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# Magis Catholic Teacher Corps at Red Cloud Indian School

## *Transformed and Strengthened in Faith*

By John Roselle, S.J.

Over a century ago, Chief Red Cloud requested aid from the “Black Robes” to teach his people, the Oglala Lakota, on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota. Jesuits have worked there ever since. Lakota youth continue to study at a school that bears the great chief’s name. Though many on the reservation struggle with substance abuse and other difficulties, Red Cloud Indian School is committed to bringing hope to its students in a Lakota-Catholic environment.

Creighton University has formed several ties with Red Cloud Indian School. The Jesuits’ Wisconsin Province includes both apostolates, though over 300 miles separate them. Creighton is the alma mater of some of the many Gates Millennium Scholars that Red Cloud has produced. Creighton is also the home of the Magis Catholic Teacher Corps, which forms recent college graduates into skilled teachers. They spend two years living in community while teaching full-time and earning a master’s degree in education.

During the school year, they take online education courses; in the summer, their intensive courses are on campus.

In 2007 Magis sent two teachers to live and work with the already existing Red Cloud Volunteer Corps. Sixteen more have followed, including eight there now. Besides teaching, they drive school busses, coach, and fill multiple other roles. Volunteers labor alongside Jesuits and lay collaborators as they seek the holistic development of Lakota youth.

Colleen (Keller) Chiacchere taught at Red Cloud years before Magis arrived there; she now serves as the assistant director of Magis. Colleen describes how “the Magis-Red Cloud partnership has strengthened the professionalism of the Red Cloud volunteer program and provided Red Cloud Indian School with new, talented, mission-oriented, trained, certified teachers” at varied grade levels on two campuses. The experience benefits the volunteers deeply; Colleen believes that “our Magis teachers leave Red Cloud transformed and strengthened in their faith and

part of the loving and welcoming community of Red Cloud.”

The Magis experience at Red Cloud is a privileged opportunity to befriend the Lakota people and encounter the beauty of their living tradition by attending pow-wows, sweat lodges, and other events. Jeff Dorr, a former Magis teacher and now a Jesuit scholastic, expresses that those who participate in Magis at Red Cloud “encounter a new culture and in many ways a new world. Amidst this encounter they are offered a unique opportunity to explore their own identities particularly in terms of what it means to be Catholic educators.”

Although Magis has a minimum commitment of two years at Red Cloud, volunteers’ generosity has extended farther. Some have continued there or have come back later to teach. Anne Grass, who completed Magis there in 2009, now coordinates over 20 teachers through the Red Cloud Volunteer Program. Besides Jeff Dorr, another Magis teacher (your author) has also joined the Jesuits. Since 2010, Magis has also sent seven teachers to work

with students from the Omaha and Winnebago tribes on the St. Augustine Indian Mission in northeastern Nebraska.

Colleen explains that “Magis Catholic Teacher Corps is one of the only University Consortium for Catholic Education programs [service through teaching] that serve on American Indian reservations, so many of our applicants seek out Magis Catholic Teacher Corps for that reason.” Magis teachers at Red Cloud do face certain daunting prospects. Students often bring immense family and social pain to the classroom, and dysfunctions (usually related to alcohol) can distract students from academics.

Chief Red Cloud remains buried alongside his Black Robes atop a hill that overlooks the residences of the Magis teachers and other volunteers. The Magis Catholic Teacher Corps at Red Cloud Indian School is an important chapter in the partnership between the Oglala Lakota and the Wisconsin Province Jesuits via Creighton University. Chief Red Cloud would be pleased.

(For more on the Magis Catholic Teacher Corps at Creighton University, visit [creighton.edu/magis](http://creighton.edu/magis))

*John Roselle, S.J., from Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, attended Creighton University as an undergraduate and returned there for the Magis Catholic Teacher Corps program. He now teaches at Marquette University High School in Milwaukee.*

## Inside-Out

By Kathleen Shull

Most students of the Inside-Out courses at Saint Joseph’s University have anecdotes of revelation of heart-felt thoughts about their time in the class. If lucky enough to make it through the applications and interview process just to be able to register for the course, they are even luckier by the time they end their 14-week experience. Eyes have been

opened, prejudices demolished, and empathy nourished.

There are two different Inside-Out courses taught at Saint Joseph’s: “Exploring Crime and Justice Behind the Walls” with Susan Clampet-Lundquist, Ph. D., a sociology professor, and “Dimensions of Freedom” with Thomas J. Brennan, S.J., and Elizabeth A. Linehan, R.S.M., Ph.D., English and philosophy professors,

respectively. For each course, 15 students from the university, the “outside” students, travel to a jail or a prison in the Philadelphia area for a three-hour class once a week with 15 incarcerated students, the “inside” students. One benefit of these classes is the relationship formed between inside and outside students. While communication is prohibited except during class, the topics