

Red Cloud Indian School

How far would you walk to go to school?

Dear Friend of American Indians,

I'd like to tell you about Steve, a young Lakota boy I know. He's a student here at the Red Cloud Indian School, one of whom I am most proud. [insert background sentence on the school.]

Steve works hard in school and excels in his classes, but that doesn't surprise me. All of our students are grateful for their education and love to learn. All of our students work very, very hard.

What *is* surprising is what young Steve has to do to get here each day.

Due to the poverty and isolation that is common in this area and to the Lakota Indians, Steve's family lives far off the main road, forcing Steve to walk miles – often in very harsh conditions – just to get to the nearest bus stop.

Steve must get up at 4:30am in the winter, when temperatures can drop as low as 40 degrees below zero, and he has to fight snow drifts to make it to the bus stop in time for the 6:30am pickup!

And the springtime is no better, because once the temperatures begin to rise, young Steve faces another challenge – the great amounts of mud he has to trudge through, caused by the melting snow.

He then has an almost hour-long ride to school, and doesn't get home again until 6 o'clock in the evening. Then he has to eat, do homework and household chores, get to bed and be up again the next morning by 4:30 and do it all over again.

Steve does this every day, all year long. It would be quite a struggle for anyone, but it is especially hard for a young boy like Steve.

One day I asked Steve why he does it. "*Father, I just want to have a chance,*" he said. "That's why I came to Red Cloud."

Those words echo in my head every day, as I think of that one boy's simple desire to have a chance at an education.

Steve's desire to learn and his hard work make me proud. But it also makes me scared.

I'm scared because I know that Steve isn't the only student here at Red Cloud that has to struggle so hard just to get here each day.

That struggle is common to all of our students. Simply getting to school shouldn't be so hard!

But it's about to get even harder. You see, I'm also scared because gas prices have been steadily increasing. It now costs **\$80 more a day** to fuel our buses than it did at the beginning of the school year – just months ago. And sadly, there is no end in sight.

Our Red Cloud buses must travel over 1,000 miles a day to keep the door to the future open for these hardworking and bright Lakota children.

I'll be honest with you – we can't afford to keep our buses running without help from folks like you.

With the increased costs of fuel delivery, running the buses and heating fuel (essential in our long, cold winters) we have already been forced to cut back in other areas.

No matter where we cut corners, the children are the ones that lose out in the end, whether it means fewer books in the classroom, cutting projects in the high school, or cutting food costs in the school cafeteria.

Without your help, we have no choice but to cut back in these important areas. I have no choice but to ask you to do whatever you can to help keep hope alive for Steve and the other children just like him.

Any gift you can send today, \$___, \$___, \$___ or even \$___ will help keep our buses running and promising young children like Steve in school. I can't imagine anything more worthwhile than that.

God Bless you for making their
dreams possible,

[sig]

Father Peter J. Klink, S.J.
President, Red Cloud Indian School

P.S. Each morning before breakfast, we have spent more than \$365.00 on gasoline alone. These buses must keep running if we are to help keep these kids in school, and keep alive their dreams for the future. Thank you in advance for whatever you can do to help.