General Information

Source: NBC Today Show  Resource Type: Video News Report
Creator: Deborah Norville  Copyright: NBCUniversal Media, LLC.
Event Date: 10/24/1990  Copyright Date: 1990
Air/Publish Date: 10/24/1990  Clip Length 00:05:59

Description
The Native American Preparatory School in Las Cruces, New Mexico gives Native American children a high quality education and the opportunity to build a future.

Keywords
Native American Preparatory School, Prep School, Education, Tribes, Reservation, Culture, Students, Children, Boarding School, Assimilation, Las Cruces, New Mexico, Native Americans, Indians

Citation
MLA
Transcript

Native American Preparatory School

DEBORAH NORVILLE, co-host:

Indian reservations and prep schools are not two things you'd ordinarily think of together. But those two vastly different worlds have been linked over the last three summers by something called the Native American Preparatory School. It was held this last summer at Las Cruces, New Mexico.

MONTY WHITE: [Speaks in native language] Hello. My name is Monty White. I am of the Salt clan and from the Many Goats clan. My hometown is in Pinon, Arizona. Welcome to the Native American Preparatory School's 1990 commencement exercises.

TREE ESCALANTI (Mesa, Arizona): My grandparents are always telling me that education is important. Now I have an opportunity to fulfill my dreams and theirs.

Dr. JOSEPH CURRY (Headmaster): We are sealing up and bringing together a group of kids who are winners. They've been brought together so that they can associate with other winners.

TED LUTKUS: And what's this right here?

NORVILLE: They're some of the best and the brightest--seventh, eighth, and ninth graders--Native American students from 28 tribes.

Mr. LUTKUS: That'll be a lot closer to the true temperature. They're actually a very motivated group with a lot of natural ability. But on top of that, they work.

UNIDENTIFIED GIRL #1: Well, it challenges you a lot more, so that you're not just learning the same thing over.

NORVILLE: Over the last three summers, a total of 350 students have come together to attend the Native American Preparatory School.

SHARLYN SANCHEZ (Acoma, New Mexico): I learned more in six weeks than I would at school.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: What do we know about Modest?

Ms. SANCHEZ: Some people, you know, they just don't understand. They just think we're dumb. They think Indians are dumb. They don't realize that we have minds and we can think. Us Indians can do it just like the white men can. And we can get out there and make a name for ourselves, just like the white men.
Dr. CURRY: Everybody who purported to know anything about Native American education has said not only will they not come, but if they do, they will run away. They'll have to go out at night to perform all kinds of strange rituals, looking at the stars; and they didn't say baying at the moon, but that wouldn't have been far away from what they were saying.

Ms. VIRGINIA ROBBINS (Teacher): OK, let's do jabberwocky. You all got it memorized?
CLASS: Yes.
ROBBINS: I know you know it. Let's try it.
CLASS: Twas brillig...
ROBBINS: By nature of their culture, the youth is to defer to the elder, and the eye contact comes right away, once they begin to trust you and know that it's OK.
Dr. CURRY: We've been told these people will never come to your school and parents will never leave their children with you. The boarding school represented to the American Indian an institution that virtually kidnapped a generation of children, cut off their hair, forbade them to speak their language, stripped away their dignity and left them ill-equipped for either the mainstream world or for the world on the reservation that they'd left behind. That's the legacy that--that we were fighting against.
Ms. DALE SANCHEZ (Mother): Everything is getting so modern and yet we try to hold on to our kids for traditional reasons. We’re like one big family. One by one they are leaving.
Mr. ELBERT DAYZIE (Rock Point, Arizona): Nobody really knows, or nobody cares for the outside world on the reservation. It happens that I care. And I want to go travel the world, see what other people know and do, not only my own.
Dr. CURRY: At the end of the three summers, our hope is that we can have found placement in a preparatory school for all of the children who want that.
NORVILLE: This fall, 34 Native American Preparatory School students enrolled in 19 year-round prep schools.
Dr. CURRY: Now we don't want to turn them into preppies. I want them to pick up some of the--some of the self-assuredness that comes with the best possible education. The--the sense of foreboding, the sense of distrust, has now been replaced by a sense of entitlement. And they now expect that this is going to happen year after year.
Ms. DALE SANCHEZ: Hopefully when--when my grandkids get up there, we're just--then they will quick, but I want to be--still be involved in something else.
Dr. CURRY: They all need to face the fact, though, that they are going to need massive amounts of financial aid.
Ms. DENISE HOBSON (Chinle, Arizona): It kind of scares me to think about how my life would be without NAPS, because it's just made--it's made so much of a difference. And I wish that other people could have the opportunity.
Mr. WHITE: Preserve this also; we mustn't live in two worlds. We must create a world of our own as native American Indians, and in this way we shall hit the target and continue building, once again, the path of our forefathers.
NORVILLE: The Native American Prep School gets no government funds and the private money it's been
depending on is drying up. At this stage of the game, it's hard to say whether or not there'll even be another session next summer.