Spring is a time of new beginnings at Red Cloud Indian School. The hallways are filled with talk of the futures—starting college, exploring careers, and dreaming of new possibilities. A story that’s not uncommon with the challenges of college and scholarship application, members of Red Cloud’s senior class are preparing to begin a new phase of their lives. And for this hardworking Red Cloud students, that next step involves taking on a new title: 2016 Gates Millennium Scholar.

“When I went home, I opened my bedroom door, and there was a pretty big envelope there,” said Justin Meantie, recollecting how he learned he was a Gates Scholar. “It was a moment I won’t forget. There was a lot of relief—it was a moment of joy.”

As recipients of the Gates Millennium Scholarship, Justin and his classmates will receive funding to cover almost the entirety of their bachelor’s degree, and further education if they so choose, at the college of their choice. The scholarship—launched through a historic, one billion dollar gift from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation—gives high-achieving minority students and women financial funds to pursue a college education in any area of interest.

The eligibility standards for the Gates are exceptionally rigorous in addition to having a minimum GPA of 3.3, applicants must demonstrate leadership skills and a commitment to community service. Only 1,000 scholarships are selected from a pool of over 53,000 applicants. For those who earn the scholarship, it represents an extraordinary opportunity to pursue both personal and professional dreams.

“Talking to youth and being around youth made me realize the amount of change that can be brought about on the reservation and how much change personally can create. It made me want to work harder, to get to a position where I can invest myself and I can get experience that will be helpful in the reservation when I do come back after getting my degree,” said Bobby Pourier – Yale University, Class of 2020. “Before last summer I had no clue what I was going to do for my future or where I was going to go to college. I used to do theatre and bridge. I’m interested in the profession because—looking around my reservation—a lot of the roads are falling apart and this place needs to be fixed. It’s been a dream of mine since I was a young kid, so I want to make that dream a reality.”

For the Gates application process, when I did doubt myself and I started comparing all of my essays to other people’s, it made a lot of sense to tell me. “You’re your own person, you have your own story.” I finally submitted my application, and I was amazed and shocked when I made the second round. “I was excited for everyone who told me to do it, because look at me now. It all paid off in the end.”

Dean Huerter. “Having that support to really create that foundation, in order to feel secure and motivated to help. And they all understand our mission of educating the whole student,” said Dean Huerter. “Beyond earning five more Gates scholarships, Dean Huerter says this year’s entire senior class has accomplished extraordinary things. They have earned acceptance to the most competitive colleges in the country, scholars are in service and volunteers in the community. But most critically for Huerter, they have learned to support one another.

Hope. Alive. 100 Mission Drive, Pine Ridge, South Dakota 57770
www.redcloudschool.org

Making a monthly recurring gift...
Dear friends,

This fall a young man named Bobby will be a part of the freshman class at Yale University. Alongside him will be his Red Cloud High School classmates. Like many other students in their newly-formed class, they will walk the infamously busy hallways, imagining the possibilities that await. For Bobby, in particular, the potential before him is especially significant.

As an 8th grade, Bobby was invited to attend the prestigious Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire for his upcoming high school years—a fortunate opportunity for our young men. Then he would be exposed to the best our country has to offer in secondary education. However, he named the opportunity down because, in his words, "I wanted to prove to everyone that I’m from the poorest country in the U.S. we could be accepted, and obtain a degree from, Yale... I wanted other people on the reservation to know they could do it, too."

Bobby is halfway there; he has been accepted. And I have no doubt he will prove his point.

Many years before, there were other students from Red Cloud who were faced with the usual path of high school graduation or taking the road less traveled, breaking that barrier. Bobby told that Peirce Senior residents students from back pursing a college career. Thankfully, they persisted and, today at Red Cloud we are no longer talking about "students will go to college, but we will go to college."

The stories define our community to those who do not know better describe the Pine Ridge reservation as having the lowest life expectancy in the women's hemisphere outside of Haiti. Here the per capita income is just $9,200 and a mere 12% of the population holds a Bachelor's degree. Eighty percent of people are unemployed.

And perhaps most invasive, more than 4.5 million cans of beer are sold annually in White Clay, Nebraska, just over the border from the reservation. (This amounts to more than 125,000 cans of beer a day in a town where the population is just 14 people.)

However, our students know they are so much more than the economic demographic that faces them. This data is more than just numbers; it is a powerful tool in their tool kit for success. They are members of a school that has graduated the most Gates Millennium Scholars of any school our size in the country—72 since the program’s inception. They are young men and women studying Lakota language and culture each day in the classroom and returning home in the evening to test their friends in the historic language, feeling the weight of their role as culture keepers. At Red Cloud students know that—like 99% of our recce graduate—residents their siblings and cousins have graduated and gone off to schools like Regis University and the University of South Dakota and are already returning to the reservation to work to improve their community—many are now in high school;

These are the types of qualifications our students want to know about them. And yet their perseverance and successes in spite of the economic struggle that faces them is what is most powerful to us.

In gratitude,

The George Wengerbauer Foundation

President

A Powerful Source of Healing

Angie agrees that the flea market provides an essential service to the community.

"Giving people a chance to earn additional income has an impact on the community. We want to help people feel a sense of dignity and pride. This gives people another opportunity to care for themselves and that ultimately helps to build more self-esteem."

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