

Walking Shield

Ingenuity Resourcefulness Powers of Negotiation Commitment Respect

STORY

When a group of Native Americans took over Alcatraz prison, protesting generations of injustice, Phil Stevens decided he wanted to do something to help. As a successful businessman, he hadn't thought much about his Lakota Sioux roots until he visited the reservations. "Our people are refugees in their own land," he told his family upon his return. This is the story of how Phil used his business savvy and connections to find ingenious ways to bring desperately needed clothing, medical supplies, and housing to the reservations. "The most important thing we are doing is providing hope for our people," he says. His organization, Operation Walking Shield, is helping people rebuild their hopes, their dreams, and their dignity. "I tell the young people they need to learn to live in both cultures -- with a moccasin one foot and a tennis shoe on the other," Phil says.

ACTIONS

- Research the life of a young person on a reservation. Have students imagine how their lives would be different if they lived there, even for a week. Write a report on their ideas.
- Watch the film, *Smoke Signals* and discuss how the young people honor their elders.

Language Arts

Social Studies

- Research how many reservations there are in America. Where are they located? Write a report about the differences in their economy, health, educational services and your city.
- Native Americans have a deep respect and strong tradition of caring for the earth. Study various tribes who are trying to restore the ecological balance (Washington, Canada).
- Research the Hopi Indian prophecy regarding how we should care for the environment.

Community Service

- Adopt a school on a reservation. Set up pen pals with students and donate school supplies
- Hold a lightly used winter clothing drive to bring warmth to people on the reservation.
- Help the Walking Shield American Indian Society provide food, shelter, medical assistance and education for Native Americans. www.walkingshield.org

This story is featured on the *Stone Soup for the World* audio tape.

Reflection Questions

1. Why would Phil give up his good job and salary to help Native Americans?
2. Why did he call them "refugees in their own land"? What is life like on a reservation?
3. What creative ideas do you have for recycling things to those in need?
4. One of the Indian chiefs said there are 4 kinds of people. Which one are you?

Lessons You Can Learn

1. By reconnecting with his heritage, Phil transformed his life and helped others.
2. There is great power in working together with people so they can improve their lives.
3. During peacetime, the military can be used to help others in our own country.
4. Native American people are struggling to survive on reservations and need our help