



Rural Development • Native American Month • Community Facility

Our Lady of Lourdes Provides Foundational Skills and Oh So Much More

It was a special day for the students at the Our Lady of Lourdes, OLL, K- 8th grade school in Porcupine, SD as it was their last day before Thanksgiving break and many of their parents had joined them for lunch. It was fun to see the students excited about the holidays and the change from their usual routine.

I was honored to eat Thanksgiving lunch with Father George Winzenburg, S.J, administrator, students and staff at the School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation; part of the Red Cloud Indian School system. Tim Potts, Rural Development's South Dakota's West River Area Director and I visited to celebrate the purchase of several USDA Rural Development funded school buses.

It was extra special for me because I live on and grew up on the Pine Ridge Reservation and attended 4th through my 7th grades at Our Lady of Lourdes. I won't say how many years ago that was, but several historic events took place during that time. President Kennedy was assassinated and Billy Mills (also from Pine Ridge) won the Olympic Gold Medal in the 10,000 meter run in Tokyo.



Father George Winzenburg, SJ and USDA Rural Development State Director Elsie M. Meeks inspect one of the new buses.

Things have changed a bit at OLL since then. Gone are the dormitories. OLL had been a boarding school and now buses children from over a fifty mile radius. A two-story, multiple classroom building replaces two small buildings that housed the 4th - 8th graders and the 1st - 3rd. I noticed none of the students were wearing maroon uniforms (jump dresses) that we had to wear!

But the one thing that hasn't changed is the quality of education. OLL and Red Cloud Indian School system are still considered the premier schools on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. I can honestly say the lessons I had during my time at OLL was foundational and no other school I attended after taught me more than I what I learned while there.

So, in honor of Native American month and in honor of Thanksgiving, thank you Our Lady of Lourdes for teaching me so many things and continuing to do the work you have done for so many years! USDA Rural Development is happy that we could be a part of this day and contribute to your future.

Obligation Amount: \$30,000 Community Facility Loan and a \$25,000 Grant

Date of Obligation: 04/28/2014

Congressional District: Senators Thune and Rounds ; Representative Noem, SD

Partners: Red Cloud Indian School, Inc. and USDA Rural Development

Demographics: Shannon County

Impact: The school system now has the ability to bus students in from a 50-mile radius to participate in school activities.