

How One Person Can Make a Difference

by
Megan Weiler



I dedicate this book to Mrs. Riccio.
She makes me feel so special.

M.W.

“Class settle down!” snarled Mrs. Meanwild. She had big, thick glasses that fogged up when she got angry, which happened a lot. She was scary looking for a teacher. Her shoes looked to tight for her large, bulging feet.

“Class, please give a warm welcome to Little Deer,” the teacher cackled. No one said anything. One kid giggled and whispered about Little Deer’s glasses. Mrs. Meanwild pointed Little Deer to her seat. She told the class to open their workbooks. Everybody followed directions. Everybody but Little Deer. A girl named Clair snickered at her. Mrs. Meanwild rolled her eyes and opened Little Deer’s workbook for her.

Little Deer was an American Indian. She had long, straight black hair. Her skin was the color of a fawn and just as soft. Her glasses framed two beautiful dark brown eyes. A brave soldier saved most of her family during a serious disturbance on her reservation. She knew very little English. It was almost impossible for her to follow along. Even though her old home was in a terrible place, she wanted to be there instead of at school. But there was no way her family would go back to the reservation since her mother had found a job. Her mother was proud to work at a school for the deaf as a cafeteria lady.



At lunch on that frightening first day of school Little Deer sat alone. Clair and her friends laughed at her and her unusual food. They teased her and shrieked out, "Dummy! Weirdo! Baby!" That night at dinner, Little Deer's younger brother Singing River, who did not go to school yet, asked her what school was like. She ran from the table crying. Her mother found her outside. Little Deer's mother knew life was getting harder since the children's father had died. She and her mother lay under the stars. Her mother reminded Little Deer that her father was still watching them from up above. Later, Singing River joined them. The family looked up at the stars together.

One day at school while Mrs. Meanwild was giving an endless lecture about fungus, a tall, black man walked in. His name was Mr. Shiel and he was the school speech teacher. Everybody hoped he would take him or her to his cool room. The kids had all heard he gives out prizes. "I would like to see Little Deer, please." The class sighed. Little Deer recognized her name so she walked up to the towering, soft spoken teacher. All of her classmates glared. Clair stuck her tongue out at Little Deer. Mr. Shiel look Little Deer's hand gently. He led her to his room. Little Deer was amazed. The room had different colors on each wall and the art on the walls was breathtaking. Mr. Shiel introduced himself. Poor Little Deer did not understand. Mr. Shiel taught her how to make introductions. She shyly stuttered, "M-my n-name i-is Little Deer." Mr. Shiel smiled. When she walked back into her classroom she held her head up high. She had learned a lot already from Mr. Shiel.

At lunch Clair and her friends picked on her more than ever because they were jealous that Little Deer got to go with Mr. Shiel. They said, "I bet Mr. Shiel doesn't come back to get you because he doesn't want to work with an empty minded baby!" Little Deer didn't understand what they were saying, but she knew she was being insulted. She felt it in her heart. Her heart would always sink when Clair and her friends were around.

Weeks passed. Little Deer loved Mr. Sheil. One day when she went to Mr. Shiel's room he put a book called My Town in front of her. She read the first word, then the next, and the next and the next. Before she knew it, she read My Town from cover to cover. Mr. Shiel was so proud. He had a special gift for Little Deer that day. He gave her a cute, brown teddy bear with a red bow. Little Dear showed her appreciation by giving Mr. Shiel a big hug.

By recess Clair had already heard about the toy bear and at once started calling Little Deer names. Now that Little Deer understood the names, they hurt even more. Little Deer ran inside the school but Clair followed her with her taunts. Little Deer darted into a kindergarten room. Then she heard a different set of footsteps coming and feared she would be in trouble for coming inside alone. Suddenly the footsteps stopped. She heard Mr. Shiel. He was talking louder than she had ever heard him talk. He was talking to Clair! He took her to the office. He returned to the kindergarten room and sat next to Little Deer. He comforted her by telling her she wasn't all the names Clair was calling her. He said she was his favorite student. She wiped her face and smiled, "You...are my favorite teacher."

As the years went by, Little Deer graduated each school she attended with straight A's. She graduated college and became a doctor. She often returned to her reservation to help her sick fellow Native Americans. She also worked in a hospital. Amazingly, she was even picked by NASA to be an astronaut!

Clair apparently learned a valuable lesson from Mr. Shiel too. What ever he said to her that day in the hall must have stuck with her. She became a heroic police officer and even came back to the school to talk to the kids about bullies!

In every award speech Dr. Little Deer made, she said, "I could never have done it without Mr. Shiel." And every night she slept with that teddy bear Mr. Shiel gave to her. That's how one teacher changed the lives of thousands of people.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Megan Weiler is a 4th grader at Flanders Elementary School in Southington, Connecticut. She especially enjoys music, reading, writing and art. She also loves her family and friends. There is a special place in her heart for every teacher who has ever touched her life.