

Big Sister/ Little Sister

By LaVelle Walker

Out of concern for the younger and new female students who are often lonely and homesick a Big Sister/Little Sister Program was launched.

The program grew out of a strong concern older girls were expressing about their younger classmates, explained program director Lori Bighorn.

Kindship ties have always been strong among Indian people. Extending these bonds to make the girls see that as Indian women they are indeed sisters interdependent upon each other was the driving force behind the establishment of the program.

September 14 was the official kick off of the program.

Each girl was assigned a big sister--a student who was a returning student. Each girl then not only had a new adopted sister, but was "adopted" by a group leader which was a female staff member who wanted to be an extra support and friend to the girls.

Prior to meeting the members of their group, several Indian women gave presentations on the traditional values of womanhood. They were Tuluah Pinkham, Yakima; Jill Hagen,

Seneca; Cathy Gree, Laguna/Pueblo; and Germaine Kunaah, Sioux. Vieta Hemsley, director of the Salem Womens' Crisis Center also addressed the girls.

TULUAH PINKHAM

In addressing the 250 girls Mrs. Tuluah Pinkham, Yakima, and mother of seven children, stressed the importance of taking care of each other, in having sisters all over the world, and treating each other with respect.

"The future builders of every tribe are the Indian Women. You are not to be mistreated -- not by yourself by using alcohol, sex, drugs, or by others. Put out your hand to your neighbors of small and large tribes. We are all going to need our sisters in the future."

She complimented the girls by saying she had never seen so many beautiful faces in such a long time. "Don't use too much make-up -- you are already so beautiful!"

Mrs. Pinkham applauded the girls for taking time to think about themselves and their role as developing Indian Women.

"I address you today as Indian women because you all have biologically started that process. That means you have responsibilities not only to bring up children with love, but to make changes."

"Your body is a sacred gift. Never misuse it. Keep yourself physically and spiritually clean. Do things that are mature and respectful, things that make you feel like a woman. Don't fall in love or think you are in love. Right now you need all the time, help, and energy to help you grow now," explained Pinkham.

In cautioning girls to take care of themselves in their relationships with boys, Pinkham stressed that girls must have and demonstrate self control. Teenage pregnancies are not only physically dangerous, but constitute a high death rate for newborn with a low birth weight and fetal alcohol.

"I am your mother. I expect you to learn from me and other teachers. I know you will take care of each other. You are going to need one another. Don't be jealous of each other because you come from different tribes. When I went to Chemawa we didn't see each other as coming from various tribes. It was like Chemawa was our tribe--where we all came from."

"Be proud of Chemawa. Be willing to reach out to your Indian sisters across the world. It's a great feeling to know your sisters can reach out for help and find it, especially when you are in a strange place."

Mrs. Pinkham graduated from Chemawa in 1954 and went on to "extending my kindness and friendships at Haskell."

While a student at Chemawa Pinkham served as student council president, excelled in sports and maintained an overall 3.8 G.P.A.

We Have Strength In Unity

KATHY GREEN

Kathy Green, Laguna/Pueblo, current administrator assistant for the Oregon Commission on Indian Services, shared her experiences growing up at St. Catherine's Indian boarding school and how they became a close family of sisters. Being with Indian women, explained Ms. Green, gave her a growing sense of who she was as an Indian woman.

"You have a unique opportunity here to begin the growing up process by being a Big/Little Sister. You can learn from each other, share different lifestyles, learn how to listen, learn how to be a friend and how to get along with each other and gain new ideas that you will use later."

By caring and sharing for each other, students can have the best of both worlds: education and contribute to each other which are strong traits not only in our traditional cultures, but in women's cultures.

By nurturing each other Indian women become strong and confident. She develops dreams and sets goals to achieve those dreams. This, said Green, carries on the traditional role of building confidence and self-respect.

"What Indian women do today is what they have learned from other Indian women. Strive to be the best -- do it well. Realize, too, that anything you choose to do is equally important to all things."

"In all your choice of events that enhance you -- these decisions affirm Creator and affirm



Monte and Jesus ask, "Would you like seconds?"

the possibilities of yourself. "I challenge you to set goals, to be women of vision. Together you determine your future and the future of the Indian people."

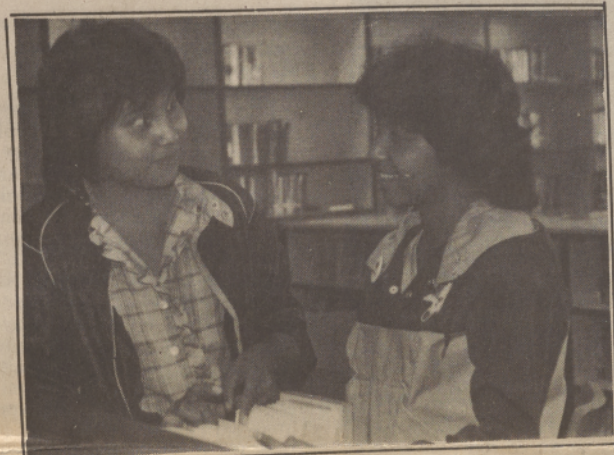


Pinkham Shares Traditional Values



KATHY GREEN

TULUAH PINKHAM



Big Sister/ shows her little sister how to act cool and study at the same time.



WE HAVE STRENGTH IN unity
WELCOME
Big Sisters Little Sisters and ?



Corrine ChiefStick and Carrie Whitford show Chemawa they have strength in unity.

VIETA HEMSLEY

Mrs. Hemsley reaffirmed the other speakers' statements and added that Big/Sister programs help each other by building networks. These lead to gaining power to make changes for all women.

"Women traditionally have been kept apart, except Indian women. Strengthen those ties with each other so you will be in a position to get what you want as a strong united group."

In summarizing the events of the afternoon Lori Bighorn and Jill Hagen encouraged the girls to reach outside of themselves and become aware of the pains and hurts of each other.

"We are our sisters' keeper, we belong to each other. If I am lonely or isolated or unloved then all my sisters are in pain."

"We have a right not only to live, but to be respected, accepted and loved. Don't allow boys

to divide you through petty jealousy. If you can't trust them, if everytime they leave your sight you're afraid they'll leave you, then maybe they aren't worth it. Treat yourself and each other with dignity. "We have strength in unity!" summarized Bighorn.

