

## Reflections on the



We pulled into the camp at about ten o'clock at night. Worries about the amount of insects and uncertainties about the choice we made to come on this trip filled our brains making it hard to think. However the humidity in the air made it just as hard to breathe. After a rough hour, our tents are prepared and we gather around the light to sing our first song. Before the final notes even began to linger in the air, many of the other Native American teens had joined us. For them we performed a modern funk version of *Kumba yah*. We ended the night after singing our hearts out and having danced with an energetic young girl named Anna.



The following days were not quite what we expected; there was one shower per bathroom but there was only one bathroom for the men and one for the women, either that or the nearby port-a-potties. By Thursday night, the girls' tent had an impressive collection of earwigs, flies, and mosquitoes. We could not decide if it was better to sleep out of our sleeping bags to avoid the heat or in them to avoid most of the bugs.

The majority of the youth spent both Tuesday and Wednesday at Corn Creek getting to know the other churches and more of the actual community at the reservation. We found very few teens there, more of little children, adults with newborns or the elderly. Nevertheless everything went great and we all had fun with arts and crafts, basketball, kickball, or throwing the Frisbee around.

At first when this reservation had been described to us the main word used had been

hopeless and as we drove into Corn Creek, those of us who were awake could clearly see the hopelessness emanating off the land. We could see broken down houses with broken down basketball rims (if they had one) and broken down spirits in the people. Many dogs surrounded the area where we were at Corn Creek, limping around in their own pathetic way, perhaps covered in fleas.

The good thing was that no matter how hopeless the reservation seemed, the people still came up to us with smiles on their faces, ready for a good time. We all learned a few things about sharing and sacrificing. A favorite story that has been retold many times now by our

group is of a young boy from one of the churches and a Native American girl. The boy had spent an hour or two working very hard on coloring one of the patterned crosses, the results were very beautiful. Yet as soon as the girl came to admire his work, he graciously gave it to her and walked



away, expecting nothing in return. There is no denying that this is what we had been sent to do. As we drove out of Corn Creek on Wednesday for the last time, I wondered what they would do after all the excitement left,

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## Mission Trip

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would they be as empty as before or had we brought them a gift that would give them lasting joy?

Despite the strange and uncomfortable situations we were in the fun never stopped. One night we led the worship at the common meeting place and had a blast singing. We went swimming at least once and still have the sand in our pants to prove that we got to enjoy the current. We had constant water fights despite the fact that there was only one fountain per camping area. On our day off, we chilled and migrated to different shady areas, attempting to avoid water fights.

Some of us got to know the Native American teens much, much better. Some of us brought in our own talents to mix with those of others, we beat-boxed, sang, and break danced. Some of us played more basketball or football, tried archery or chilled with new friends. The best part is that we shared all this fun with the teens at the camp and it seemed that not a single person was left out.

We were scheduled to leave Friday morning so we made the most of our Thursday, we made great friends and exchanged addresses and phone numbers. We played our last games, sang our last songs, and had our last conversations with our new friends. Before digging in to some Dutch oven cobbler, we circled up and testified about what we had found at this camp. We found reasons not to be selfish, reasons to praise God, reasons to sing more, reasons to appreciate more, reasons to learn and teach, and we found reasons to return. We slept

as the rain pelted our tents and threatened to flood us out and awoke to our last morning and last breakfast in South Dakota. We packed up before we ate and cleaned up after. The few friends we had made who had awoken in time to see us off. So we all gave our biggest hugs and biggest smiles, holding back our biggest

tears as we realized that some of us might never meet again and if we did, it would not be for quite a while.

We sped off in our mostly air conditioned cars towards the black hills and Mount Rushmore. It was an experience dimmed by what we still felt from our week. We have returned to Colorado, back to our comforts—now as im-

migrants set apart by what we learned, what we saw, what we heard, and what we felt. I know that if asked our group would pile back into the cars, despite the promise of hardship. In the meantime you should consider going on the next trip!



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