

Flutes for Hope Mission Report

This April, we took our third annual trip of visits to schools at the Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River reservations. These visits give us a chance to share a little, encourage youth and get to know the people in the community. This year was no exception! In-all the students of these schools made close to 100 flutes!

Takini School (Cheyenne River)



This year the weather was considerably better (no snow) so we were able to spend two full days at the school. Our hosts were Mr. Van St. John, the art teacher, and Principal Manny Iron Hawk.



We were blessed to see several of the students from last year's workshop including who has been practicing



flute-playing since we last saw him. In-fact, after he finished his flute this year, he composed and perfected a song which he recorded during the workshop using the best acoustical environment he could find (the boys restroom).



We also made some new friends during this workshop. One of the volunteers at the school, Debbie, came in to make flutes for her son and grandson. It was a real pleasure to get to know this dear

lady.

Wounded Knee (Pine Ridge)



Our workshop at Wounded Knee school (WKS) was our third annual visit during the regular school year. Our first groups were children in the younger grades and we did a flute show-and-tell; a welcome change between the rigors of the regular workshops. As usual these kids were eager to participate.

Theresa was also able to bring two large bags of baby blankets and caps and another large bag of knitwear crocheted and knitted by the St. Anthony's prayer shawl group. The baby items were given to "Baby Face", an organization headed by Laura Clifford, one

of the teachers at WKS. Baby Face does home visits in the Manderson community for families with children with under the age of 3, taking parenting goods, books and parent-child interaction activities.



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In our first workshop two years ago we had a group of sixth graders, Cheyenne, Mary, Leroy and Mileah, who were very patient and persistent while we tried carving flutes. This year they returned as eighth graders and were joined by the seventh grade making flutes from river-cane. I noticed their confidence and recall of the original workshop and it took very little direction when they had questions. Mileah had even begun to decorate her flute by the end of the workshop.

During these visits to Takini and Wounded Knee we became aware of some of the special needs and the impact

of external influences on these schools. These communities are not immune to the presence of gangs and bullying on youth. At this age the sense of being part of a group is very important and gangs are appealing for that reason. But gangs are often an avenue for drugs, violence and other crimes. Bullying is being actively dealt with by the schools as is evident by the program posters at WKS. Bullying has such a diverse footprint and can de-motivate some of the brightest and most talented students. If it escalates a child may attempt suicide as a means of escape. But we can all do a part to counter these pressures by being aware of the signs and encouraging the talents and gifts of our children. This boosts their confidence and self-esteem.

