

"PROGRESS IN NAVAJO EDUCATION"

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by

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It gives me a great deal of pleasure to be here as a personal representative of Mr. Raymond Nakai, Chairman of the Navajo Tribal Council. Especially gratifying is this opportunity for me to tell you the story of present day Navajo education. With so many taking sides, both on and off the reservation, it is very easy to lose sight of the magnitude of good that is happening in Navajo Education. The good that is referred to, as you will shortly learn, is to be found in public, mission and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. It is to be found at the Rough Rock Demonstration School, the Navajo Community College, in Tribal and Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity programs.

The unifying force for the many fine educational programs arises from the wishes of the Navajo Tribe. Many years ago Manuelito said, "My children, education is the ladder. Take it." The history of the Tribe's accelerated drive to raise the educational level of its children after World War II could be told with pleasure, but more important are the developments of the last few years. These developments pointed the way for the unity of effort, by all those, devoted to providing the best education for Navajo students.

In 1966, the Navajo Tribal Education Committee developed the following goals:

1. To attack the unique problems of Indian students by the provision of unique programs suited to the needs of these students, such as the ESL Program or English as a second language.
2. To seek maximum, feasible involvement of parents and tribal leaders in the educational program.
3. To develop a public information program on a continuing basis, which reflects progress made.
4. To endeavor to assist in any way possible so that full utilization can be made of resources, including the Economic Opportunity Act, Public Law 89-10, and other similar programs which can benefit the Indian people.

To achieve these goals, many programs have been initiated by the educational groups mentioned, by the Tribe and the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity

The Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools have, for the third year running, one of the most advanced English as-a-Second-Language

Programs. Two demonstration schools initiate new teachers into the theory and practice of ESL on the Navajo. Original ESL materials for Navajo pupils are being developed by Dr. Robert Wilson of UCLA. The first set of materials is now being tested in pilot classrooms throughout the reservation.

Navajo Social Studies units are being developed by Dr. LeRoy Condie of the University of New Mexico to help children develop a sound self-image. There will be a unit for each grade, elementary through high school. The units deal with Navajo history, culture and economy, past, present and future. The Navajo pupil will be enabled to see who he is, and what opportunities are open to him in the future, on and off the reservation.

The outstanding Bureau of Indian Affairs school food program needs special mention. A central purchasing and distribution system ensures fresh vegetables and milk and other food items delivered on a bi-weekly basis. Nutritiously, balanced meals with enough for seconds and thirds are provided along with mid-morning and afternoon snacks, and food for special parties. Master menus not only guide the cooks for providing balanced meals but contain instructions to make sure the food prepared is tasty and appealing to the eye.

Seventeen BIA Kindergartens were opened this year for the first time and double that amount will be operating next year. Of these a number will be pilot units in bi-lingual, bi-cultural education.

The much maligned boarding school is just another way to meet the special needs of the Navajo child. The enrolment guidelines spelled out in the Joint Education Policy Agreement of 1961 between the Navajo Tribe and the Navajo Area Office illustrate the all encompassing ways to provide an education from all school-age Navajo children. Where roads can be utilized, children attend either Bureau of Indian Affairs day schools, public day or ONEO Headstart classes. Where no roads exist, children attend BIA boarding school. With their known strengths and weaknesses, in many instances they provide the only opportunity for schooling. Of course, parents are free to send their children to mission schools. In addition, in the Rough Rock School District, the children attend the Rough Rock Boarding Demonstration School.

The major thrust in involving parents and tribal leaders in Bureau of Indian Affairs schools has been towards the formation and active participation of school boards. Ninety-four percent of the schools have boards. As a grass roots development, the local board idea gave birth to the Agency school boards consisting of representatives from local school boards. Just recently, the five agency school boards met in Window Rock to discuss the final

Children study the same subjects as offered in any school and also subjects especially for Navajos like speaking, reading and writing Navajo; Navajo culture and history; and arts and crafts. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is preparing a five year contract for the continued operation of the school with similar funding as in the past three years

The Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity operates many educational programs.

The Headstart Program, for instance, takes four and five year olds in over a hundred units over the reservation, and as the name implies, gives them an educational headstart. When the Bureau of Indian Affairs suggested the taking over of 17 units this year, the ONEO approved wholeheartedly. It meant that in turn the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity could then serve that many more four and five year olds not previously enrolled.

The Tribe has a number of programs directly and indirectly in the interests of the Navajo students. The Tribal Education Committee, each summer, sponsors an enrolment drive. It involves Bureau of Indian Affairs, public, and mission schools, Public Health Service, and all branches of the Bureau and the Tribal organizations. Through its clothing and eye glass program, children are enabled to attend school who otherwise might not. To provide for more people involvement in the schools, the Tribal Education Committee established Parents' Day and Tribal Leaders' Day observances in all Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. On both days, parents and Tribal leaders observe school and dormitory programs and eat lunch with their children.

A far reaching program is the Tribal Scholarship Program. With an investment of \$10,000,000, over 500 qualified Navajo students attend the college of their choice. Tuition fees, room and board, books and supplies are provided for. It should be noted here that the Bureau of Indian Affairs Grants Program "backs up" the Tribal Scholarship Program. A Scholarship student who fails to maintain a "C" average and loses the scholarship can apply for a Grant. Where the failure to maintain a "C" average appears to be remediable, the student is given a grant to continue his college education and to prove he can maintain a "C" average. If he does, he regains his scholarship. In a similar manner, a high school graduate who fails to meet the requirements for getting a Tribal Scholarship can apply for a grant. If he proves he can do college work, he moves into a Tribal Scholarship the following year.

The latest Tribal effort in the interest of continued Navajo education is the Navajo Community College. The College was long a dream of the Navajo Tribe which opened in January guided by the following principles.

draft of a set of proposed school board guidelines. These guidelines previously were considered, added to and refined at local school board meetings, at the schools, at Chapter meetings and at the Agency level. The guidelines approved by a vote of 63 to 3 will be presented to the Navajo Tribal Council for consideration and approval by the Tribal Education Committee. Once approved, the guidelines will become the law of Navajoland BIA school boards in the same sense as state laws govern the public school boards.

Other government programs have been made use of to meet the needs of the Navajo child. Public Law 89-10, Title I has accelerated the ESL program, provided the funds for the development of the Navajo Social Studies units and provided enrichment field trips by bus for all of the children at one time or another. Through "Mini-Projects", a Navajo Area original idea, many teachers have experimented with methods and materials to the benefit of the children.

The Teacher Corps has units at three schools now and will have units at three more next year.

The Peace Corps for the last three years has trained units in Bureau of Indian Affairs schools.

The public and mission schools on and off the reservation have initiated programs to reach the four goals. These schools too, have developed ESL programs. They too, have the immediate opportunities for the Navajo students in school with non-Navajos to develop a sound self-image and an immediate awareness of what non-Navajo opportunities are available. Public schools, of course, have school boards on which some Navajos serve. Under Public Law 89-10, Title I, many enrichment programs have been made possible and several public schools on the reservation have Teacher Corps Teams.

The Rough Rock Demonstration School was established three years ago in a new BIA boarding school facility. It is supported by funds from BIA, the Office of Economic Opportunity and by foundation funds. Its purpose is to demonstrate the effectiveness of total school-community involvement and of bicultural education. It is under the control of a local elected school board. Parents work in the classroom and the dormitory. The school works with the community to solve common problems; provides crafts training, initiates cottage type industries. The Navajo Curriculum Center at the school has published five books of Navajo cultural material and five more are being developed.



The Bureau of Indian Affairs school at Teecnospos has four public school teachers under a joint agreement with the Chinle Public School District.

So you can see in spite of newspaper, television and magazine accounts to the contrary, all educational groups -- the public schools, the mission schools, the BIA schools, the Rough Rock Demonstration School, the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity and the Navajo Tribe, guided by the Four Tribal Education Committee goals, are striving together to help Navajo students develop their abilities in the best interests of themselves and their communities. In the future, the Navajo Tribe wishes to establish an education department within its own organization.

But in the leadership is the Navajo Tribe with the Tribe pointing the way for the agencies of all types endeavouring to serve all the needs of Navajos. For, to quote an old Zuni saying, "If the poor be poor in spirit as well as in appearance, how shall they be aught but poor to the end of their days?"