



Flute-Making Workshop in Manderson (Pine Ridge) South Dakota



In March, we travelled to Manderson, South Dakota to conduct a Native American flute-making workshop with children at the Wounded Knee District School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Mr. Richard Iron Cloud of the Sweetgrass Project believes this “hands-on” cultural learning activity is instrumental in the healing of youth affected by suicide.



Our hosts were the Wounded Knee District School. One of our participants was interviewed by Diane Sawyer in her 20/20 report “Children of the Plains”.

Our hosts at the Wounded Knee school were Mr. Brian Charging Cloud and Mrs. Roberta Spencer, the school’s Lakota language studies teachers. Their goal for the kids is to recover their heritage and language in an immersion style program. They were eager to have this workshop as part of this cultural education initiative and we thank them for their hospitality.



Mr. Brian Charging Cloud (left) and Mr. Richard Iron Cloud (Right) shared some cultural stories with the kids on Wednesday.

We taught a core group of seven 6th graders basic flute-making and woodworking skills, however, we were visited daily by the other classes (2nd thru 8th grades). The kids jumped right in and diligently worked to complete their flutes. In all we shared with about 30 students.



Even the adults had a good time. Mr. Joseph Brings Plenty, the Dean of Students, got onto the shaving horse and worked-up a sweat carving his piece to the size he wanted.



We were invited to a cultural night on Wednesday which is held for members of the community. We were blessed with singing, story-telling and cultural discussions. Mr. Charging Cloud and Theresa arranged for this to be a means to give the items she collected from several of our friends (blankets, clothing and other goods) to the people as door prizes. One of the highlights of the evening was our friend Luke whose family received a willow chair.

About 50 adults and kids from the Manderson area came to the culture night where clothing, blankets and other donated items were given as door prizes. Our friend Luke won this willow chair.



On the final day we presented a completed flute to the student body. We also then presented the core group with a kid's flute to decorate as they desired.



The tools we brought to the school for the workshop have stayed as a donation. This gift was made possible by contributions (money, time, material) from various people and organizations along our road to Pine Ridge. Theresa and I thank you all for your love and support on this effort. And most of all, thank-you for your prayers! Mr. Charging Cloud plans to start an after-school program to continue working on flutes and had invited us to return for another workshop that could be as early as this coming summer.

