



# Cultivating lifelong learners The Yaxche School

By Sandy Penny

**Y**axche is Mayan for the "tree of life." Growth is a big focus at Yaxche—personal and academic growth for students; a larger student population; and a new campus.

Yaxche is an accredited independent Taos community school that serves students in kindergarten through ninth grade, soon to add Pre-K and 10th. At the heart of a Yaxche education is: Academic excellence, earth stewardship, diversity, emotional intelligence, creativity through the arts, and social justice. The school's philosophy mandates education that is student-centered, experiential, participatory and rooted in community.

Yaxche cultivates lifelong learners and leaders who value knowledge, self-awareness, and kinship. Students, teachers and parents work together to maintain a joyful environment that inspires each person to question, reflect, sustain effort and act with empathy, confidence and integrity.

To accommodate a growing expansion rate of 26 percent per year, Yaxche recently purchased the seven-acre estate of R.C. Gorman, the internationally acclaimed Native American artist. The new campus provides an ideal location for the Yaxche Green Campus to incorporate environmentally sustainable technologies into the school curriculum. Yaxche's expanded earth stewardship program provides students with opportunities to acquire wilderness skills, meet challenges, work cooperatively and connect the classroom to the natural world.

### Student Body Ethnic Diversity

Reflecting Taos's multicultural community, Yaxche's student body includes 18 percent Native Americans; 24 percent Hispanics; 54 percent Anglos; and 4 percent other students. Yaxche helps realize ethnic and economic diversity by offering scholarships to more than 55 percent of its students, compared to 17-22 percent for the national average.

Yaxche parents and students express strong positive opinions about the school and its effects on their families.

"What I enjoy most about Yaxche is its cultural sensitivity for Native children," said Yaxche parent Jeff Romanoido. "The thing that discourages Native families from applying or enrolling is the tuition. Scholarships and sponsorships make it affordable. I am grateful for the



### I AM

I am the beautiful, loud whispers of my ancestors that have walked before me.

I am from mother earth. The complex details of nature are what makes me, me.

I am the wind so calm yet wild, but always strong.

I am from two separate worlds both unique in their own way.

I am a tiny detail in a beautiful masterpiece.

I am from my mother oh so strong, my father a warrior of heart, and shaped by my step-mom, a caring loving woman.

I am a Native American made up of many things both complex and simple.

I am a young lady changing into a woman with the earth, changing with the mountains, with the rivers and the lakes. The earth is shaping me into a better human being.

I am from the sacred land that my ancestors fought over. I am a part of something great, something unexplainable.

I am unique, complex, rare, beautiful, confident, proud, and special in my own way.

No one can change me. I am me!

- By Emileah Lujan, eight-grade student, Yaxche School



Light up the World, students made flashlights from all recycled materials.



the wonderful educational program come encouragement, kindness and respect, where kids thrive in the dedication and love of their teachers."

Taos Pueblo and Yaxche parent Patricia Michaels especially appreciates Yaxche's programs. "One of the gifts my people have to offer is a close connection to nature. Yaxche's programs of environmental awareness and participation make us feel at home," Michaels added. "Our cultural traditions are embraced when our children dance for Yaxche community celebrations, and instinctively and gracefully share their earth knowledge."

Applications for 2008 are due by March 20. Scholarships and sponsorships may be available.

Contact Beth Frost, head of school, for applications or to support or sponsor a child at Yaxche.



Many multi-cultural traditions are explored.

at a glance

### Yaxche School

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