the same mission that prompted Chief Red Cloud to work with the Jesuits to found this institution. And 125 years later, it fills me with hope to know we are fulfilling that mission.

Red Cloud students and graduates are lighting the world on fire. As you will read in these pages, this summer three Red Cloud students are researching devastating brain disorders at the National Institutes of Health. Autumn White Eyes ’10 was awarded a competitive community service fellowship this summer, and chose “to give back to the community I grew up in.” And Rilda Means ’08 has come back to Red Cloud while she prepares for her next big move: law school.

Students like Rilda and Autumn represent the next generation of Lakota leaders. And you can help make their dreams a reality by returning the gift form attached here. Or, consider including Red Cloud in your will, using the following sample language:

1. *Outright gift of a predetermined amount: “I give to Red Cloud Indian School, Inc. the sum of \$_____.”*
2. *Outright gift of a share of residuary estate: “I give, devise and bequeath to Red Cloud Indian School, Inc. all (or a percentage) of the rest, residue and remainder of my estate.”*

Your legal advisor may need the following: Our legal name is Red Cloud Indian School, Inc. and our address is 100 Mission Drive, Pine Ridge, SD, 57770-2100. Our Tax ID number is 46-0275071. Red Cloud is a recognized tax-exempt nonprofit, religious, educational institution.

Regardless of its form, your gift will help us empower Lakota children here on Pine Ridge. If you need additional information, please reach out to us at 605/867-1105, ext. 300 or visit us at www.redcloudschool.org.

Many blessings,

Fr. George Winzenburg SJ

Fr. George Winzenburg, S.J.

Future college graduates. This spring, our high school seniors proudly walked across the graduation stage with a solid education and a vision for their future. Your support does more than keep the doors open and the lights on—it allows us to be innovative with our courses and comprehensive with our extracurricular activities. *Wopila!*

Summer Learning. Through your support, our students have access to quality summer school programming that helps them maintain their academic skills and prepare for the year ahead, all while having fun. *Wopila!*

Healthy Meals. Our students are able to focus on their studies because they are not focused on their stomachs. You provided a complete breakfast, a healthy lunch and an after-school snack. *Wopila!*

Economic Impact. The Heritage Center adds \$100,000 to the local reservation economy by purchasing items from local artists and selling them through our internationally recognized gift shop. By buying from our gift shop and online store, you allow us to foster and encourage the Lakota artists of today and tomorrow. *Wopila!*

When Mary Bordeaux arrived at Red Cloud in 2004 to become The Heritage Center’s new curator, she knew the collection was one-of-a-kind.

Made up of almost 10,000 pieces of historic and contemporary Native art, The Center’s permanent collection rivals those of the nation’s leading American Indian art museums. But Bordeaux explains it’s not just the quality of the collection that make it unique.

“What’s really extraordinary is that we hold an excellent Native art collection—that is actually housed on a reservation. Right here on Pine Ridge, community members can come and experience a collection of this caliber,” she explains. “Providing that community access and sharing the arts is the real reason we’re here.”

Discovering A World of Native Art on Pine Ridge

It is this commitment to the local community that has defined The Heritage Center from the very start. It began as an art show aimed at highlighting the talent of local artists. As founding director Brother C.M. Simon S.J. purchased contemporary pieces from each show, local families and private collectors donated thousands of pieces of historical Lakota art. Eventually, a strong permanent collection took shape—and The Heritage Center was born.

From 1969 until Bordeaux’s arrival, the collection grew to nearly 10,000 pieces of art spanning more than two centuries. But without systems for cataloging and preservation, it was in complete disarray.

“Brother Simon had the wisdom and vision to know what this collection could become. But he was only one person and didn’t have the resources to care for such a large collection,” says Bordeaux. “We had wood shelving that attracts bugs and emits destructive fumes, as well as the constant threat of damage from moisture. It was heartbreaking to see some truly priceless pieces in disrepair. And when Brother Simon unexpectedly passed away, we lost a great deal of information that only he possessed.”

Reconstructing that knowledge is an ongoing process, and Bordeaux knows it will take time. But she says its thrilling to have elders and community members visit and recognize a piece from the collection. She is amazed at how often they can share a personal story about the artist and their inspiration.

Just the process of cataloging the collection took five years to complete. Bordeaux and then-Director Peter Strong began by establishing collections policies and new methods for preservation, with critical and generous funding from the Institute for Museum and Library Services and the Bush Foundation.

What they uncovered was a remarkable contribution to the Native art world. The collection holds a top hat owned by the famed Oglala Lakota Chief American Horse, as well as a series of priceless Lakota “leader shirts”—worn by recognized leaders of a *tiospaye* or extended family group. And in addition to Native history, the collection tells the story of contemporary Native art as few others can.



Mary Bordeaux (right) and Mary Maxon at work in the permanent collection

“The Heritage Center holds one of only three or four collections in the world that can show the evolution of fine Native American art since the 1960’s. And it has played a major role in developing and encouraging Lakota and other Native artists,” says Tatiana Lomahaftewa-Singer, curator of collections at the Museum of Contemporary Native Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

“It’s a nationally significant cultural institution that focuses on uplifting a local community. That’s a rare combination, and it deserves to be treasured.”

Although the process of cataloging was painstaking, for Bordeaux, who now serves as The Center’s interim director, it was a labor of love.

“We’ve made it possible for people here on Pine Ridge to see and appreciate the art that comes from their culture, without having to go to Washington, DC or Los Angeles,” she explains.

Today the collection continues to grow, and with growth comes new challenges. Collections Manager Mary Maxon, who has worked in museums for 25 years, says caring for it is a tremendous responsibility.

“We hold some really priceless pieces. Right now we’re cleaning a delicate full-length feather headdress. We’re doing our best on preservation, but it will take more resources in the long run,” explains Maxon. “It’s critical these pieces be saved for future generations.”

And next, The Heritage Center will embark on its biggest challenge yet: developing a new physical space to house the collection and share it with more visitors.

“We want The Heritage Center to belong to the people in this community—and to be a gathering place, alive with performances, workshops and exhibits. We’re launching new educational programming that will bring entire classrooms into the collection. And new space will allow us to do so much more,” says Bordeaux. “By sharing our artistic heritage, there’s no doubt we can build a stronger, healthier community.”

RED CLOUD INDIAN ART SHOW CELEBRATES 45 YEARS

Thousands of visitors made the trip to Pine Ridge this summer for the 45th annual Red Cloud Indian Art Show—the largest and longest running Native American art show of its kind in the country, and one of only a few held on a reservation.



Portrait of Dr. Lucy Reifel, Charles Her Many Horses (Oglala Lakota)

To learn more about the show and to view works by the winners, visit The Heritage Center online at www.redcloudschool.org/theheritagecenter.

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Celebrating Our 125th Anniversary!

This October, Red Cloud will begin a year-long celebration to mark our 125th anniversary – and we want you to be a part of it! If you have memories of visiting our campus and the Pine Ridge Reservation, or reflections on what you hope we can achieve in our next 125 years, please share them with us in the space below. Or, email us at info@redcloudschool.org. We can’t wait to hear from you!

Name _____ Email _____