

AROUND THE REZ:
RED CLOUD BRIEFS

Snapshots of hope
Red Cloud Elementary School students were presented with disposable cameras this spring... and a challenge: Take pictures of “hope.” Jason Alley, a board member of the American Advertising Federation of the Black Hills, says the goal of the project was to create a public service campaign about what hope looks like from the perspective of young children. The program is in conjunction with Oglala Lakota College and the Sweet Grass Project’s suicide prevention program. “I took a picture of my sister because she means a lot to me. I love her so much... I don’t want her to ever leave,” says Riyen Carlow ’20, a fourth grader. “The second picture I took was of my cat because she loves me so much. She comes to me every day when I come back from school.” Select photos from the project will be used to create billboards and posters to be put up around the reservation.

More bull’s-eyes for Our Lady of Lourdes Elementary archery team
Elementary and middle school students in Porcupine continued to “bring home the hardware” with a number of first-place finishes at archery tournaments this spring. The young Lakota boys and girls, from the third grade all the way up to eighth grade, recently competed with 80 contestants from six schools at a competition sponsored by the Wounded Knee School District. The team was led by NuVassie Blacksmith ’16, who took first place overall, and Bob Pourier ’16, who placed second. This year, more than 25 students are on the archery roster, with a team that is made up of slightly more girls than boys.

Street theatre surprises students in cafeteria
Red Cloud High School students interrupted the lunch hour this spring to introduce their classmates to “street theatre,” an art form in which actors perform in a random space, at a moment’s notice, for a non-paying (and unsuspecting) audience. The six students performed a one-act play with an anti-alcohol message that they wrote themselves. The students chose the topic knowing the many problems alcohol causes on the reservation, which are exacerbated by the town of Whiteclay, Nebraska, where on average more than four million cans of beer are sold annually. Located just one mile south of Pine Ridge on the Nebraska–South Dakota border, White Clay has been featured in a number of national newspapers recently, including *The New York Times* and *The Denver Post*.

Former volunteer returns with student group
Steve Dacey, a former volunteer at Red Cloud Indian School who taught science in the high school at the turn of the Millennium, brought a group of students from Xaverian High School in Massachusetts to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to work in Gretchen Lees’ fourth grade classroom and Erin Diffenderfer’s second grade classroom at Red Cloud Elementary School. During the visit, the high school students assisted elementary kids in math and reading. In the weeks leading up to the visit, Dacey collaborated with Lees on a surprise for her students. Lees asked her students what book they would want to receive if a “book fairy” could grant them each one book. Lees gave the list to Dacey, and the visiting high school students granted their literary wishes, presenting each of the students with their book of choice.

Go to the new www.redcloudschool.org/news for more stories

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RED CLOUD COUNTRY

Sharing the stories of Red Cloud Indian School www.redcloudschool.org Summer 2012 Volume 4, Issue 1

Bob Brave Heart Sr. has seen a lot of growth over his 26 years at Red Cloud Indian School. And he'll take that history of service with him as he leaves his position as superintendent of schools and steps into a new leadership role as executive vice president on July 1. Red Cloud Country sat down with Brave Heart as he reflects on the past and builds momentum for the future.

THE ROAD AHEAD
A Q&A WITH BOB BRAVE HEART SR.

Red Cloud Country: What is it about Red Cloud—about this special institution—that has caused you to decide, “Wow, I’d be okay with spending the rest of my professional life working here?”
Bob Brave Heart: I believe fully in our mission. I believe in the work that we are doing here—the great work that we are doing here. We are making a real difference in the lives of the young people of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, right now and for their future. It’s inspiring... to serve God, and the Lakota people—my people. This is where my great grandparents originated. This is our home.

RCC: Your history at Red Cloud is long. But your family’s history is even longer!
BBH: My children were the fifth generation to go to this school. My dad, grandparents and even great-grandparents went here. In fact, my dad’s grandmother, Mary, was one of the first students to go to school here. In the old church [before it was destroyed in the fire of 1996], there was a stained glass window with my grandmother’s name on it. I, myself, went to school here, but only in first, third and fifth grades. My parents were “nomadic people,” so we moved around a lot.

RCC: It seems like moving around is something you had to grow accustomed to early in life. How will you use that experience in your new position?
BBH: There will be many challenges in this new position, working with each of the departments here in Pine Ridge and in Porcupine. Having been superintendent, I have a handle on what is happening in the schools. And in our monthly program staff meetings, all of us—from The Heritage Center to pastoral ministry—are in dialogue with each other about how we can work together, and how we can support each other. That has helped me get a good sense of the world they work in, and the challenges we all face.


RCC: What are some of those challenges?
BBH: Because of the complexities of the institution and the fact that we operate as far as 90 miles from where I’m sitting, there’s somewhat of a disconnect between the schools and other efforts... a lack of understanding about what other areas do and how they do it. But we’re finding ways to bridge that gap. The Heritage Center has plans to make a concerted effort to work directly with the schools to provide more opportunities to learn about the history and culture of our people. There are opportunities for service at our churches, and even classes for students wishing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Our schools benefited by going completely Macintosh-based with our computer systems. It increased our ability to communicate with one another from building to building, campus to campus. And we’re going to give that same opportunity to the entire institution. We’re going to give our community the tools they need so we can communicate with people across departments. There will always be challenges. But we’re going to work together in a stronger way.

RCC: Where do you want to see Red Cloud one year from now—or five years from now?
BBH: We’re finishing our strategic planning process right now, and it is premature to talk about those initiatives concretely. But one thing I will tell you: One of our biggest challenges is having enough resources for people to do their jobs—especially to compensate our staff well enough to afford a decent living. We need to adjust this, but there’s no easy answer. We’re working really hard to raise the money so that we can do this for our hardworking staff. Right now, I can tell them we recognize that this is a problem and we are working to change it. It makes them feel better—to know we are working toward turning the tide on compensation—but it doesn’t necessarily make them *live* better. Our compensation is a lot lower than most of the other school systems on the reservation and off. It’s hard to attract and keep good people.

RCC: It’s a challenge we can overcome with the help of our community!
BBH: Yes! We’ve always been good at coming together for our community. As superintendent, I’ve tried to do my job humbly. We renovated science labs, and increased math and science requirements from two to four years. Our Lakota language program has taken off—and we’re willing to share it with others outside our classroom walls. We’ve made this school Lakota.

RCC: Do you feel like the “new kid on the block” again?
BBH: I was apprehensive my first day as superintendent... just this feeling of inadequacy because I didn’t know the job. There were enormous challenges and workloads faced. But after a while, I realized my work as an educator and principal in both the elementary and high school would help me in my position. I’ll take my decades of experience here to work with Fr. George and our program directors as the new executive vice president.




 **Hope. Alive.** 100 Mission Drive, Pine Ridge, South Dakota 57770 www.redcloudschool.org 605/867-1105 ext. 300



RED CLOUD INDIAN ART SHOW
CELEBRATES 44 YEARS

The Red Cloud Indian Art Show opened on June 3 with 170 pieces from 80 artists. The annual exhibition is the largest and longest running Native American art show of its kind in the country, and one of only a few held on an Indian reservation hundreds of miles from any urban area. Since 1969, the Red Cloud Indian Art Show has attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors to The Heritage Center and the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to view impressive works of art from seasoned Native American professionals and young Lakota artists just beginning their artistic careers. Over \$7000 in prizes are awarded in 24 different categories. The show is open to the public seven days a week through August 11, 2012. Visit our new website at www.redcloudschool.org for more information



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Enclosed please find my gift of \$ _____ to help Red Cloud continue to educate and provide for Lakota students on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

dear fr. george,

There is an energy and excitement at Red Cloud Indian School toward the end of every school year, with students busily making plans for life after high school. This spring, Red Cloud Country asked Russell Cournoyer, director of the spiritual formation department at Red Cloud High School and the father of 2010 and 2012 graduates, to reflect on a historical, prestigious rite of passage that has been part of the Red Cloud community for decades.

A RITE OF PASSAGE

AN ESSAY BY RUSSELL COURNOYER

“Long ago, when a warrior accomplished a great deed, he was awarded an eagle feather to indicate he had carried out a difficult task. It was a way of honoring—a way of acknowledging the good work that had been achieved, as well as encouragement for continued success on the road ahead. It brought together families and friends who were invited by the honoree to do the tying. And, was one of the highest honors in the Lakota society. Eagle feathers are most respected by the Lakota people. They show courage and strength, truth and fortitude. They are firmly tied to our spirituality. Even Catholic, Jesuit priests who have become a part of our community, once referred to as the “Black Robes,” have received eagle feathers in honor. You see, we believe that eagles have a special connection to *Tunkasila*—to God. These birds of prey carry messages from man to Creator, and from Creator back to man.

Today, this tradition continues... and has grown and evolved to include our young women who are also standing alongside our young men in accomplishing new goals and pursuing new dreams. Each spring, just prior to graduation, our students and families gather for a feather tying ceremony to honor our senior class.

As the proud father of a Red Cloud graduate, and with a daughter who graduates in May, the feather tying ceremony we hold at the high school has taken on a special meaning. When my oldest daughter graduated in 2010, she wanted to recognize her late mother who had passed from a terminal illness. In her memory, she asked her aunt to tie the feather to her hair. It was a special moment for my daughter, for her mother’s sister, and for our family.

This year, my second daughter, Renae (pictured below) will walk across the graduation stage. But before she does, we will once again join more than 40 families from our senior class to pay homage to our past, while looking toward a bright future, very much in the hands of our students.

Personally, I will be proud to see my daughter receive her feather—a plume for women. One of her aunts will tie the feather to Renae’s hair, signaling that she, like her older sister, has accomplished a major hurdle in her young life. It will also recognize her journey ahead—her pursuit of another goal, a college degree.

The teachings of our ancestors, like Red Cloud and Sitting Bull, are instilled in each of us—they are part of us. Our ancestors told us to learn the teachings of the white man’s ways and then to apply them to help the future of our people so that we can continue to live on as Lakotas!

Yes, our Lakota culture is alive and well today—rooted in our history, evolving with our time. My hope is that as my children—and our students—go through life, that they will pass this ceremony on to their children... and their children’s children. So that we keep our storied history vibrant and continue to celebrate all of our accomplishments together.



FUN FACT

Russell Cournoyer’s daughter, Renae Cournoyer ’12, was one of three students selected as Bill and Melinda Gates Millennium Scholars. The award fully funds the tuition and expenses for Renae, along with her classmates Talia Lawrence ’12 and Tiarra Little ’12, to attend the college of their choosing. In total, 57 students have earned the Gates Scholarship since the program’s inception in 1999. More online at www.redcloudschool.org

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,

This spring, a team of staff members from Red Cloud Indian School accompanied me to Bridgewater State University, about 60 miles south of Boston. We were there to discuss possible collaborations between our schools. Though Red Cloud has 600 students and their university numbers more than 10,000, there are many similarities in mission, especially educating students who will be the first in their family to earn a college degree. One of our own graduates, Tina Merdanian ’90, our director of institutional relations, gave a talk as part of their President’s Distinguished Speaker Series.

Attendees may have come to hear Tina speak about the hardships of living in one of the most isolated areas of South Dakota, and in one of the poorest areas of the Western Hemisphere. Yes, Tina did acknowledge the realities of growing up and living on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. But she acknowledged so much more.

She acknowledged hope. Prosperity. Drive. And determination. She gave voice to our students and staff. Our families and parishioners, artists and entrepreneurs.

She told the story you’ve come to learn, have decided to embrace and have championed every single day.

You know well the record number of Bill and Melinda Gates Millennium Scholars—now at 57 total—who have walked across our graduation stage and gone on to our nation’s top colleges. You’ve celebrated our seniors, like Lyle Jacobs ’12, who earned a full-ride to Duke University, and Marisa Snider ’12, who earned a full-ride to Creighton University. And each fall, you’ve cheered us on as we’ve ushered in a new academic year.

This momentum must continue. Today, I once again ask for your financial support by returning the gift form attached to this newsletter. You might also wish to consider a bequest in your will, which will leave a legacy for decades to come! If you are updating your will to include Red Cloud, here are two examples of bequests in wills as well as sample language:

1. Outright gift of a sum of money: “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.”

Whether it is a specific sum or a percentage of the residual, all 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. and our address is 100 Mission Drive, Pine Ridge, South Dakota 57770-2100. Should it be needed, our Tax ID Number is 46-0275071. Red Cloud is a recognized tax-exempt non-profit, religious, educational institution.

Bridgewater State learned about us from the ABC 20/20 Special “Hidden America: Children of the Plains.” They answered Diane Sawyer’s call to learn more. To partner with us. To hear our story. And to take action for the future of our community. My hope is that you will always continue to do the same in more ways than one.

Safe travels on your summer journeys,

Fr. George Wingenburg SJ

Fr. George Wingenburg, S.J.
President

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

A roof over our head. 92 mile per hour winds (yes, 92!) took down trees and tree branches, with one in particular busting a hole in the roof of Fr. Bill Pauly Hall on the campus of Our Lady of Lourdes. Your support allowed us to repair that roof immediately. *Wopila!*

Sacramental preparation. Seven young men celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation this spring. Your prayers and support allowed our pastoral team to prepare them for the important step in their Catholic faith formation. *Wopila!*

Economic impact. The Heritage Center puts \$100,000 into the local reservation economy by purchasing items—and reselling them—through our internationally recognized gift shop. By buying from our gift shop and online store, you allowed us to foster and encourage the Lakota artists of today. *Wopila!*

Gift shop moves from organic beginnings to strategic future

Talk to Peter Strong about The Heritage Center gift shop’s beginning, and the director of the world-class gallery will likely use the word “organic” more than once. Many more, actually.

“It’s what keeps coming to mind,” he says on a Friday morning after a busy week preparing for the summer art show. “We’re beginning to get applications for the show. It’s shaping up to be a great one.”

Emerging “organically” from humble beginnings in the 1970s when Br. C.M. Simon, S.J., founding director of The Heritage Center, started selling items like earrings and quillwork at the request of patrons, the gift shop now puts \$100,000 each year back into the reservation economy by purchasing items from local Lakota artists. Strong says on any given week, anywhere from 10-40 artists will step foot in the shop to sell their items for resale.

“That money goes directly to the artist,” Strong says. “Six months before Br. Simon passed, he was asked why he started the gift shop. ‘You can’t expect people to grow as individuals or as human beings if they can’t put food on the table,’ he said. I believe the gift shop is one way we are working to make sure they can do that, as artists and as human beings.”

The Heritage Center buys directly from the artists for two reasons. The first is a legal one: “We must be able to document that the work we are marketing is indeed Native-made, which satisfies the requirements of the federal Indian Arts and Crafts Act. This is to protect the artist and the customer from all of the knock-off, foreign made items that try to pass as ‘Native American,’” he notes.

The second, however, is truly mission-driven, and at the very heart of the Center. “We are supporting creativity in our community. We are ensuring that our community is benefiting directly.

Seeing the vision, experiencing the humanity

For decades, revitalization of artistic spaces across the United States most often has been geared toward abandoned buildings in the blighted neighborhoods of urban areas. Not anymore though.

Through a collaboration with Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC), in partnership with the Ford Foundation, rural-based cultural and innovative spaces like The Heritage Center are expanding their visions and opening new doors for artists in their communities.

“If there is an opportunity for people in the arts to be invited into an indigenous setting, that’s a really important invitation,” says Roberta Uno, program officer at the Ford Foundation, who recently convened 70 arts professionals on the Red Cloud Indian School campus for a seminar by the DeVos Institute of Arts Management, part of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

Uno brought the group to Pine Ridge to introduce them to a vibrant community that continues to thrive, despite its place within the shadows. She says she is particularly interested in issues concerning indigenous people because she sees American Indians as a demographic that is nearly invisible to the majority of the country. Many times at workshops she is looking at who is *not* in the room just as much as who is.

“Even in seminars about diversity, there are no Native Americans in the room. So how do we begin to build that inclusive table? How do we go a step further and begin to talk about cultural, social and racial equality?” she asks. “Then we can start to address some of those structures that keep certain organizations at a low level of funding.”

The solution, Uno believes, will come not from a myopic focus on demographics or poverty, but from leadership within the communities themselves. What is hard to find on the reservation are “people who are willing to step forward and categorize themselves as artists.”

Instead, some of the most artistically talented local people may not realize how tremendously gifted they are. And those who come in contact with the work may not see the underlying talent and innovation simply

“The gift shop is one of the few places in the region that buys art for resale and really walks alongside these artists in marketing their amazing work. Because their work is amazing,” he says.

What haven’t been so organic for the gift shop are the giant leaps forward it has taken in the past couple of years, including the launch of an online store that has seen purchases come from all over the country—even world, from Europe to Asia and places in between.

“A lot of vendors come in and remember when the shop was just being established,” says Delmarina One Feather ’07, gift shop manager. “They are quite excited how we’ve grown. They appreciate how we promote our Lakota artists. When I think about what we’re doing now, and think about the next 10 years... it’s really cool to imagine the possibilities.”

“If it weren’t for organizations like USDA Rural Development and ArtPlace, who have partnered with us to build and grow our website, training programs and marketing strategies, it would be difficult to continue to invest in the creative capital of our community,” Strong says. “We’re learning that people love Lakota art. And we want to be able to facilitate the connection between artist and customer any way we can.”

Shop the gift shop online at www.redcloudschool.org/shop



UNEXPECTED FINDS

Delmarina One Feather says more and more she’s seeing not just the traditional beadwork and quillwork, with their intricate Lakota patterns, coming into the store’s inventory, but a whole new approach to artistry. Step foot into the gift shop today and you’ll find Denver Bronco-themed star quilts and lights with lampshades styled as a teepee. “You never know what our artists will bring into the store,” she says.

“Recently, I was talking to one of our artists, Sam Two Bulls, who makes amazing wood carvings of crosses that we can’t keep on the shelves,” she says. “I said to him, ‘You are such a good painter. Have you ever thought about making wooden earrings?’ He said, ‘No.’ Three weeks later, he brought back these gorgeous rawhide and cedar wooden earrings, which he had handpainted.

“Every artist has a unique talent, and they continue to surprise me,” she adds.

because they don’t have the artistic framework to know what they’re looking at. The Heritage Center, she says, turns that on its head.

“One of the critical pieces is the leadership offered here at the Center,” she notes. “When I see people like Peter Strong and Mary Bordeaux, who are bringing artistic and community vision into a project, I look to them and hope they have the support to do what they envision with the larger community.”

And seeing is indeed believing. For some of the visitors, this may have been their first visit to a reservation. But for all, Uno says, the visit was about showing a firsthand view of an area that too often gets represented secondhand.

“So much of what we get in the news about the reservation is so negative. And that’s not to say that the realities aren’t harsh here,” she says, pausing for a moment. “But when you actually come and visit here, you see so much resilience... you see so much inspiration... you see so much quality—of life, humanity, family and community. You see all of those things.”

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A whole new crop of students

This fall, our kindergarten classroom will welcome the Red Cloud graduating class of 2025. Please join us in celebrating the beginning of their academic careers by sending them a note about what you hope they’ll do with their Catholic, Lakota, Jesuit education as they navigate the next 13 years of school. We’ll share your hopes with them, and their parents!

Name _____ Email _____