

The Dreamer

Exclusive news for the St. Joseph's Indian School DreamMakers



July 2023

Students at St. Joseph's Discover their Cultural Identity

Students at St. Joseph's learn more than key subjects in their classrooms ... they also discover themselves.

If you were to ponder the important subjects taught in classrooms across the country, what might you think of?

Perhaps math, science, reading and English are the first to come to mind. While these subjects are, of course, important for a well-rounded student to succeed in the real world one day, among the list of subjects provided to students at St. Joseph's Indian School, there is one that is extra special.

That class is **Native American Studies**. It's a class that aims at preserving and sharing the Lakota (Sioux) culture, traditions and language through every student at St. Joseph's. While coming to understand one's background and culture may seem like a daunting task for school-aged children, it can actually be a simple and fun opportunity for self-discovery.

When referring to culture, there is a special term for this self-discovery. It's called "cultural identity".



LaRayne is the Native American Studies Lead and Cultural Specialist at St. Joseph's. As a cultural specialist, LaRayne developed a unique

(over, please)



project called “30 Ways to Build Cultural Identity for Native American Children”. In the lesson, LaRayne challenges the students to discover who they are and where they came from.

“People are often interested about their ancestry, but may not know where to start. There are so many small steps you can take each day by studying, cooking and exploring to discover and connect with your culture,” said LaRayne. “This lesson highlights 30 of those small steps.”

Five of the 30 examples to develop cultural identity include:

1. Learn and retell your creation story.
2. Study a traditional craft, such as beading, and try it.
3. Know kinship terms and use them often.
4. Host a meal of traditional foods and learn how to make them.
5. Perform a traditional dance and pass it on.

Students are provided opportunities throughout the year to experience their culture in the ways suggested in the lesson. Of course, the most popular opportunity being our powwow, which correlates nicely with number five above. This September we will celebrate our 47th Annual Powwow.

“I have been getting ready for powwow by practicing my dancing, and also helping others get ready,” said Ezmiah, a St. Joseph’s student. “It’s been my dream to become a really great dancer.”

And as Ezmiah practices, we know she will achieve her dream. Along the way, Ezmiah may just find out what she’s capable of and a part of who she is at her center. Thus, completing the full-circle experience of discovering her personal cultural identity.

Cultural identity is not only for Native Americans to discover. While this activity focuses on Native American children, LaRayne recommends parents and teachers use this exercise and share ideas to help any child, of any race or ethnicity, connect with his or her own heritage — from Hispanic and African cultures to French, Irish and beyond.

Your kindness and monthly support make St. Joseph’s a great environment for students as we work to educate Native American children and families for life — *mind, body, heart and spirit*. **Philámayaye** — *thank you* — for your generosity!

Want to view the full list of **30 Ways to Build Cultural Identity for Native American Children**? Scan the QR code now!



DID YOU KNOW?

Native American beliefs and values, as in most cultures, help shape life-changing decisions and plans for the future. Discover the beliefs and traditions the Lakota (Sioux) historically, and still to this day, hold dear at stjo.org/culture.



St. Joseph's Indian School
We serve and teach, we receive and learn.
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Sophia



Dear Dohar

MY name is Chantz
and I am in 2nd
grade. Thank you for
all you do. I like
to go swimming at
our pool.

When I grow up
I want to be a cop.

YOUR Friend
Chantz