

May 2017; summer update

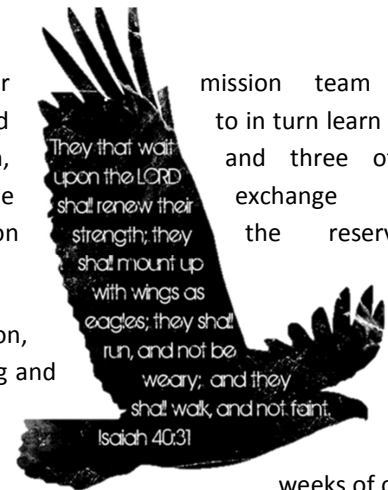
Three weeks into the summer, I am finally taking a moment to sit down and update you about our final weeks of the 2016/17 school year. Doing this involves both, looking back, and maybe more importantly, looking ahead.

### *looking back*

The last few weeks of the year were marked by very little sleep and a curious mixture of a desire to finish the year off well and a sense of hesitancy to actually release the kids into the summer break. Summer comes with a very different set of challenges here in Oglala, challenges serious enough to where even the faces of our teens during our final bible study revealed how reluctantly most of them were to go into this part of the year.

The last few weeks of the year were also **packed** with activity. Our biggest summer middle schoolers, teachers and chaperones) came in to teach crafts and basketball, and Lakota culture. One of our kids' grandmas agreed to come to class for a Q+A session, students gave a dance performance for the whole group at the Rec Center. A genuine working together, especially beautiful to watch considering the history of education on which at different times was very one sided.

In class, our main focus was on finishing the research and reporting each student took on, on a country of their choice, and of course reviewing different aspects of story writing and language arts. I learned things I did not previously know about the Bahamas, New Zealand, Italy, Russia, Mexico, and China. And while the techniques of researching the structuring of a research paper definitely could have benefitted from a few more weeks of class, I was impressed with what the kids gained in terms of general knowledge about the geography of our planet – something they were able to pass on during a fun, fast paced geography quiz they hosted as part of our end of the year program. With many former teachers visiting, and two high schoolers graduating who practically grew up together, it truly felt like a family event. And as difficult as it was to let the kids go, knowing that some will go on to other schools, it made me all the more thankful for our big end of the year field trip that Eric and I were able to enjoy with my class. We spent two nights in Denver, visiting the Zoo, exploring the Museum of Nature and Science (including a planetarium show), eating foods from three different continents in one night (and ice cream!), going on a scavenger hunt at the Global Village Museum in Fort Collins, eating European baked goods, and learning how Candy is made at the Hammond's Candy Factory. Our budget even allowed for a special treat for one of my students: a tour of the Mile High Stadium, home of his favorite team: the Denver Broncos. Being able to take the teaching outside of the classroom, and share some of the enthusiasm about all the things that are out there to learn, was definitely a highlight this year. Also, the fact that the kids made it their own by raising about half of the funds themselves. Thank You so much to all who helped make this trip possible, You are a blessing!



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### *looking ahead*

It's just now mid-June, and already a lot of prayer and thought goes towards preparing the next year. PLEASE pray for God to send workers (Matthew 9:38)! I will probably be able to help out in the school during the month of September, but from October on the middle school class (grades 4 through 6) needs a teacher while I take on this new adventure of motherhood. Also, the school is looking for a K/1 teacher, for volunteers to introduce and teach some of their own skills, even teachers specializing in a specific subject. I want to encourage you to spread the word, pass on our newsletters, make it an announcement in your church or bible study groups, maybe especially where you do not suspect anyone would be interested. It's up to God to move hearts, and while teaching experience or an education would certainly be helpful, it's not a requirement. God is the one who equips, me teaching last year is proof of that. ☺

This past year has been a year of my thinking being constantly and consistently redirected; one of heavenly provision, not only financially but more so emotionally and spiritually; one of growth in my willingness to fully depend on God, and on Him alone. Whoever you are, adventurous or not (I did not use to be an adventurer, at all), if God is tugging on your heart (and you know what that looks like), take the leap, come out and get to know us. The harvest is plentiful.

I want to thank all of you who have supported me financially! If you want to continue doing this, feel free. Eric's and my bills still need to get paid and with our little one on the way there are extra expenses waiting for us. You can send your donations directly to the Rec Center. That said, I do want to encourage you to first of all consider supporting new teachers at the school! I will send out an update at the beginning of the new school year, and of course you can always contact me and ask what's new. Meanwhile, feel free to send your checks to Oyate Concern with a note like "new teachers fund", every dollar is a huge blessing.

**As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven. He is a shield to all who trust in Him. 2 Samuel 22:31**

Thank You so much for all your support throughout the year! Please pray for our students, that they would find their identity in Jesus, and a passion and curiosity for something that will motivate them to learn and press on. "For I know the plans that I have for [them], says the Lord, [...] plans to give [them] hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29.11).

Ela Sutton at Oyate Concern

*Putting Wings on Weary Hearts*

