

A Photographic Case Study of Navajo Children's  
Views of Their Education

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether an alignment exists between the mission of Puente de Hozho Magnet School and the visualization of how current Navajo students view their education at the school. Qualitative research was used as an opportunity to explore the significance and to gain an in-depth understanding of how Navajo students view their education in the context of their personal experiences.

The population consisted of six Navajo fifth grade students who lived outside the boundaries of their Indian reservation and attended school at Puente de Hozho Magnet School. The six student participants were asked to respond to the question, “What does your education look like at Puente de Hozho Magnet School?” through the pictures they took with a camera in and around the school. After the pictures were developed, students were individually interviewed by utilizing selected pictures to prompt their memory in eliciting descriptions and meanings of the images they captured. The students’ responses generated a data set for coding and analysis, from which a wealth of data yielded prominent themes as to their education at Puente de Hozho Magnet School.

Analysis of this research concluded that the students’ visualization of their education at Puente de Hozho is aligned with the original mission and vision of the school. The student voices represent a relationship of natural connections to their cultural heritage as experienced in their school by disregarding stereotypes and rising above the expected.

To my Navajo elders,  
Who exemplify the teachings of Hózhó.  
I am humbled by your example.

To my Nalí Asdzaa sání Sarah Begay, Nalí Asdzaa Anna B. Yazzie, Nalí Kee  
Yazzie, and Masání Elva Hildreth Johnson,  
Who were the foundations of my development.  
I will continue to share your teachings.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Born and raised on the Navajo Indian reservation, my parents instilled in me respect for the time-honored Navajo way of life. I am a first-generation college student and the second eldest of five children of a Navajo speaking family. My fondest memories are that of my childhood. My life has been filled with teachings from our natural environment, with regard to natural laws and observing the sacred balance that Navajos share with all living things. From these teachings, my family and community have provided me an identity and important values that have shaped who I am today and who I am to become in the future.

Upon graduating from high school in the spring of 1994, I departed from my family for the first time and left them to pursue my then recent university acceptance in Flagstaff, Arizona. Just before I left, I pledged to my family that I would complete my undergraduate degree and would return home.

In the spring of 2001, I completed my undergraduate degree from Northern Arizona University. It was during this time that my great-aunt Katherine, the matriarch and last living sibling to my late maternal grandmother, encouraged me to continue my education. Consequently, I continued with school and a year later, in 2003, I returned home to celebrate my completion of a Master's degree. I reflected on my life and gave thanks to all those who were on the journey with me, helping me by offering invaluable words of encouragement and support. However, it was also a very difficult time for my family because during the year leading up to my graduation, my great-aunt Katherine had lost her

battle to cancer. As I opened celebratory gifts from family and friends, my mother handed me an envelope. I instantly recognized the handwriting on the exterior as that belonging to my great-aunt Katherine. At the height of her sickness, her words exuded great wisdom and wise counsel. I remember one time in particular when she took my hand and shared with me that she had come to terms with her incurable illness. She calmly shared,

The doctor told me that my cancer is terminal. Terminal means that this is the last part of my journey. In a sense, when you truly think about it, we are all terminal . . . because we are only given one life to live.

She turned to me and asked, “In that regard, what are you going to do with your one life?” I wasn’t prepared for this question, let alone the situation; however, I suppose it is understandable not to be prepared for something so thought provoking and immediate. She began sharing stories of her siblings, her childhood, and her education. She ended on a more serious note and spoke passionately of a day when I would be graduating with a doctorate degree and would return home to help my Navajo people. Although I had not considered pursuing education any further, her words gave life to the idea and in time the idea inaugurated a reality. I opened the envelope and emptied the contents. I took out the folded floral print stationary note and inside laid a crisp five-dollar bill.

The note read,

Grandson, I am sorry that I could not make it to your graduation. I wanted to wear the pretty dress with flowers that I told you about. Here is some money to help you along the way. Love, Grandma Katherine.

Brofenbrenner’s Ecology Model (1995) maintains that identity is developed through the interactions of the person and the environment in which he

or she exists. Accordingly, I feel that much of who I am and my personal outlook on life is a direct result of the environment and experiences in which I was raised. Fascinated by the brief, previously undisclosed stories by my great-aunt, I was drawn to learn more about my family. For that reason, I enthusiastically began researching family history and began working faithfully on my genealogy.

My childhood, as I remember it, was idyllic. The first half was spent in Ganado, Arizona, a small college town and service hub to several undeveloped communities; and the second half was spent in Steamboat, Arizona, an isolated culturally rich community; both on the Navajo reservation. Early on, we lived along the Ganado wash, near the bridge, and were surrounded by tall cottonwood trees and other rich greenery. Our horses were corralled on the bank of the wash; chipmunks running between and amongst the trees; and our drove of ornamental fowls, peacocks full of iridescent spots and pheasant peahens roaming the grounds and nibbling away at insects and the vegetation. The many sounds of nature were invigorating: the steady, calm flow of water running downstream; a melodic chorus of jays and robins singing; lively rustling of cottonwood, elm, and poplar leaves; and an occasional woodpecker tapping away somewhere above our sight. Later on, we moved to Steamboat, near the base of a rocky canyon wall, surrounded by a scattering of pinon and juniper trees peering over the edge, open to an alluvial valley speckled with sage brush underneath the magnificent blue sky. Our horses roamed in a larger corralled area just above our home on a small hill, cottontail rabbits hopped between wild shrubs, and our flock of fleecy Navajo churro sheep openly grazed upon the plentiful pasture. New and familiar sounds

of nature could be heard throughout the countryside: the soft wind whistling through the peaceful canyon, blue birds and blue jays singing, the bells from sheep hinting every so often that they were nearby, and an occasional echo of traditional Navajo social and healing songs being sung at a nearby Hogan.

From my earliest memory, I have always known my parents to be honest and hard working. Dad operated the Standard Oil petroleum service station in town and mom worked part time as a child welfare advocate in the Navajo Nation court system. As such, my maternal grandmother Elva Hildreth Johnson took the reins and led my early development. Grandma Elva was born in 1920 in Steamboat, Arizona. Her parents were Sam Hildreth of Tséłani and Mildred Begay of Steamboat Springs. Sam was a respected Navajo medicine man and Mildred a Navajo rug weaver and herbalist.

At age 11, in 1931, Elva lost her mother to heart disease and was put under her eldest sister's care. Following World War II, Elva's oldest brother Gary Horton Hildreth was released from military service and began work in Los Angeles, California. Gary returned to the Navajo reservation where he reunited with a schoolmate from the Ganado Mission School. They soon married and moved to California, taking siblings Elva and Katherine. Gary had acquired government contracts for migrant fieldwork in San Joaquin County and began recruiting Navajo families from Steamboat for seasonal work in the produce fields. Twice a year, the siblings would return to Steamboat, on the Navajo reservation, to visit family and to pick up and drop off relatives for the recurrent work in the fields.

While in California, both sisters, Elva and Katherine, established common law relationships with American men of Mexican descent. Elva settled down with Angel Leto Quintana, a U.S. Army veteran of El Paso, Texas, and they had four children, the youngest and only daughter being my mother, Carmelita. After ten years, the unsettling relationship ended with Elva returning home with her kids to the Navajo reservation.

My grandmother Elva was a wonderful caregiver. Whether we stayed at home or left the house, I remember everyday being quite an adventure. She was a vibrant storyteller, a meticulous seamstress, and an enthusiastic horticulturist with a green thumb. It was she who, on one hand, nurtured my interests in reading, through the exploration of English literature, and, on the other, developed an understanding and an appreciation of oral Navajo narratives and its power of imagery. I recall the Reader's Digest *Great Stories for Young Readers* (*Readers Digest Great Stories for Young Readers*, 1969), which I referred to as "the big red book". My favorite stories were the classics: Beatrice Clay's *King Arthur and the Round Table*, Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*, and Sarah Orne Jewett's *A White Heron*.

The cornfields and gardens were my learning laboratories. It is there that I learned my shapes, colors, sizes, and eventually, the law of harvest. When we weren't home reading, we were visiting with Navajo elders at the local trading post where socializations would span the entire day. On many occasion, our family spent time with relatives and participated in Navajo healing ceremonies. I reason my strong connection and sentimental bonds to senior citizens and Navajo



language and culture were a direct result of those important early years that I spent with my grandparents and the relationships and empathy that were fostered.

As a result, four traditional Navajo concepts emerged as present day characteristics of who I am, personally and professionally. The first concept, *ádehozdilzin* (to know one's place within society), is especially essential in my pursuits because it reminds me of my responsibility to return and provide essential services to my community. My education defines my responsibility to contribute this western education to my people, without negating traditional Navajo values. The second concept, *ádantsijikees* (to think for oneself), requires me to respond to challenges whenever the opportunity arises. This concept teaches me that I must make personal choices; my choice of a professional education provides me with the skills necessary to advance the educational system of the Navajo people. The third concept, *k'éjindzin* (to show respect for clan relations and responsibilities to others), teaches me of my connection and accountability. The promotion of effective policies and laws, which speak to Navajo people, is essential because oftentimes educators and policy makers lack this fundamental relationship. The final concept, *jijoobá'* (to remain thoughtful and humble), recognizes that a higher level of education does not equate a heightened status within the community. This humility is necessary to maintain a balance between my traditional Navajo upbringing and my western education.

This research evolved as the succeeding stride and continuity of progression of better understanding Navajo education; consequently, it materialized out of necessity and inevitable. Early on in my career, I performed

work relating to grant writing and administration within the Navajo Nation executive offices. Principally, I was responsible for the constant gathering of data and coordination of establishing needs-based applications for federal funding. This position required me to understand the complexities and processes of the Navajo governmental system and intergovernmental relations with other tribes, states, and the United States federal government. Feeling the need to contribute further, I began adjunct faculty service at the local tribal community college and provided course instruction in public speaking, reading, and English composition. Within my first year of teaching, I adjusted my instructional practices to the educational backgrounds and multiple learning styles of my students. The juxtaposition of western theory and traditional Navajo teachings, using both English and Navajo language mediums, helped to establish association and connection between the new concepts and previously held ideas.

In my current position, I administer education content services of an American Indian early childhood development program. My essential function focuses on services to children and families; the collection of community resources data, review, and analysis of service reports; and assessing program outcomes. Additionally, I have been called to lead the design of a Navajo language recovery program.

The culmination of my education, work experience, and upbringing has presented an unusual opportunity to explore the historical foundations and administrative underpinnings of formal Navajo education. Just as I have discovered substantive information of my family, I hope to reconstruct the

framework and pattern in which Navajo children participated in early forms of education for Navajo people, so we can better understand the situations and the contexts in which they occurred.

My professional education has helped to develop necessary skills in order for me to assist American Indian communities with their unique educational needs. These skills, combined with my background, and professional development, will allow me to assist in the creation of sound policy recommendations. Too often, I have witnessed the concession of American Indian sovereignty as a result of incapacity. My desire to educate myself in the professional realm developed from wanting to challenge the status quo. Skills acquired from a professional education are essential in the advancement of tribal government operations and the Nation building process.

Consequently, it is through this dissertation that I hope to conduct academic research that will provide a historical examination of Navajo education, its effects on Navajo children, and to identify how Navajo children see their education, contributing toward the goal of ensuring that developmental programs within educational institutions that serve Navajo children continue to improve and provide not only for the basic educational needs, but also the cultural needs of Navajo children. It is my intent that the results of this research will assist in the promotion and advancement of Navajo and English bilingual education programs.

### **Background**

The 2000 Census identified 566 federally recognized American Indian and Alaskan Native Tribes under the federally recognized racial category of American

Indian or Alaska Native. This category did not allow individual tribes the ability to effectively distinguish their unique identities and special political relationship with the United States federal government. The Navajo Nation Department of Economic Development (2002) delimited the data from the American Indian or Alaska Native category to information exclusive to Navajo and produced a report titled *Navajo Nation Data: From the U.S. Census 2000* (Choudhary, 2000). This publication brought to light the condition and circumstances of the Navajo people within the United States and the results demonstrated the inadequacies of federal Indian policy. The 2000 census reported that American Indian students measured far below the national average in the area of education: 52% finished high school; 17% attended college; 4% graduated from college; and 2% attended graduate school.

The U.S. Department of Education (2005) reported that 4,500,000 U.S. citizens selected *American Indian* or *Alaskan Native* as their racial category and that there were nearly 624,000 American Indians and Alaska Native students in the U.S. K-12 system. This rapidly growing population attends public schools and schools operated by the U.S. government's Bureau of Indian Education, requiring the need for research capturing the experiences and unique needs of these students in school systems. American Indian students have been attending grade schools all these years; however, their inclusion in improving school design has not been sufficiently addressed in literature (Roessel, 2007). Most research that has been conducted is focused on American Indians and Alaskan Native quantitative

institutional data and not on the qualitative viewpoints and distinct experiences of Navajo students attending schools.

In his study, Banks (2008) pointed out that educational institutions serving multicultural individuals present interesting challenges and pose more questions than answers. Some relevant questions he recommended schools to consider are as listed below:

- Who comprises this population?
- What are the needs of this population?
- How can institutions provide resources and services to address the needs of this population?

As such, schools that serve American Indian students remain tested, often requiring that they ask themselves more questions than they have answers. American Indian education is full of complex issues; consequently, so are the needs and experiences of American Indian students.

Within literature on Navajo Education from the viewpoint of the students, Roessel (2007) has emerged as the lead researcher in his experience with Navajo students within Navajo education. Roessel's study originated as part of his doctoral dissertation and focused on the viewpoint of 10 students, ranging from 13 to 19 years of age, attending Rough Rock Community School on the Navajo reservation.

Through his research Roessel explored the school and defined its identity through the eyes and experiences of the students. The question, "What does education look like at Rough Rock?" was answered in the pictures that were taken

and “six categories or themes emerged from the interview data: (a) two worlds, (b) change, (c) strength, (d) pride, (e) Navajo language, history and culture, and (f) nature.”

School identity is changeable and it is not unusual to see it change from time to time in varying degrees. The six themes that emerged were not the only themes that emerged; however, they were the most prominent categories based on the frequency of all responses provided by the interviewees. The themes were not linear and did not represent that Navajo students view their school in characteristics that are in sequential or chronological order.

Roessel’s (2007) study was conducted on the Navajo Reservation at a bilingual community school. Bilingual schools offering the Navajo language outside of the Navajo Reservation have not yet been studied. In his findings of six themes of school identity at Rough Rock, Roessel provided recommendations for policy and practice and encouraged further research using photo-elicitation to examine issues of identity for Navajos. These two recommendations, coupled with my personal interest of exploring the nature of Navajo students’ experience in specific school settings, influenced my decision to examine the viewpoints and experiences of Navajo students attending a trilingual school that offered Navajo language outside the exterior boundaries of the Navajo reservation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The population of the Navajo people is a fast growing population. As such, the numbers of school age children are increasing. Their attendance in grade school requires these schools to respond to and address their education and

developmental needs. It is equally important to note that their needs are quite different from other students in the American school system.

Although much research has been conducted on schools within the interior boundaries of the Navajo Reservation, there is a lack of research that specifically addresses the experiences of Navajo students attending school outside the exterior boundaries of the Navajo Reservation. These Navajo students residing in the city have a different experience from other Navajo students primarily due to the improved socioeconomic and political structures. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there exists an alignment between the mission of Puente de Hózhó Trilingual Magnet School and the visualization of how current Navajo students view their education at the school.

### **Research Questions and Methodology**

The research questions for this study were formulated as follows:

1. What does education look like through the eyes of children at Puente de Hozho Trilingual Magnet School?
2. Does this visualization align with the mission of the school?

This study utilized a basic qualitative design method. Qualitative studies depend on data provided in words and images and use varied methods of inquiry (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative researchers are interested in unsheathing the deeper meaning of the material. Research of this type provided an opportunity to explore current practices in forming the identity of a trilingual school offering Navajo language located off the Navajo Indian Reservation from the viewpoint of Navajo students.

I replicated parts of Roessel's (2007) dissertation for my study. Specifically, I used his underlying research questions and modified his interview questions and research design. Roessel's study focused on a Navajo bilingual community school, federally funded, on the Navajo Indian Reservation. This study was conducted at a trilingual magnet school, state funded, off the Navajo Indian Reservation.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This research study focused on how students attending a bilingual Navajo school off the Navajo Indian Reservation viewed their school and whether that visualization was aligned with the mission and vision of the school. This qualitative study focused on a specific sector (students of Navajo heritage) of American Indian students living off their Indian reservation; therefore, the findings from the study were not generalizable to other American Indian students. Additionally, this study was geographically specific to Northern Arizona. Findings from the study may not be generalizable to other institutions in other regions.

My experiences as a Navajo educator working in Navajo education on the Navajo Nation may be seen as a limitation in this study. However, my experiences as a Navajo student who attended grade school on the Navajo Indian Reservation provides me with a unique perspective to be the true instrument of data collection during this study. During the analysis stage of this study, I utilized Navajo cohort members of the Native American Educational Leadership program to review my coding and interpretation of the data. Through peer reviews,



multiple viewpoints as to the analysis of data were used to ensure that my personal experiences did not defect the data.

### **Significance of the Study**

The inclusion of Navajo student perspectives of their schools is an area that has been neglected and deserves exploration and special attention of education leaders. The needs of these students are unique; consequently, more research is needed to explore the responses of school administrators. The needs of Navajo students living off the Navajo Indian Reservation are especially important. Because these students face additional challenges due to their race and cultural differences, any contribution to better understanding this demographic sector will add to the growth of literature on Navajo bilingual education programs. Research in an off reservation Navajo bilingual school will extend the previous research conducted by Roessel (2007) on Navajo student visualization of their schools.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter provides a review of literature to assist in understanding the context of this study of student *voices* in American Indian education. The literature review focused on three parts: Navajo education, what student voices have told us, and current research on student voices. Although this is not an exhaustive review of all literature on student voices and American Indian education, it includes a brief historiography of the Navajo tribe's educational journey, American Indian student recollections, and current research where student perspectives were used in improving the meaning and experience of education for Navajo children.

The first part provides an overview of Navajo Education, covering two topics: the effects of the Treaty of 1868 and the historical overview of the Navajo school system from 1869 to 1960, including educational mandates by the U.S. federal government. The second part of the literature review examined what Native American student voices have told us about their experiences. What is learned from the students' stories provides insight into the situations, experiences, and affects of their education. The third part of the literature review examines how student voices have been used in current research to influence meaningful and sound educational opportunities for Navajo students, validating the significance of their voices.

## **Historical Overview**

### **Navajo Treaty of 1868**

For many years leading up to the removal of Navajos from their homeland, Navajo bands, separately and jointly, had been blamed for breaking peace treaty commitments made with the U.S. government in the years 1846, 1848, 1849, 1855, 1858 (Armistice), and 1861 (Brugge & Correll, 1971). The Navajos, along with the Apaches, were coined as the “New Mexico problem” because of their raiding activities. The U.S. government reached its tolerance. The orders were given: “Stop the raiding Apache and Navaho! There are to be no more treaties, no more talk” (Underhill, 1953, p. 154).

General Carleton gave orders to Lieutenant Colonel Christopher “Kit” Carson to slay the Indian men and to take the women and children as prisoners. For six months, Lt. Col. Carson led his men to capture the Navajo. Those unwilling to surrender were chased down and Carson’s Scorched Earth Campaign commenced, directly focusing on the livelihood of the Navajo. Cornfields were burned, pantry and food houses were destroyed, and the livestock slaughtered. Deprived of food, shelter, and warmth, in the winter of 1863, many fugitive Navajos surrendered.

In the spring of 1864, captive and surrendered Navajos began the forced 300-mile walk, relocating them to eastern New Mexico at Fort Sumner, near Bosque Redondo for four years of exile. Kluckhohn and Leighton (1946) described the removal:

Word was sent out to that all The People were to surrender at Fort Defiance. Finally, in early 1864, substantial groups began to give

themselves up. On March 6 of that year 2,400 persons, 30 wagons, 400 horses, and 3,000 sheep and goats began the “Long Walk” of 300 miles to Fort Sumner, 180 miles southeast of Santa Fe. By the end of April 3,500 more, in three separate parties, had made the same long march. Eventually, 8,000 Navahos were in captivity at Fort Sumner. (p. 9)

The intent of relocating the Navajo was part of a national movement of relocating the Indians from their homelands to the present day location of Oklahoma. The distance was too far and money was too little; consequently, Fort Sumner became the alternate location and the existing fort was expanded to hold Navajo and Apache captives. Bailey (1998) described the conditions at Fort Sumner:

On a forty mile square surrounding Bosque Redondo, a clump of cottonwoods on the banks of the Rio Pecos in east-central New Mexico, nearly 9,000 Indians lived by army doctrine, attempted to till alkali impregnated soil, and died of pneumonia and dysentery induced by poor sanitation and brackish water. They were also ravaged by mumps, smallpox, and syphilis. So traumatic was this event in Navajo life, that tribesmen would reckon all future events from the day of release, as if the tribe has been reborn and all earlier happenings were much of little consequence. (p. 1)

The peace agreement between the U.S. government and the Navajo, titled Treaty With the Navajo–1868, ended the four-year internment of Navajos at Fort Sumner, New Mexico; and the Navajo were allowed to return to a designated portion, a fraction of the size of their original homeland, now identified as the Navajo Indian Reservation. Education was a provision included in the Treaty of 1868.

ARTICLE 6. In order to insure the civilization of the Indians entering into this treaty, the necessity of education is admitted, especially of such of them as may be settled on said agricultural parts of this Reservation, and they therefore pledge themselves to compel their children, male and female, between the ages of six and sixteen years, to attend school; and it is hereby made the duty of the agent for said Indians to see that this

stipulation is strictly complied with; and the United States agrees that, for every thirty children between said ages who can be induced or compelled to attend school, a house shall be provided, and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branches of an English education shall be furnished, who will reside among said Indians, and faithfully discharge his or her duties as a teacher. The provisions of this article to continue for not less than ten years. (as cited by Underhill, 1953, p. 178)

Thus, began the formal educational journey of the Navajo.

### **Navajo School System: 1869–1960**

Many factors influenced school development among the Navajos. Young (1961), serving as assistant to the General Superintendent of the Navajo Agency, identified eight types of educational services that were offered to Navajos from the time period of 1869 to 1960: mission schools, off-reservation boarding schools, boarding schools, federal day schools, trailer schools, reservation dormitories, peripheral town dormitories, and reservation public schools.

#### **Mission Schools**

A year following the signing of the Treaty of 1868, U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant declared the Peace Policy among the Indian service, establishing the Board of Indian Commissioners to appoint agents, teachers, and farmers (Lockard, 2000; Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Young, 1961). Assigned by the Presbyterian Board of Missions and paid by the U.S. Department of the Interior, the first mission teacher arrived among the Navajos at Fort Defiance in the fall of 1869. Young (1961) noted, “In 1869, Miss Charity Gaston was employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and was sent as a teacher to Fort Defiance where she attempted to conduct classes in a room set aside for the purpose of the Agency”

(p. 8). The idea of formal schooling for the Navajo was still a foreign concept.

Underhill (1953) noted the challenges:

The Navajo did not know that school meant sitting on a bench, every single day, when a child might be helping its parents in the hard work of starting a home. The fact was, that, at this time in their lives, school did not mean much to the Navaho. What they wanted was to get their fields planted and their homes built, to weave some blankets, and to trade for sheep and horses. They did not need English or writing or figuring for any of these things. What they did need was hard, daily work, and every family wanted the help of all its members. (p. 188)

Miss Gaston married in 1873 and left the Fort Defiance makeshift school.

It was then established that a male teacher would be best filling the vacated position. The day school effort of the Fort Defiance School was a failure.

Underhill (1953) noted, “In 1878, the agent reported that thousands of dollars had been spent, but still not a single Navajo could read and write” and continued, “In 1879, ten years after its start, the school had only 11 pupils” (p. 190).

Well into the third quarter of the 19th century, the U.S. federal government continued to rely heavily on the missionary groups to provide educational services to the Indians because there was no federal Indian education program (Prucha, 1979). Webb (2006) pointed out that “missionaries, subsidized by private and public funds, continued to carry both Christianity and ‘civilization’ to the Indians. Reading, writing, arithmetic, and religious catechism remained at the heart of their efforts.” From the period of 1869 up until 1957, there were many mission schools opened and operated by the religious denominations within the Navajo Reservation (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Dates of Establishment of Mission and Mission Schools on Navajo Reservation*

Name of School	Location	Mission Established
Fort Defiance (Temp.)	Fort Defiance, Arizona	1869 to 1869
Navajo Methodist Mission School	Farmington, New Mexico	1891 to 1899
Ganado Presbyterian Mission School	Ganado, Arizona	1901 to 1902
St. Michaels Indian School	St. Michaels, Arizona	1898 to 1902
Rehoboth Mission School	Rehoboth, New Mexico	1898 to 1903
Navajo Mission School of Seventh Day Adventists	Holbrook, Arizona	1947 to 1947
Navajo Gospel Crusade Mission School	Gallup, New Mexico	1954 to 1954
Sacred Heart Academy	Waterflow, New Mexico	
Lybrook Mission Church of the Brethren	Cuba, New Mexico	1953 to 1953
Rough Rock Friends Mission	Rough Rock, Arizona	1956 to 1956
Immanuel Mission	Sweetwater, Arizona	1948 to 1948
Mennonite Mission and Boarding School		1951 to 1951
Rock Point Mission	Rock Point, Arizona	1953 to 1957
Navajo Bible Academy	Hard Rocks, Arizona	1941 to 1941

*Note. Adapted from The Navajo Yearbook: 1951-1961: A decade of progress; Report no. 8., by R.W. Young, 1961, Navajo Agency, Window Rock, Arizona.*

**Boarding Schools**

Ten years after the Fort Defiance school's first attempts at educating the Navajo, funding was acquired to build a boarding school. Work commenced on a Fort Defiance boarding school building in 1880 and it was completed in 1883.

Previously, the distance to the Fort Defiance School was lengthy for students to travel and attend school daily. School attendance at the Fort Defiance School slowly increased. In the fall of 1884, there were 22 students and in the spring of 1885, there were 33 students. The *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1885) described the plan as follows:

If there were a sufficient number of reservation boarding-school-buildings to accommodate all the Indian children of school age, and these buildings could be filled and kept filled with Indian pupils, the Indian problem would be solved within the school age of the Indian child now six years old. (cited by Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 75)

Compulsory attendance was put into place in the spring of 1887 and the federally appointed Indian agency police helped place the children in schools. Additionally, the *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1887) described that Indian children were now the targets of the Indian Service. By removing groups of Indian children and keeping them away from their parents and to prohibit engagement in cultural customs and traditions, it was thought as the fastest way to assimilate entire groups of Indians. Archuleta, Child, and Lomawaima (2000) described the role of Indian Boarding Schools as

Indian boarding schools were key components in the process of cultural genocide against Native cultures, and were designed to physically, ideologically, and emotionally remove Indian children from their families, homes, and tribal affiliations. From the moment students arrived at school, they could not “be Indian” in any way—culturally, artistically, spiritually, or linguistically. (p. 56)

Consequently, the number of boarding schools on the Navajo Indian Reservation began to grow. Young (1961) noted, “During the first decade of the 1900s schools were constructed at Tuba City, Leupp, Tohatchi, Shiprock, and Chinle, and during the following decade similar facilities were built at



Crownpoint, Toadlena, and Fort Wingate” (p. 11). As the years progressed, the federal boarding schools on the Navajo Reservation were an alternative to sending Navajo children far away, some hundreds of miles away, to off-reservation boarding schools. During the period from 1881 to 1925, ten boarding schools were built and in operation within the Navajo Reservation (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Dates of Establishment of Federal Boarding Schools on Navajo Reservation*

School Name	Location	Established
Fort Defiance Boarding School	Fort Defiance, Arizona	1881
Keams Canyon School	Keams Canyon, Arizona	1887
Tohatchi School	Tohatchi, New Mexico	1900
Tuba City Boarding School	Tuba City, Arizona	1901
Shiprock Boarding School	Shiprock, New Mexico	1907
Leupp Boarding School	Leupp, Arizona	1909
Chinle Boarding School	Chinle, Arizona	1910
Crownpoint Boarding School	Crownpoint, New Mexico	1912
Toadlena Boarding School	Toadlena, New Mexico	1913
Fort Wingate School	Fort Wingate, New Mexico	1925

*Note.* Adapted from *Here Come the Navaho!* by R. Underhill, 1953, Haskell, Institute Print Shop, Lawrence, Kansas; and *The Navajo Yearbook: Report No. viii 1951-1961, A Decade of Progress*, by R.W. Young, 1961, Navajo Agency, Window Rock, Arizona.

Resources were limited to enforce the new attendance law of Navajo school age children; for that reason, the Navajo agency sent the first group of Navajo children to U.S. Army Captain Henry Richard Pratt’s experimental Indian industrial boarding school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1883. Having previously

proven in 1878 that Indian warriors could be taught to learn at the Hampton School in Virginia, where released black slaves were being educated, he was authorized, by public support and subsidies from the government, to convert the old Carlisle military base to further test his “Kill the Indian, Save the Man” training on a grander scale.

The school marketed its achievement of “civilizing” the American Indians by documenting through photographs images of the Indian on arrival to the school and of their refined transformations. Szasz (1974) noted, “The success of Carlisle, which was acknowledged by a large congressional appropriation in 1882, led to a sudden expansion of off-reservation industrial boarding schools” (p. 10). The more involved the Indian Service became in working with American Indians and their education, they became overly optimistic in thinking how simple it would be to convert and transfer Indians into the general American society through a white education at a boarding school (Hoxie, 1984; Reyhner & Eder, 2004).

Archuletta, Child, and Lomawaima (2000) described Indian boarding schools as being “designed to create a new kind of American Indian person: detribalized, fluent and literate in English, economically self-sufficient, hard-working, and self-disciplined” (p. 56). Just as the first day school attempts “bore no fruit,” sending Navajo children off to school for long periods of time with no connection to their families and cultures became the rule (Underhill, 1953, p. 111).

The new goal was to “civilize” the Indians by acculturating him into White society. Reyhner (1990) described this process as “cultural change that

occurs when two or more cultures are in persistent contact . . . in which one culture changes significantly more than the other and, as a result, comes to resemble it” (p. 24). Young (1961) shared,

During the period 1880-1902, a number of Indian Boarding Schools were built by the Federal Government at widely separated locations. . . . These, and other off-Reservation boarding facilities, were constructed to serve the educational needs of a variety of Indian Tribal groups, operating on the premise that success hinged upon divorcing the Indian child from parental influence and from his reservation environment. (p. 43)

Rehyner and Eder (2004) commented that

attempts at quick assimilation often led to failure. The rapid erosion of traditional culture by immersing students in an all-English environment in boarding schools often led to cultural disintegration, not cultural replacement. Students returned to their families unprepared to resume their tribal life but unable as well to carry on as “whites.” (p. 5)

The criticisms of the off-reservation boarding schools were that they were expensive, assimilation practices caused incorrigible harm, students were taught trades not beneficial to reservation life, and that many of the students innately returned to their cultural practices on their reservations (Rehyner & Eder, 2004). The alternatives to off-reservation boarding schools were boarding schools on the reservation and the federal day schools. During the period beginning in 1868 to 1950, there were many off-Reservation boarding schools where Navajos were sent to attend school (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Off-Reservation Boarding Schools Attended By Navajos*

School Name	Location	Established
Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute	Hampton, Virginia	1868
Carlisle Indian School	Carlisle, Pennsylvania	1879
Chemawa Indian School	Salem, Oregon	1880
Chilocco Indian School	Chilocco, Oklahoma	1884
Haskell Institute	Lawrence, Kansas	1884
Albuquerque Indian School	Albuquerque, New Mexico	1886
Grand Junction School	Grand Junction, Colorado	1886
Santa Fe Indian School	Santa Fe, New Mexico	1890
Fort Mojave Indian School	Fort Mojave, Arizona	1890
Stewart Indian School	Carson City, Nevada	1890
Phoenix Indian School	Phoenix, Arizona	1891
Sherman Institute	Riverside, California	1902
Intermountain	Brigham City, Utah	1950

*Note.* Adapted from *The Navajo Yearbook: Report No. viii 1951-1961, A Decade of Progress*, by R.W. Young, 1961, Navajo Agency, Window Rock, Arizona.

### **Federal Day Schools**

The release of the 1928 *The Problem of Indian Administration* report (also known as the Merriam Report), conducted by John Hopkins University's Brookings Institute, highlighted the weaknesses of the Indian office by the examination of services provided to American Indians by the U.S. federal government. Specific to education, the report identified the use of incompatible, outdated, and uniform programs of study disconnected to reservation life.

Additionally, the report condemned the government practice of sending elementary age children away from their families to boarding schools. Merriam (1928) commented:

Whatever the necessity may once have been, the philosophy underlying the establishment of Indian boarding schools, that the way to “civilize” the Indian is to take Indian children, even very young children, as completely as possible away from their home and family life, is a variance with modern views of education and social work, which regard the home and family as essential social institutions from which it is generally undesirable to uproot children. (p. 403)

During this time, more than a third, or 5,000, Navajo school age children were in school (Szasz, 1974). Young (1961) related,

The Merriam Report of 1928 described the 8 boarding and 9 day-schools operating at the time on the Reservation as decrepit and the authors of the Report looked with disfavor on the use of the boarding facilities, favoring expansion of the day school system. (p. 12)

The tides of change had slowly begun with the findings and recommendations of the Merriam Report and the timely arrival of the Progressive Movement. Previously the government’s goals for Indian education had been to “Christianize” the Indians, with the assistance of the Christian Missions and their schools; to “Civilize” the Indians, by stealing their children and sending them away from their reservations for long periods of time by force, under the control of Indian boarding schools; and to “Americanize” the Indians by imposing a White man’s education upon their children with the purpose of assimilating them, by setting up American schools on their reservations. Merriam (1928) redefined the objectives of Indian education and pointed out misconceptions made in the Indian School Course of Study. He explained that it is historically a mistake to say, as the Indian School Course of Study does, that “from primitive times

reading, writing, and arithmetic have formed the foundation of education.” They have been tools, undoubtedly, but long before they were used as tools there was education of the most important sort. The real goals of education are not “reading, writing, and arithmetic”—not even teaching the Indians to speak English, though this is important—but sound health, both mental and physical, good citizenship in the sense of an understanding participation in community life, ability to earn one’s own living honestly and efficiently in a socially worthwhile vocation, comfortable, and a desirable home and family life, and good character. These are the real objectives of education; reading, writing, numbers, geography, history, and other “subjects” or skills are only useful to the extent that they contribute directly or indirectly to these fundamental objectives.

In the 1929 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, Reyner and Eder (2004) highlighted Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles Rhodes’ reverberation of the Merriam report and drew on localizing educational material as an example of implementation of recommendations: “Emphasis is being placed upon the importance of basing all early primary reading on words that already have a place in the children’s speaking vocabulary,” to which he added, “All Navajo schools now have native weavers who teach blanket weaving to girls” and encouraged them “to write about their own Indian life, and to depict their own customs, their own legends, their own economic and social activities” (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 211).

The transition of the Navajo education by Commissioner Collier was described as “education over schooling” and Jensen (1983) explained in the following:

When the adolescent Indian returned home from the “violent and bizarre” boarding-school experience . . . in many cases “a veritable amnesia, including an aphasia for English words, seems to sweep the bitter years and all their evil and good tracings out of the child’s soul. In place of boarding schools, he envisioned decentralized day schools and community education. (p. 50)

In the fall of 1935, with more than 85% of Navajos never having been in school, coupled with the de-emphasis of boarding schools, Commissioner Collier’s education plan, which centered upon the development of day schools and providing community education, was realized by the Department of Interior opening 39 day schools on the Navajo Indian Reservation with Public Works Administration funding (Jensen, 1983; Young 1961; see Table 4). Consequently, communities across the Navajo Indian Reservation began to grow with services and trades offered locally. Jensen (1983) reported the expansion to include “carpentry and blacksmith shops, sewing and washing facilities, health care clinics, local government (“chapter”) meeting places, and Navajo literacy centers” (p. 52).

In 1938, the Navajo tribal leaders enacted compulsory school attendance for Navajo school age children, promoting education for Navajos (Cory, 1955). As the population grew, so did the number of school age children. Even five years after the first day schools were built, still only a third, or 6,000, Navajo school age children were in school (Szasz, 1974).

Table 4

*Dates of Establishment of Federal Day Schools on Navajo Reservation (1930s)*

School Name	Location	Established
Aneth Day School	Aneth, Utah	1935
Baca Day School	Baca, New Mexico	1935
Coyote Canyon Day School	Coyote Canyon, New Mexico	1935
Iyanbito Day School	Iyanbito, New Mexico	1935
Klagetoh Day School	Klagetoh, Arizona	1935
Lake Valley Day School	Lake Valley, New Mexico	1935
Mexican Springs Day School	Mexican Springs, New Mexico	1935
Naschitti Day School	Naschitti, New Mexico	1935
Nenanezad Day School	Nenanezad, New Mexico	1935
Pine Dale Day School	Pine Dale, New Mexico	1935
Pueblo Pintado Day School	Pueblo Pintado, New Mexico	1935
Rahmah Day School	Rahmah, New Mexico	1935
Red Rock Day School	Red Rock, New Mexico	1935
Rock Point Day School	Rock Point, Arizona	1935
Rough Rock Day School	Rough Rock, Arizona	1935
Tolani Lake Day School	Tolani Lake, New Mexico	1935
Teecnospos Day School	Teecnospos, Arizona	1935
Torreon Day School	Torreon, New Mexico	1935
Twin Lakes Day School	Twin Lakes, New Mexico	1935
White Horse Lake Day School	White Horse Lake, New Mexico	1935
Beclabito Day School	Beclabito, New Mexico	1930s
Hunter's Point Day School	Hunters Point, Arizona	1930s
Kaibito Day School	Kaibito, Arizona	1930s
Kayenta Day School	Kayenta, Arizona	1930s
Kinlichee Day School	Kinlichee, Arizona	1930s
Lukachukai Day School	Lukachukai, Arizona	1930s
Nazlini Day School	Nazlini, Arizona	1930s
Pine Springs Day School	Pine Springs, Arizona	1930s
Pinon Day School	Pinon, Arizona	1930s
Red Lake Day School	Red Lake, New Mexico	1930s



Table 4 (continued)

School Name	Location	Established
Seba Dalkai Day School	Seba Dalkai, Arizona	1930s
Steamboat Day School	Steamboat, Arizona	1930s
Thoreau Day School	Thoreau, New Mexico	1930s
Wide Ruins Day School	Wide Ruins, Arizona	1930s
Huerfano Day School	Huerfano, New Mexico	1930s
Round Rock Day School	Round Rock, Arizona	1930s
Shonto Day School	Shonto, Arizona	1930s
Standing Rock Day School	Standing Rock, New Mexico	1930s

*Note.* Adapted from *The Navajo Yearbook: Report No. viii 1951-1961, A Decade of Progress*, by R.W. Young, 1961, Navajo Agency, Window Rock, Arizona.

### **Trailer Schools**

In 1950, Congress approved the Long Range Act, providing \$25,000,000 for the construction of schools and ultimately to increase the number of school age children to attend school. Young (1961) noted, “The immediate objective was to provide seats for an additional 7,946 Navajo children by September of the same year, to thus raise enrollment to a minimum of 22,052 children” (pp. 17-18).

Accordingly, the funding was designated for the implementation of various types of educational service offerings, including infrastructure development, elementary school and vocational training for Navajo students identified as having delayed education development, opportunities for high school age children to attend school on and off the Navajo Indian Reservation, and transition planning for the authority of educational services of Navajo children to be shifted to the public school systems (Young, 1961).

One approach in meeting the universal education goal for Navajo children called for the purchase of numerous mobile trailer units to act as schools. Young (1961) shared that “1,119 Navajo Children were accommodated in 37 trailer schools strategically located throughout the Navajo Country” (p. 18). There were 37 trailer schools established on the Navajo Reservation between 1952 and 1955 (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Dates of Establishment of Federal Trailer Schools on Navajo Reservation*

School Name	Agency	Established (school year)
Borrego Pass	Crownpoint	1952/1953
Kimbeto	Crownpoint	1952/1953
Chilchinbeto	Crownpoint	1952/1953
Jones Ranch	Crownpoint	1952/1953
Sanostee	Shiprock	1952/1953
Black Mountain	Chinle	1953/1954
Canyon Del Muerto	Chinle	1954/1955
Cottonwood	Chinle	1954/1955
Low Mountain	Chinle	1954/1955
Tachee	Chinle	1954/1955
Valley Store	Chinle	1954/1955
Whippoorwill	Chinle	1954/1955
Biggs Store	Crownpoint	1954/1955
Bread Springs	Crownpoint	1954/1955
Nageezi	Crownpoint	1954/1955
Ojo Encino	Crownpoint	1954/1955
Pinon Lodge	Crownpoint	1954/1955

Table 5 (continued)

School Name	Agency	Established (school year)
Springstead	Crownpoint	1954/1955
Dilcon	Fort Defiance	1954/1955
Indian Wells	Fort Defiance	1954/1955
Rock Springs	Fort Defiance	1954/1955
Sunrise	Fort Defiance	1954/1955
Tohlakai	Fort Defiance	1954/1955
White Cone	Fort Defiance	1954/1955
Jeddito	Fort Defiance	1954/1955
Hatch's Store	Shiprock	1954/1955
Mexican Water	Shiprock	1954/1955
Red Mesa	Shiprock	1954/1955
Sheep Springs	Shiprock	1954/1955
Sweetwater	Shiprock	1954/1955
Tocito	Shiprock	1954/1955
Cain Valley	Tuba City	1954/1955
Cameron	Tuba City	1954/1955
Copper Mine	Tuba City	1954/1955
Cow Springs	Tuba City	1954/1955
Dinnebito Dam	Tuba City	1954/1955

*Note.* Adapted from *The Navajo Yearbook: Report No. viii 1951-1961, A Decade of Progress*, by R.W. Young, 1961, Navajo Agency, Window Rock, Arizona.

### **Peripheral Town Dormitory Program**

In 1954, due to the delay of facility developments and universal education for Navajos, as funded in the 1950 Long Range Act, the Navajo Tribal Council authorized the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to address the situation; however, he saw fit to achieve the goals. In turn, the Bureau of Indian Affairs assured “that

within a year all Navajo children would be in school” and declared that “schooling for every [Navajo] child will be a reality by September, 1955” (Cory, 1955, pp. 77-78).

Consequently, the Navajo Emergency Education Program, an educational boot camp for Navajo students age 11 and over that were two to three grade levels behind, would be enlisted in the Five-Year Navaho Plan and be provided a basic junior high education. This program had been modified over the years to fit the differing needs and circumstances of students and institutions from the original 1946 plan which sent 200 Navajo students between the ages of 12-18 years old that had never been to school before to Sherman Institute in Riverside, California. The original plan focused on teaching Navajo students in five years what is typically learned in the period of 12 years and was assisted by a Navajo speaking teacher-interpreter who would teach content in Navajo before the content would be presented by another teacher in English in every classroom.

One strategy applied was to build dormitories in towns outside the reservation borders from the Navajo Reservation where Navajo children could live and attend school. Young (1961) noted,

In 1954 the communities of Aztec and Gallup, New Mexico; Holbrook, Winslow, and Snowflake, Arizona; and Richfield, Utah, entered into agreements with the Bureau of Indian Affairs providing for the enrollment of stipulated numbers of Navajo children in the local public school. (p. 39)

Additionally, Flagstaff dormitory was opened in 1958; and the following year, in 1959, Ramah transitioned as a border town dormitory (Young, 1961). In the period beginning 1955 to 1959, there were eight peripheral border town dormitories for Navajo students (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Dates of Establishment of Peripheral Town “Border Town” Dormitories*

School Name	Location	Established
Aztec	Aztec, New Mexico	1955
Gallup	Gallup, New Mexico	1955
Holbrook	Holbrook, Arizona	1955
Winslow	Winslow, Arizona	1955
Snowflake	Snowflake, Arizona	1955
Richfield	Richfield, Utah	1955
Flagstaff	Flagstaff, Arizona	1958
Ramah	Ramah, New Mexico	1959

*Note.* Adapted from *The Navajo Yearbook: Report No. viii 1951-1961, A Decade of Progress*, by R.W. Young, 1961, Navajo Agency, Window Rock, Arizona.

**Public Schools**

Provisions in the 1950 Long Range Act required for the shifting of the school service burden to public schools of the respective state governments. More than half a century earlier, the U.S. federal government had already begun working directly with individual public schools in covering the educational costs of Indian children; however, public schools were reluctant due to “the non-taxable status of Indian Reservation lands, State Departments of Public Instruction could not carry the burden of Indian enrollment without Federal aid” (Young, 1961, p. 52). Not until the passage of the 1934 Johnson O’Malley Act were funds appropriated to assist state education departments in sustaining the obligations for the education of Indian children within their school systems. Within two years, in 1936, the Johnson O’Malley Act was improved to specify the following:

1. The Secretary of Interior could enter into contracts with States, Counties or other political subdivisions, or with State universities, colleges or other types of schools for the provision of educational, medical and other services to Indians;
2. The Secretary could permit the contracting party to use existing Federally-owned buildings and equipment in carrying out the terms of the contract; and
3. Required that in carrying out the terms of the contract, the state maintain its standards of services to Indians at a level comparable to that governing the provision of similar services to non-Indians. (Young, 1961, pp. 52-53).

The Navajo government became increasingly involved in their intergovernmental relations with the U.S. federal and state governments. In the late 1940s, Young (1961) reported,

The demand for schools on the part of the Navajo Tribe included a demand that the federal schools be replaced with public schools on the premise that the two systems differed essentially in their objectives, curricula and teaching methods. (p. 53)

Although never fully materializing, discussions were held on whether the federal government should terminate set-aside funding for American Indians, altogether. This would have meant that American Indian tribes would have had to compete at the same level as other groups in the nation for the same funding.

Confounding the issues even further was the realization of just how massive and undeveloped the Navajo Indian Reservation was. Young (1961) shared,

In view of the large tribal population, the extensive Reservation area, the lack of adequate roads and other limiting factors, the problem of educating the Navajo school age population was an especially difficult one requiring

the continued operation of boarding facilities to serve a large portion of the school age group. (pp. 53-54)

Finally, in 1952, after changes were made to Public Law 815 concerning “Federal Impact,” Fort Defiance and Ganado, Arizona were the first two communities on the Navajo Indian Reservation to have appropriated brand new public school facilities, qualifying as school districts with significant Indian enrollment (Young, 1961). In this manner, the growth of public education grew in both Arizona and New Mexico boundaries of the Navajo Indian Reservation. Between the period beginning 1952 to 1960, there were a total of 20 public schools established for Navajo students (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Dates of Establishment of Public Schools Attended by Navajo Students*

School Name	Location	Established
Window Rock	Window Rock, Arizona	1952/1953
Ganado	Ganado, Arizona	1952/1953
Sanders	Sanders, Arizona	1952/1953
Tohatchi	Tohatchi, New Mexico	1952/1953
Kirtland	Kirtland, New Mexico	1954
Naschitti	Naschitti, New Mexico	1954
Newcomb	Newcomb, New Mexico	1954
Shiprock	Shiprock, New Mexico	1954
Thoreau	Thoreau, New Mexico	1954
Tuba City	Tuba City, Arizona	1954
Crownpoint	Crownpoint, New Mexico	1955
Bloomfield	Bloomfield, New Mexico	1956

Table 7 (continued)

School Name	Location	Established
Cuba	Cuba, New Mexico	1956
Ramah	Ramah, New Mexico	1956
Tohatchi	Tohatchi, New Mexico	1956
Church Rock	Church Rock, New Mexico	1957
Chinle	Chinle, Arizona	1958
Kayenta	Kayenta, Arizona	1958
Page	Page, Arizona	1958
Leupp	Leupp, Arizona	1960

*Note.* Adapted from *The Navajo Yearbook: Report No. viii 1951-1961, A Decade of Progress*, by R.W. Young, 1961, Navajo Agency, Window Rock, Arizona.

### Student Voices

On September 8, 2000, at a ceremony recognizing the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Kevin Gover offered a formal apology for past atrocities conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) against American Indian and Alaskan Native people. Specific to education, Gover (Tribal Court Clearinghouse, n.d.) remarked,

This agency forbade the speaking of Indian languages, prohibited the conduct of traditional religious activities, outlawed traditional government, and made Indian people ashamed of who they were. . . . Worst of all, the BIA committed these acts against the children entrusted to its boarding schools, brutalizing them emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. (Para. 6)



This apology was received with mixed emotions and revived past feelings ranging from contentment, as a form of closure; to uncertainty, as a form of vulnerability; and to anger, as a form of revictimization.

A female Indian child who attended an Indian Boarding School remembers being frightened and afraid of her surroundings; for she had witnessed and experienced first-hand occurrences of punishment, cruelty, sexual assault, and anguish while attending grade school. Bernice Levchuck, in her book *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*, describes the deception:

Intimidation and fear were very much present in our daily lives. For instance, we would cower from the abusive disciplinary practices of some superiors, such as the one who yanked my cousin's ear hard enough to tear it. After a nine-year old was raped in her dormitory bed during the night, we girls would be so scared that we would jump into each other's bed as soon as the lights went out. The sustained terror in our hearts further tested our endurance, as it was better to suffer with a full bladder and be safe than to walk through the dark, seemingly endless hallway to the bathroom. When we were older, we girls anguished each time we entered the classroom of a certain male teacher who stalked and molested girls. (cited by Archuletta, Child, & Lomawaima, 2000, p. 43)

The perpetrators were in these scenarios were often the very staff that the system had entrusted and given custody of children for intentions of education and refinement; however, many were never disciplined, charged, arrested, and sentenced for their acts of indecency and abuse upon vulnerable Indian children. The staff would complete the school year and, like clockwork, they would return for yet another year of schooling. How was it possible for adult employees to commit such blatant acts of abuse within the government school system and yet be recognized as sympathetic and understanding to be able to even work with Indian children?

In 2000, the Heard Museum published *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences* to provide a first person insight of the experiences of Native American children in government boarding schools. The book covers two parts: “PART ONE—A Uniform Course of Study: Life at School” and “PART TWO—The Honest Facts Concerning My Race: Life Beyond School.” Throughout the book is a poignant collection of quotes from the Indian students. The following is a representative sampling of those quotes, touching on various themes, from the book:

Quote by Ruthie Blalock Jones, Delaware/Shawnee/Peoria:

Boarding schools were started to stamp out the Indian from the Indian, you know, make us all into White people, and you know, it didn't work. Actually . . . it was the exact opposite: It made us stronger as Indian people. It made us more aware of and more proud of who we were. (Heard Museum, 2000, p. 19)

Quote by Wayquahgeshig (John Rogers), White Earth Ojibwe:

It was very difficult for me at first, for students at the school were not allowed to speak the language of the Indians. At the time I understood nothing else. (Heard Museum, 2000, p. 24)

Quote by student at Chilocco Indian School 1930s, Choctaw:

At the beginning of every school year they inoculate you, and they lined us up just like you do in the Army, I used to say, like cattle, and I remember I had five inoculations. . . . And I was so homesick, and sick, I just thought I would die. That's one of the earliest things I remember. And another early memory was of being fine combed for lice. . . . They had a little metal comb and it had short teeth, real fine teeth. (Heard Museum, 2000, p. 25)

Quote by Patricia Waconda, Kickapoo/Laguna:

We got off the bus in this strange, strange place, and they didn't even tell us we was going to have to stay, and we thought we were going to stay just for the night, you know, so we went in, and I laugh now but at the time it was so scary . . . walking together, you know, whimpering, and we

got into this government girls building, and the first thing I could remember was smelling the floor varnish. (Heard Museum, 2000, p. 26)

Quote by Lilly Quoetone Nahwooksy:

When they first took us in school, they gave us government lace-up shoes, and they gave us maybe a couple pair of black stockings, and long underwear, about a couple of them, and . . . slippers and dress. Then they gave us a number. My number was always twenty-three. (Heard Museum, 2000, p. 26)

Quote by Walter B. Jones, Santee Sioux:

Our name isn't supposed to be Jones, but Chonku or something like that and the teachers couldn't say it right so they just give us Jones. (Heard Museum, 2000, p. 28)

Quote by Fred Kabotie, Hopi:

When you first started attending school, they looked at you, guessed how old you were, set your birthday, and gave you an age. Then they'd assign you a Christian name. Mine turned out to be Fred. (Heard Museum, 2000, p. 29)

Quote by Ben Zurega, Chiricahua Apache:

Well, we had a boy's advisor. . . . He was an Eskimo from Alaska and he ruled that dorm with an iron hand. Everybody was afraid of him. (Heard Museum, 2000, p. 42)

Quote by Ehattesaht, Nuu-Chah-nulth:

It always seemed like every time I wanted to talk about this sexual abuse, it seemed like nobody wanted to listen. . . . It hurts, it really hurts! It's a tough thing to have to live with. I want to put it out in the open, to talk about it, 'cause I want to deal with it, I need to deal with it. . . . I was really scared to come out into the world, because of the way I felt, a lot of shame. (Heard Museum, 2000, p. 43)

Archuletta, Child, and Lomawaima (2000) noted,

The entrance to nearly every Indian boarding school is marked by an arch, a symbol of the transition from "uncivilized" space to "civilized" space. As new students arrived at school and passed through the arch, they essentially passed from one life to another, entering a difficult and traumatizing time that, for many, marked numerous difficult and traumatizing years. Former students vividly recall their first hours and

days after passing under the arch, when they were often assaulted by practices consciously designed to strip them of their identities. This is how the schools began their task of creating a new kind of individual. (p. 24)

Quote by Lucy Toledo, Navajo, Sherman Institute 1950s:

Saturday night we had a movie. Do you know what the movie was about? Cowboys and Indians. Cowboys and Indians. Here we're getting all our people killed, and that's the kind of stuff they showed us. (Bear, 2008).

Quote by Eulynda Toledo-Benally, Navajo, Rehobeth 1950s:

When I was five years old, I was sent to a mission boarding school run by the Christian Reform Church at Rehobeth, New Mexico, which was very puritanical. There was a lot of psychological, emotional, verbal, and even physical abuse. My brother, sister, and I seldom went home. We never told our parents about the abuse because we didn't realize we were being abused. Now when my mother hears about it, she cries. She says she didn't know this was going on at the schools. And my siblings and I wonder, "Why did you leave us there?" (Toledo-Benalli, 2004)

Quote by Brown, John, Jr., Navajo Code Talker:

They tell us not to speak in Navajo language. You're going to school. You're supposed to only speak English, and it was true. They did practice that and we got punished if you was caught speaking Navajo. (National Museum of American Indian, n.d.)

Quote by Merrill Sandoval, Navajo, Navajo Code Talker:

We even had to march to school, march to chow, march everywhere, to church. It was still kind of military basis. So when we were in the service everything just came natural, physically and morally and everything. (National Museum of American Indian, n.d.).

Quote by Jean Whitehorse, Navajo, 1960s:

My whole boarding school experience was about abuse. Back then, our mothers and fathers weren't there to talk for us. They weren't there to protect us. (Norrell, 2010)

The Merriam Report has largely been considered the sudden and striking realization of the negative manner in which services were provided to American Indians in the United States, including education. Howard (1949) wrote about the

affects of the Merriam Report as the catalyst of change, beginning in the late 1920s and well into the 1930s and beyond, where the Indian service “began to demand that the curricula of its schools be planned locally in terms of local needs” (p. 7).

Over the span of two decades, in the 1950s and 1960s, Navajo education continued to be affected by several federal laws that were passed. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 identified the federal government as responsible for special education services for Indians, including supplementary corrective coursework be provided to those American Indian students requiring additional skills support in reading and math (Wright, Hirlinger, & England, 1998). The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 responded to the need of assisting children with instruction in their native language as a means for them to become competent in the English language.

In 1969, a report titled *Indian Education: A National Tragedy, A National Challenge*, also known as the Kennedy Report, was presented by the U.S. Senate’s Special Subcommittee on Indian Education focusing on the disproportions of American Indian educational achievement, lack of American Indian educators, and additional educational service needs of American Indians (Wright, Hirlinger & England, 1998). Coupled with provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the Kennedy Report drew attention to revisiting policy and laws concerning American Indians. Consequently, in 1972, the Indian Education Act of 1972 was passed to promote

equal education opportunities to American Indians. The Indian Education Act was amended in 1974 and 1978.

The September 1975 report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights documented the first United States Commission on Civil Rights held on an Indian reservation. For the period of October 22-24, 1973, the commission convened in Window Rock, Arizona, the capital of the Navajo Nation government, to discuss the failures of federal Indian policy, particularly, in education, health, and economic development:

It focused on the question of self-determination for the largest Indian reservation in the United States, and it did so, in part, by concentrating on three key areas in which the current system of Indian trusteeship has failed dismally to meet the 20<sup>th</sup> century needs of some 137,000 people. (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1975, p. v)

Specific to education, the Commission examined curricula, alternative structures of schools, credentialed teacher shortages, institutional agency certifications, parent involvement, Navajo students, and funding. Integration of Navajo language, history, and culture into the educational process; and empowering Navajos to serve in capacities where the nature of work enables participation in establishing sound and effective policies were two recommendations for Navajo education. The summation of the report (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1975) read as follows:

Despite a 5-year-old Federal policy of Indian self-determination, the country's largest Indian tribe, after more than a century of "trustee" domination, remains today as subject as ever to the red tape and shortsightedness of a still burgeoning Federal bureaucracy; the tribe is still the poorest of America's poor, and still has the worst health and least education of any ethnic group in the Nation. During more than a year of studying these problems, including a 3-day open hearing in the Navajo capital at Window Rock, Arizona, the Commission found not only a

shocking and disgraceful condition of neglect, but an alarming acceptance of the status quo emanating from key Federal programs that should be providing the means for Navajo self-development. (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1975, p. 120)

In review of numerous historical documents, it is unmistakable that Navajo children and families have suffered at the hands of education imposed upon them by external governmental and non-governmental bodies. In 1928, the Merriam Report revealed the shocking state of Indian education, including the education of the Navajo. Again, in 1969, the Kennedy Report presented recurrences of deficiencies some 40 years earlier. Although there have been advancements made in the education of Navajo children, there exists opportunities to improve further.

Early on, the federal government's goals for Indian education had been to "Christianize" the Indians, with the assistance of the Christian Missions and their schools; to "Civilize" the Indians, by stealing their children and sending them away from their reservations for long periods of time, under the control of Indian boarding schools; and to "Americanize" the Indians by imposing a White man's education upon their children with the purpose of assimilating them, by setting up American schools on their reservations.

Today, Navajo education continues to operate as varying fragmented schools, serving Navajo children, with varying curricula, assessments, funding streams tied to requirements, and independent structured governance: federal schools, operated by the Bureau of Indian Education; public schools, political subdivisions of the states; community and grant schools, federally funded and operated by local community school boards; and parochial schools.

Over 100 years after the initial, first attempts of formally educating the Navajo, the time-honored traditional Navajo form of education was acknowledged by Thompson (1975) and described as

The education process, in Navajo culture, was carried on primarily by the family and extended family; and, through this process, young people received a good education, an education to prepare them to live the life expected of them. They were taught what they needed to know to function in their society—the rules and taboos of their culture, the skills to make a living from their flocks and farms, the accepted behavior expected of them and the responsibilities they must assume to be respected Navajos. Boys were taught what they needed to know to function as male members of the tribe, and girls were taught their roles. Each individual youth, in keeping with his or her age and maturity, not only was permitted but expected to participate with adults in the activities of the group in the work, the social life and certain of the ceremonials. Cultural values were passed on through stories, legends, ceremonials, and everyday living. This traditional learning process kept youth and adults in close step with each other, and it developed in young Navajos a sense of worth, self respect and respect for elders. The educational process was sound, and it made sense in a culture that was self-contained, with little need for outside contacts. (pp. 25-26)

### **Current Research: School Identity and Alignment**

Charles M. Roessel (2007), in his dissertation titled *Navajo Education in and Out of the Classroom: A Photographic Case Study of Rough Rock Community School*, explored the visualization of education by Navajo students at a bilingual school on the Navajo Indian Reservation. Six themes emerged from the study: (a) two worlds; (b) change; (c) strength; (d) pride; (e) Navajo language, history, and culture; and (f) nature.



Table 8

*Roessel's Six Themes of School Identity at Rough Rock*

Theme	Characteristics
Two Worlds	Moving seamlessly between two worlds (e.g., Navajo and Western)
Change	Ever evolving (e.g., past and future need)
Strength	Self-identity, confidence, and contentedness
Pride	Importance of heritage
Navajo language, history and culture	Integration of Navajo language, history, and culture
Nature	Connection to the natural world

*Note.* Adapted from *Navajo Education In and Out of the Classroom: A Photographic Case Study of Rough Rock Community School*, by C. M. Roessel, 2007, Doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

The first theme, *two worlds*, emerged from the students ages 10 to 17 years who noted similarities and understood perspectives of and between the Navajo and western worlds. Many students discussed multiple perspectives and their experiences of looking through different lenses. Many of the responses from the interviews focused on examples of the “both and” approach (p. 72). The interviewees discussed the need to value diversity and to connect cultures for a greater understanding, such as, “People would think that we’re just sitting around but it’s kind of like my grandmother’s where we sit in a Hogan, traditional Navajo homemade from natural materials, on the dirt floor. The hallways are mini-hogans without walls.”

The second theme, *change*, emerged from the students in sharing their observations of differences over time. They discussed how these differences have improved services and/or caused concern at the school. Clothing was one area that was discussed, “If you look at the old pictures every girl in elementary today is wearing skirts and dresses yet almost all girls in the new photos are wearing pants.” Additionally, “Forty years ago teachers dressed nice, but today our teachers are wearing jeans” (p. 80). The increase of Navajo professionals administering and teaching at schools was another area discussed:

We have public, grant, and BIA; and we have more Navajo teachers, principals running the school now, and I am very proud of that; but what does it mean? We have so many stories of our way of life which makes of Navajo. (pp. 84-85)

The third theme, *strength*, emerged from discussions of spirit and resilience. The study described it as “actions and thoughts about the perspective of self-identity and how that builds confidence and a sense of contentedness” (p. 85). The students described how knowledge is empowering, such as “I like the strong Navajo woman look.” “Like, don’t mess with me.” “That strength comes from what she knows” (pp. 88-89); and “she’s not going to be without her turquoise necklace with two hearts on it. . . . She’s an Indian woman, she’s young and she’s confident” (p. 90). Many of the students understood that learning their heritage culture and history was necessary to understand themselves.

The fourth theme that emerged focused on *pride*. Many of the students shared impressions of *home* being at *school* because those cultural activities that Navajos normally would perform at home have been brought into the school. One student shared,

What place butchers a sheep for education and food? It's more like family education and each side giving their own story. I feel like I'm with a family, the way they tease and make you feel proud—they want us to talk Navajo. (p. 94)

The students presented their Navajo clans in their introductions as a form of self-respect and honoring tradition.

The fifth theme, *Navajo language, history, and culture*, emerged from discussions of the participants sharing how academic content areas are fused with the Navajo language, history, and culture. Many of the students stated that the reason why they chose to attend school at Rough Rock was as a result of their desire and their parents' desire for them to receive a Navajo education. Referring to a picture of a young boy gathering herbal medicine with an elder, a student shared,

My parents want me to learn and that's why I am at Rough Rock. But learning Navajo is like that picture because I can't imagine becoming fluent but every day I get a little closer and eventually I will be fluent. (p. 98)

The final theme, *nature*, focused on discussions students shared about living things in comparison to non-living structures. Many of the students used examples of living things, trees and plants, as analogies for the type of school they are attending and compared them to the non-living things, which they see as enclosed. A student shared,

My cousin stands in front of both [the tree and building] but closer to nature. That's what Navajo education looks like to me. . . . Even when I'm in college, all buildings look alike but that tree and what I learned about Navajo remains alive in me. (p. 105)

Roessel's study provided a voice to the students from Rough Rock Community School to share how they see their school. The visualization of the

school, from student perceptions, was used to see if it aligned with the original mission of the school. Over 41 years later, there is an alignment of “the look” of the school and the purpose of the school. Many of the students shared that they had a better understanding of themselves as a result of learning more about Navajo language, culture, and history at their school. Roessel (2007) recommended that students be allowed to participate to a greater extent in educational practices; he encouraged the alignment of student perception with educational developments.

Roessel’s (2007) study is included in the literature review because it was the only Native American study where Navajo student voices were used to construct the “look” of their school and that visualization was confirmed for alignment with the original mission and vision of Rough Rock Community School.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether an alignment exists between the mission of Puente de Hozho Magnet School and the visualization of how current Navajo students view their education at the school. This chapter focused on the research design, sample selection, research site, data collection, and data analysis.

#### **Design**

A qualitative research design was used for this study because it offered the ideal method in securing an understanding of students' experiences through field notes, interviews, and research. Creswell (2003) defined qualitative research as a method

in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings of socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (i.e., political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change oriented) or both. (p. 18)

Qualitative researchers are drawn to exploring the significance that people see themselves and the world around them at a particular place and time. The data are gathered and analyzed, consequently, forming data themes. This study employed constructivist and emancipatory knowledge claims, noted by Creswell (2003), whereby "the researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants," through the selection of a "culture-sharing group" that had

been made, and thus learning “how it [the culture-sharing group] developed shared patterns of behavior over time” (pp. 21-22).

Douglas (1998) defined photo elicitation interviews as “interviews that are conducted about photographs that were taken by study participants” and distinguished it as “photographs are taken by study participants and that they are the primary interpreters of their photographs” (p. 11). This process, as Douglas (1998) described, is also known as “photo-interviewing” (Blinn-Pike & Eyring, 1989; Collier & Collier, 1986; Douglas, 1998; Harper, 2002; Tucker & Dempsey, 1991).

### **Sample Selection**

This research focused on the perspectives of Native American students attending a K-5 school outside the boundaries of their respective Indian reservations. The criteria for the student participants in this study were Native American students in the fifth grade at Puente de Hozho Magnet School. I recruited six students with the assistance of the fifth grade teacher. A parent permission form (see Appendix A) and a child assent form (see Appendix B) were sent home with 10 students identified as having met the student participant criteria by the teacher. Of the 12 students in the fifth grade bilingual Navajo program, 10 met the student participant criteria; however, only six returned signed parent permission and child assent forms. Therefore, the total sample for this study was 6 students.

## Site Selection

Puente de Hozho Magnet School in Flagstaff, Arizona was selected as the focus of this research. Puente de Hozho opened its doors in the fall of 2001 and it was a combination of two very successful programs within the district: The Navajo Immersion Program in Leupp, Arizona, on the Navajo Indian Reservation, and the dual language Spanish/English program in Flagstaff. This bilingual school is located within the city of Flagstaff, Arizona, a border town exterior to the Navajo Indian Reservation and is a small school within the Flagstaff Unified School District system. Puente de Hozho enrolled 371 students in the 2011-2012 school year: 74 in Kindergarten, 73 in first grade, 63 in second grade, 61 in third grade, 58 in fourth grade, and 41 in fifth grade (see Table 9).

Table 9

*2011-2012 School Year Enrollment*

Grade	K	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	Total
No.	74	73	63	61	58	41	370

During enrollment at Puente de Hozho, students were self-identified as follows: 151, or 40.8 %, as Hispanic; 8, or 2.1 % as two or more ethnicities; 2, or .5%, Asian; 2, or .5% Black or African American; 106, or 28.6%, as American Indian/Alaskan Native; 1, or .2%, as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; and 101, or 27.2%, as White (see Table 10).

Table 10

*2011-2012 Parent Reported Ethnicity*

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
White	101	27.2
Black or African American	2	0.5
Hispanic	151	40.8
Asian	2	0.5
American Indian/Alaskan Native	106	28.6
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	0.2
Two or more ethnicities	8	2.1

Students and their parents choose either the Spanish/English bilingual program or the Navajo/English bilingual program. During enrollment, program selection was as follows for the 370 students: 260, or 70%, in the Spanish/English bilingual program and 110, or 30%, in the Navajo/English language program (see Table 11).



Table 11

*2011-2012 Program Selection*

Program	Number	Percentage
English/Navajo	110	30%
English/Spanish	260	70%

Of the 41 fifth grade students, 29 students, or 71%, were enrolled in the Spanish/English bilingual program and 12 students, or 29%, were enrolled in the Navajo/English bilingual program (see Table 4). Of the 12 total students in the fifth grade Navajo/English bilingual program, 6, or 50%, participated in this study (see Table 12).

Table 12

*2011-2012 Fifth Graders by Program*

Program	Number of fifth graders (N = 41)	Percentage
English/Navajo Program	12	29.0
English/Spanish Program	29	71.0

**Data Collection**

**Individual Interviews**

When student participants returned their parent permission forms (see Appendix A) and student assent form (see Appendix B), I met with the students

and provided them information on my background and an overview of the study. Students were assigned pseudonyms to document their participation in the study. Before digitally recording the background interviews of student participants, I shared my reasons for pursuing this study. Thereafter, I conducted the student interviews. Students were asked demographic data questions to include where they live, how they get to school, decision for attending this school, prior knowledge of school before attending, what they would say in describing their school to a peer, and if they knew what the mission of their school was. Additionally, students were asked follow-up questions of the pictures they took and what Navajo education meant to them (see Appendix C). The interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

### **Photo Elicitation Interviews**

I coded the cameras with numbers 1 thru 6 and assigned them to the student participants. Student participants were asked to respond to the question “What does your education look like at Puente de Hozho Trilingual Magnet School?” through the pictures they would take in and around the school. Student participants roamed throughout the school and outside the building, documenting what their education looked like from their perspectives. Because the consent of other students and adults was not obtained, student participants were instructed not to take pictures of people. After the pictures were taken, the cameras were gathered and the pictures developed. After the pictures were developed, selected pictures were used to prompt their memory and elicit descriptions and meanings

of the images that they captured. The students' responses generated a data set for coding and analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of qualitative data collected from the individual interviews, photographs, and photo elicitation was completed by use of the coding process. Coding is the method in which one takes collected information in written words and then clusters the data by the meaning in which the respondents have given it, and then arranged by similarities and differences to distinguish patterns (Roper & Shapira, 2000).

### **Summary**

In responding to the questions posed in this study, the qualitative research design was best suited to meet the needs of collecting data on the perception that participant Native American students attending a bilingual school outside the boundaries of any Indian reservation had of their school and whether that visualization was aligned with the mission and vision of the school. Individual interviews, photo elicitation, and memo writing were utilized in this study. The result provided a wealth of data that described "the look" of education at Puente de Hozho Magnet School. The prominent emergent themes are discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

### FINDINGS

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study identified, described, and analyzed Native American students and adult educators at Puente de Hozho of their background and visualization of the education at the school.

Personal interviews were conducted with six Native American fifth grade students and five adult educators affiliated with Puente de Hozho Trilingual Magnet School. Personal student interviews ranged from 11 minutes and 29 seconds to 21 minutes and 24 seconds in length. Personal adult educator interviews ranged from 3 minutes and 40 seconds to 23 minutes and 27 seconds in length. Table 13 displays biographical information of the participants. To protect the identity of the students, pseudonyms were used.

Table 13

*Biographical Information of Student Participant Interviews*

Student participant	Gender	Grade	Residence	Tribal affiliation	Transportation to school
Katie	Female	5 <sup>th</sup>	East Flagstaff	Navajo	Parents
Haley	Female	5 <sup>th</sup>	Doney Park	Navajo	Parents
Johnny	Male	5 <sup>th</sup>	South Flagstaff	Navajo	Parents
Calvin	Male	5 <sup>th</sup>	East Flagstaff	Navajo	Parents
Jordan	Male	5 <sup>th</sup>	Sunnyside	Navajo	Parents
Jacob	Male	5 <sup>th</sup>	East Flagstaff	Navajo	Parents/Bus

Student interviewees were asked to respond to 10 open-ended questions related to their background, and to elicit data from photographs as to how they viewed their education. Student participants were asked the following background and photo-elicitation questions:

1. Where do you live?
2. How do you get to school and how long does it take for you to get to school?
3. Why did you or your parents decide to go to this school?
4. Did you know anything about this school before you came here?
5. If you had to describe this school to someone your own age, what would you say?
6. Why do you think this photograph answers the question, “What does Navajo education look like at your school?”
7. Is this scene something that you have experienced before, or elsewhere?
8. Do you know the mission of your school?
9. Does the photograph reflect a positive picture of Navajo education?
10. What does Navajo education mean to you?

Adult educator participants were asked the following background questions:

1. How long have you been here?
2. Why did you choose to work with this school?
3. What had you heard about this school before you got here?

4. If you were to describe this school to other educators, what would you say?
5. What do you think students would say about this school?

### **Student Question 1: Residence**

Question 1 asked, “Where do you live?” When asked this question, all of the students described where they lived with their parents and/or guardians. All of the student participants lived in the vicinity of Flagstaff, Arizona. Although all of the student participants are of Navajo heritage, they live with their families in town, outside of the Navajo Indian Reservation, for reasons related to employment, school, and/or work. Half of the students lived on the east side of Flagstaff, while the others lived in the central, northeast, and south side of Flagstaff. Following are examples of students explaining they lived on the east side of Flagstaff:

I live across the corner from here in east Flagstaff. (Katie).

I live right by—I live by . . . the east side of town. (Calvin).

Across the street from Buffalo Park, Buffalo Fence. It’s close to the mall. (Jacob).

Following are examples of students living in central Flagstaff, the south side of Flagstaff, and in northeast Flagstaff:

By Kellip. It’s close to St. Vincent de Paul. (Jordan).

South side of Flagstaff. (Johnny)

In Donkey Park, it’s probably about 15 minutes. (Haley)

## **Student Question 2: Transportation to School**

Question 2 asked, “How do you get to school and how long does it take you to get to school?” All of the student participants responded that they live in Flagstaff and are either dropped off by their parents at school or they ride the bus to school. Puente de Hozho Trilingual Magnet school is supported by the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD); therefore, transportation services are provided by FUSD from all over town. Student responses identified that all six students made it to school 20 minutes or less when driven to school by a parent.

Examples of students who are transported by parents are as follows:

My dad drives me and it takes about 15 minutes. (Katie).

I come to school in the car. My parents drive me to school and it probably takes about 20 minutes. (Haley)

I drive to school and it takes about 5 to 10 minutes. (Johnny)

My mom brings me to school and it takes me about 11 or 12 minutes. (Calvin)

My parents drop me off at school and it takes me about 5 minutes. (Jordan)

One student reported that he alternated riding the bus and having a parent drop him off at school. When he rode the bus, it took twice as long to get to school. His response is as follows:

My mom or dad drives me here or I take the bus and it takes me . . . if I take the bus, about 40 minutes. And if I go with my mom or dad, it takes 20. (Jacob)

## **Student Question 3: School Choice**

Question 3 asked, “*Why did you or your parents decide to go to this school?*” Student participants each shared why they attended this school.

Responses focused upon two themes: They all suggested their reasoning to be related to the opportunity of learning Navajo language and culture and the benefits of a multi-lingual education. Examples of the opportunity of learning Navajo language and culture are as follows:

Because we get to learn the native language. (Katie)

Because they wanted me to learn Navajo. (Calvin)

Because they wanted me to learn Navajo so I could understand my grandma and grandpa when they're talking. (Jacob)

Two of the students shared that their parents wanted them to go to this school because they wanted them to learn more than one language. Examples of benefits of a multi-lingual education are as follows:

Because it's trilingual, and they wanted me to learn my language. (Haley)

Because they heard it was bilingual. (Johnny)

One student noted that he did not know any particular reason why his parents first enrolled him at that particular school. He innocently responded the following: "I don't know. I started here in kindergarten" (Jordan)

#### **Student Question 4: Knowledge of School**

Question 4 asked, "Did you know anything about this school before you came here?" Students tried as best as they could to recall if they had heard anything before coming to this school. Many of them had begun school at Puente de Hozho as kindergarteners. The single theme that emerged from the responses regarding knowledge of the school was from either a family member that went to school there or a relative having shared information about the school.



Examples of family members or relatives sharing information are as follows:

Only from my dad's sister. (Katie)

I came in kindergarten and my cousins used to go to school here. (Haley)

No. I started in kindergarten. (Calvin)

The only thing is that my sister went to school here when it was Weitzel. (Jacob)

### **Student Question 5: Student Description of School to Peers**

Question 5 asked, "If you had to describe this school to someone your own age, what would you say?" Student participants individually shared how they would explain and tell about their school to a cousin, friend, or another person their own age. A majority of the students responded with the central theme being that the school is a multilingual school. Examples of students describing their school identified by being a multilingual school are as follows:

This school is fairly unique. There's tons of other languages here and there's people your same race and everything so you can sort of relate to them. (Katie)

It's a fun and new learning experience. And you get to learn different languages and different stuff, as well as learning your own language like Navajo and Spanish and you get to learn English at the same time. (Haley)

A nice school. A lot of friendly people where we have really good classes. (Johnny)

I would say it's a good school. They teach different languages. (Calvin)

It's a trilingual school and it's cool. (Jordan)

It's a nice school. You can learn all these different languages. . . . You can learn Navajo. . . . The Spanish kids can kind of teach you Spanish. (Jacob)

### **Student Question 6: Visualization of Navajo Education at School**

Question 6 asked, “Why do you think this photograph answers the question, ‘What does Navajo education look like at your school?’” When the student participants were asked to describe the photos they took to represent what Navajo education looked like to them, several themes emerged. Responses stated by the students included *home life on the reservation, written Navajo language and grammar, music, kinship, acquired learning and student interests, multilingual environment, roles in and out of school, health, math and technology, and cultural imagery.*

#### **Home Life on the Reservation**

Many of the students identified, through pictures, that home life on the reservation was representative of their education. They felt that this visualization was important to them in their education, as well as sharing this visualization with others who want to learn about their curriculum. The following are examples of the comments regarding home life on the reservation and what they were thinking when they took the pictures representing the theme of *home life on the reservation.*



*Figure 1.* Photo 1. “This looks like Navajo education at my school because it talks a lot about Navajo people. The Navajo people live in Hogans, they ride horses and they plant corn. There’s sheeps in the corral, animals . . . there’s a Navajo rug on the side. There are . . . people in the Hogan making a fire, there’s a person riding a horse . . . two people grinding corn. I was thinking about my grandma’s house and her Hogan. I was thinking about how my grandma and grandpa . . . live and what they do during the summer.” (Calvin)



*Figure 2.* Photo 2. “If you’re Navajo . . . it has a Hogan and a horse. They’re [Navajo] growing corn . . . they ride horses most of the time. I was thinking . . . how they are going to learn . . . what it looks like if they’ve never been to the reservation. It’s going to look like this . . .” (Johnny)



*Figure 3.* Photo 3. “They’re doing stuff that people on the rez [reservation] would do . . . like herding sheep, riding horses, and they would cook. It’s awesome because it’s honoring the Navajos. . . . They’ve been through so much.” (Jordan)

When these same students were asked if the pictures they took, representative of home life on the reservation of which they identified they have experienced, were positive views of their education, they responded as follows:

Yeah, because when all my Navajo teachers have been teaching me about Hogans, horses, and corn. A Hogan, that’s used for ceremonies. . . . A Hogan is where kids can learn and there’s a Navajo rug outside. . . . My aunties make Navajo rugs . . . weave Navajo rugs. That’s special to me.” (Calvin)

Yes, . . . this is what the great-great-grandparents used to live in and this is what they would do in their lifetime. (Johnny)

It would be because they [kids] would still have to learn . . .” (Jordan)





word in Navajo, like 'Saad', next to the word. We use it pretty much all the time because when we have trouble like when we write a paragraph in Navajo, we sometimes have trouble and we look at this wall and then find the word that we're looking for. It has . . . the slash 't' and it has 'sh', and it has the name of the clouds, what kind of clouds and rain and snow. It has it in Navajo and the meaning of a monkey, coyote, pumpkin, mouse and a crab." (Haley)



*Figure 5.* Photo 5. "These are about the Navajo alphabets and the animals that start with the Navajo alphabets. I use a lot of Navajo words when I write and speak. During class, we write in Navajo and at home. Miss Begay brings us Navajo reading and we have to read it for homework. Also, my grandma talks Navajo . . . she writes in Navajo." (Calvin)



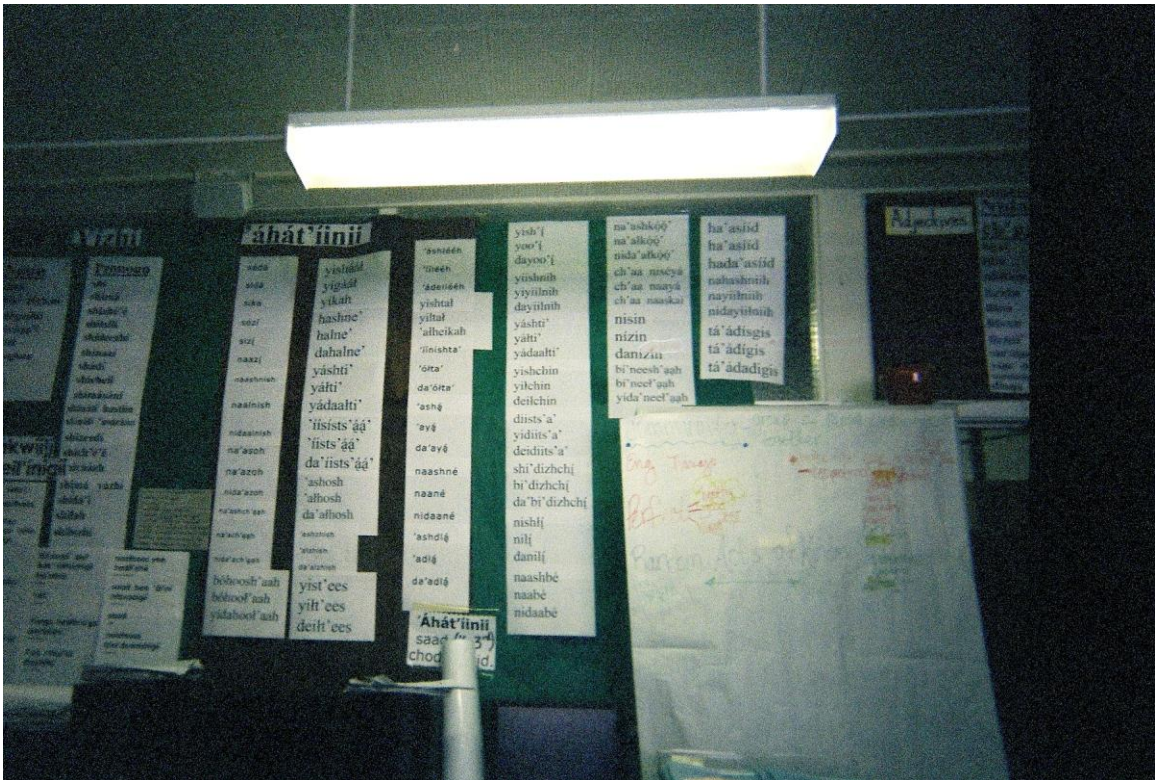


Figure 6. Photo 6. “It [wall] has a lot of words in Navajo. . . . I was thinking to show . . . how many words we actually have. It has the Navajo alphabets and how you would say it—it helped us [students] with our letters and the sounds and then, like different things, like how to react . . . like if it was missing a nasal tone, it would still make a word and make it sound funny. It has definitions and it helps you understand it. It is what my education looks like to me in Navajo, so I took this picture. Then there’s these books . . . you can read them and learn on your own free time. I was thinking that all these kids that are in here that were here could learn their Navajo verbs, their places, their time, their ancestors and all that. It has a lot of words in Navajo and it helps the students learn.” (Jacob)

When these same students were asked if the pictures they took, representative of written Navajo language and grammar, were positive views of their education, they responded as follows:

Yes, because it is written in Navajo. In our Navajo class, everything is in Navajo, nothing is in English . . . (Haley)

Yes, because there is Navajo alphabets, there is the animals that start with the Navajo alphabets, and their vowels and consonants. (Calvin)



Yeah. When I was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, I was in Mrs. Hansen's class, so I used to see this stuff for two years . . . It has all these different letters that the Navajo alphabet has which is, I think, 36 letters, and it has all these different things to help you learn it and how to say it. (Jacob)

## Music

Some student participants felt that their Navajo education was also represented by music. Students identified music in their school as an added benefit to their curriculum and felt that this visualization was important in their education. The following are examples of students' observations about music as represented by the pictures they took and what they were thinking when they took the pictures representing the theme of *music*:



Figure 7. Photo 7. "This [poster] is from music and tells you what notes are high and low and what they're saying, like in the symphony. I was thinking . . . Navajo have a special music . . . there's some traditional songs and ceremony songs." (Johnny)



*Figure 8.* Photo 8. “Because this has music notes, most of the famous composers in each genre, like it says romantic, classical, medieval, and renaissance. And it has different notes and everything. I think in lots of other schools . . . don’t have music, they don’t really have music so I feel very fortunate that we have music in our school.” (Katie)

When these same students were asked if the pictures they took, representative of music, were positive views of their education, they responded as follows:

Yes. In this school and on the Navajo Reservation, I had to learn a traditional song and a healing song. (Johnny)

I guess so, because it shows the music notes and stuff like that. In one of my other schools, we had this, but we only had a few minutes of music. All we did was make sounds and everything like that. (Katie)

### **Kinship**

A few of the student participants identified their Navajo education to be represented by kinship. The students described the Navajo clanship system and family tree projects based on the photographs that they took. The following are

examples of students' observations about kinship as represented by the pictures they took and what they were thinking when they took the pictures representing the theme of *kinship*:



Figure 9. Photo 9. “It [Navajo clan sheet] has . . . all of the most important clans and it has clans that are related. Like if it was *Kinyaa’aanii*; it would have different clans that are related to *Kinyaa’aanii*. Some people forget their clans and who’s related to them by clan . . . so they probably have to look at that sheet. I thought it was good that you could see your clan on it and what related . . . what it meant, and it had . . . different clans. When I was in kindergarten, I learned my clans in Navajo and I had no idea what they meant. It wasn’t until I was in third grade that I finally learned what they meant. Our family teases each other about it. They tease all the girls and say, ‘Make sure you don’t marry your uncle.’” (Haley)



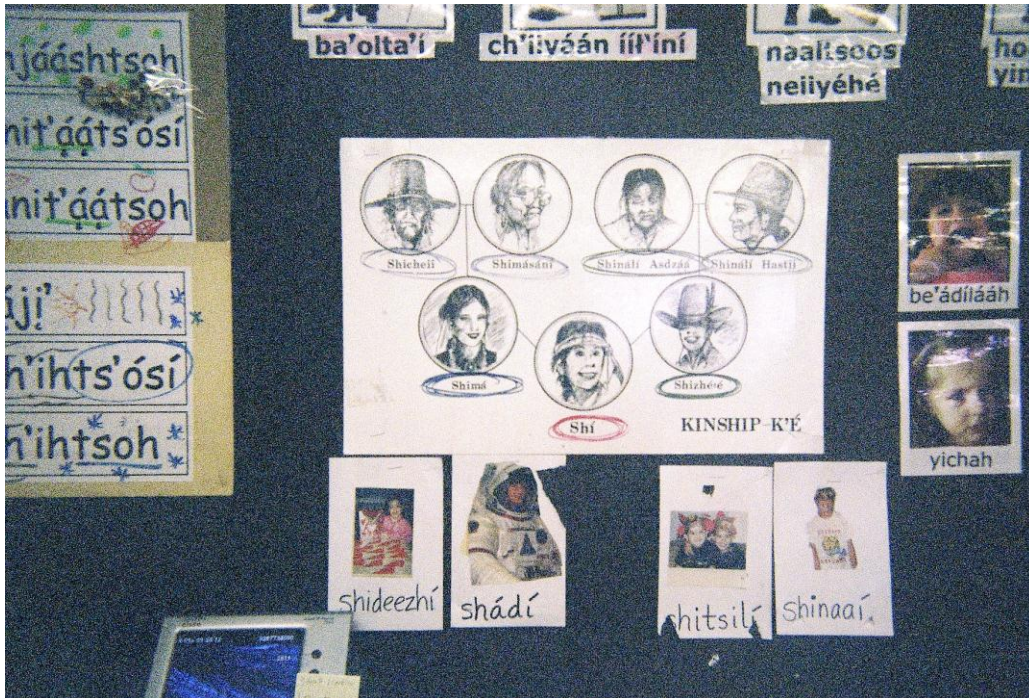


Figure 10. Photo 10. “It [family tree] shows your grandparents on which side of your family, your mom’s side and your dad’s side. And it shows your aunts, and then, it’s in Navajo [relationship terms]. It would be good for . . . kids who are learning Navajo. Miss Hansen’s class, when I was in second and third grade, she would ask us, like if we had a birthday party who would come. Like our grandparents, we had to tell her which grandparents. If my grandparents came over, I would be like, *Yá’át’ée’h, shimá sání.*” (Jordan)

When these same students were asked if the pictures they took, representative of kinship, were positive views of their education, they responded as follows:

Yes, because it has the meaning of your clan and it says it in Navajo, and what the meaning is, and what other clans can be related to you. (Haley)

Yeah, because its like, if you were . . . to learn, but then sometimes you’ll forget. (Jordan)

### Acquired Learning and Student Interests

Several of the students shared their interest of a subject that helped them overcome the process of the work that they do and identified acquired learning to

be representative of their Navajo education. Because students have certain areas of interests, their curiosity overshadows the length and sequence of their work. The students described their Navajo education process as an acquired learning style in which they completed projects, while maintaining interest, and identified this in the photographs that they took.

The following are examples of students' observations about this process as represented by the pictures they took and what they were thinking when they took the pictures representing the theme of *acquired learning and student interests*:



*Figure 11.* Photo 11. “Because our teachers would . . . teach us to translate from English to Navajo; then like we would always ask her, and one time we asked her to help us, and she told us that we couldn’t ask her no more. Then I tried it on my own. It’s about space. It’s cool because it’s in Navajo. Most times they won’t have it in Navajo, they’ll just have it like in English . . .” (Jordan)





*Figure 12.* Photo 12. “I think this [astronomy project] looks like Navajo education because we’re learning about planets and it’s in Navajo. First we have to draw them; then we have to write all the facts about them. It’s one of our projects that was one of my favorites. This is the only place that I’ve done this kind of thing.” (Katie)



*Figure 13.* Photo 13. “Right here we had our planet project where we had to do these different projects to find out how projects work and then we had to translate it into Navajo . . . so we could learn it and learn the facts about it in Navajo and learn how to say it in Navajo. So, it’s reading and writing, because we have to learn it in Navajo, and then we have to translate it from English into Navajo. It gets confusing at times. It takes a long time . . . translating something to Navajo.” (Jacob)



*Figure 14.* Photo 14. “See . . . we wrote about our Christmas vacation, we wrote about it in English and she [teacher] helped us write about it in Navajo. It was so long for some of us . . . but the real thing is it takes effort to go the extra step of translating it into Navajo. It takes a lot longer than just putting it in English. It takes a long time to take something to go from one language to another language so they would see how we read and write in Navajo. And sometimes it’s difficult, and sometimes it’s like the easy words that we learned in kindergarten.” (Jacob)





Figure 15. Photo 15. “It’s like how kids write words in Navajo, different things in Navajo, how they could translate it. Sometimes it’s difficult. In the picture you have somebody writing in English, trying to translate some words. Kind of like what our education is, writing it over and over, so we could get it stuck in our heads . . .” (Jacob)

When these same students were asked if the pictures they took, representative of acquired learning, were positive views of their education, they responded as follows:

Yeah, because like, you know, kindergarteners won’t be able to read it, but when they get older they’ll learn it. When I was here [kindergarten], there was nothing here on the wall. It wasn’t until I was in third grade that they put that up there. (Jordan)

Yes, because you get to learn about the planets in Navajo and the *funest* thing about it is that we get to draw the planets. (Katie)

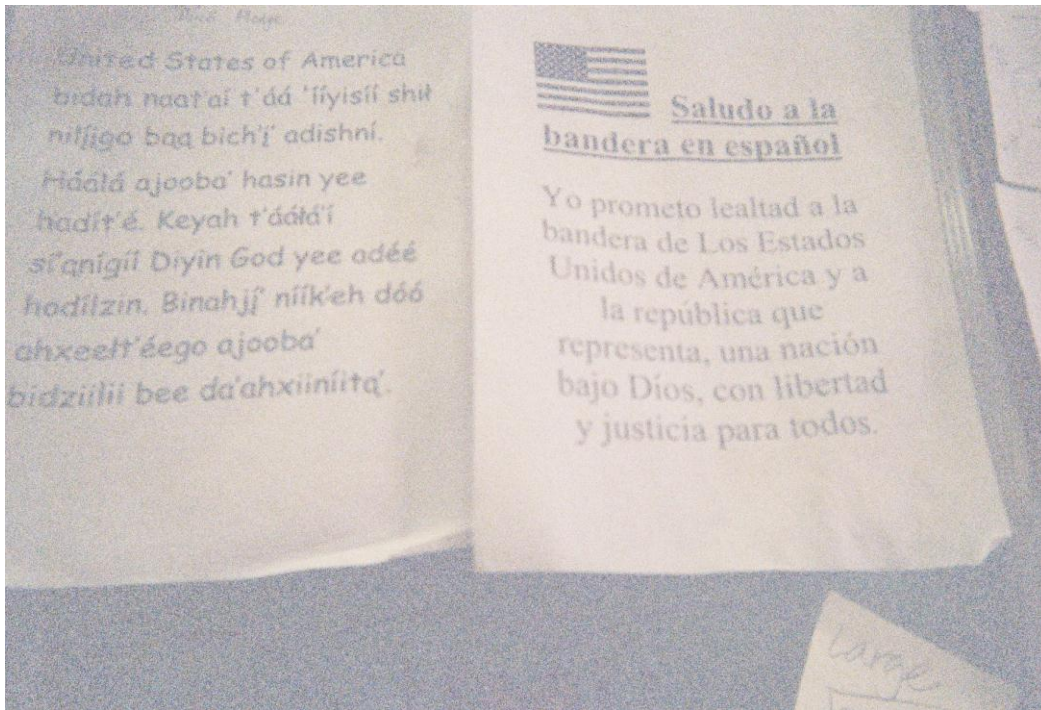
Yeah, to see how hard it takes, how hard it takes an effort to make a project going from Navajo to English and sometimes English to Navajo. We do different things to like enhance our reading and writing skills. I’ve only seen this in one place outside of school . . . It’s a science center . . . (Jacob)

Yeah, because it shows you that we can read and write our language. Like they say the Navajo language is slowly going away, but some people are still keeping it alive. That's important to me because once Navajo is gone, it's like a whole language is gone. The whole Navajo people's language, the original language is going to be gone forever and you can't get it back because no one is listening or talking about it . . . That's why I'm trying to learn it. (Jacob)

Yeah, like a child writing over and over. Like what the definition is. So pretty soon they'll know what the definition is by just hearing the word. Only sometimes when my sister needs help with her Navajo, I actually help her sometimes, I can help her. So sometimes she asks for help, for definitions of certain words or how to spell it. (Jacob)

### **Multilingual Environment**

Many of the students acknowledged their Navajo education to be represented by multiple languages. These students described their multilingual environment identified in the photographs that they took. The following are examples of student comments about the multiple languages at their school as represented by the pictures they took and what they were thinking when they took the pictures representing the theme of *multilingual environment*:



*Figure 16.* Photo 16. “It looks like our education because we have both languages here, like Navajo and in Spanish we get to learn the Pledge of Allegiance. I think it’s pretty cool that we get to learn our Pledge of Allegiance and also our Star Spangled Banner and stuff like that in Navajo . . .” (Katie)





Figure 17. Photo 17. “It looks like our education because in Spanish class everything is in Spanish and I think everything is in Spanish. The objectives is in Spanish, yeah . . . everything is in Spanish. I thought it was really good that like . . . like how good they are in Spanish because they can understand everything right there.” (Katie)



*Figure 18.* Photo 18. “I think it was pretty cool because there was the book *Charlotte’s Web*. It had a picture of Charlotte’s web and it was all in Spanish. I have never seen that before. I thought it was pretty cool so I took a picture of it. Education looks to me that there can be a book that was in English, or a movie that was in English, and it can be translated in Navajo or Spanish. . . . I’ve seen like movies and stuff in Spanish but I’ve never seen movies in Navajo. Only like the old movies, like the Coyote stories. I’ve only seen those kinds of movies in Navajo . . . but sometimes a different movie that’s Navajo where I’ve seen some Indian movies . . . I thought that was pretty cool.” (Haley)

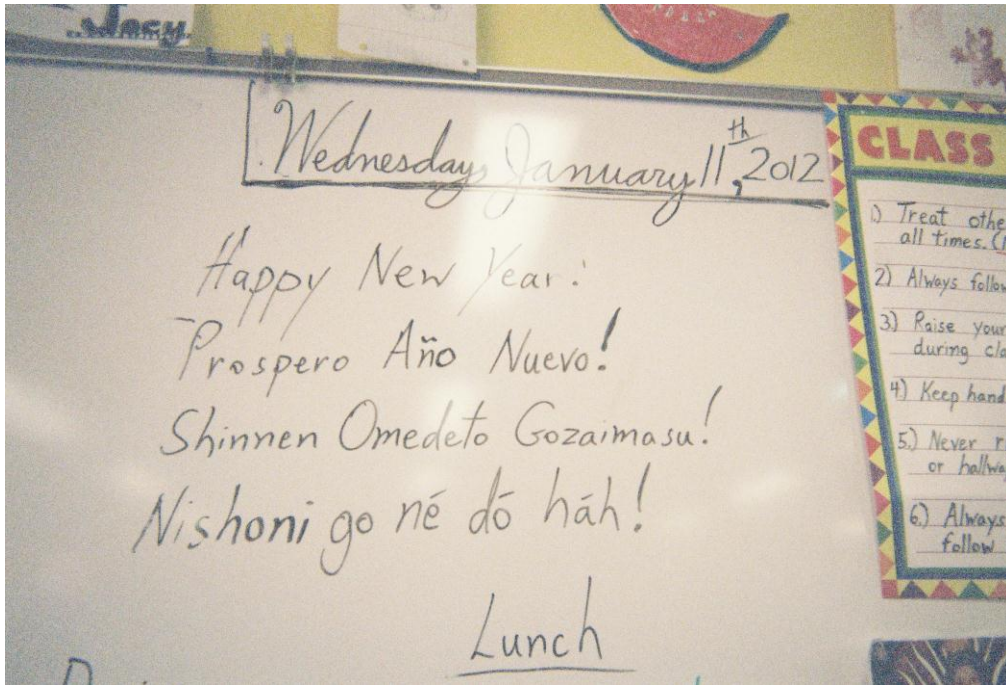


Figure 19. Photo 19. "It says Happy New Year and then it has *Feliz Año Nuevo*, *Nishonigo Nedoohah*. It says 'Happy New Years' in English, Spanish, Japanese, and Navajo. I thought it was cool because it had 'Happy New Year' in all four languages." (Haley)





*Figure 20.* Photo 20. “Well, this is not really Navajo, it’s in Spanish. It tells you how the Spanish, how they write it, what it looks like, what their flag looks like, the colors. So it tells you where they’re originally from and now it tells you where they are at. I wanted to include things not only in Navajo and English, it’s also Spanish . . .” (Johnny)



Figure 21. Photo 21. “Our school is a trilingual school. Puente de Hozho. *Puente* is Spanish and *Hozho* is in Navajo. It [school name] shows it’s a trilingual school. It’s a cool picture because it says ‘Puente de Hozho’ and it has a boy and a girl, they’re . . . coloring together.” (Johnny)

When these students were asked if the pictures they took, representing multiple languages, were positive views of their education, they responded as follows:

Yes, because I think that is really good that we’re learning all this stuff. (Katie)

Yeah, because they [students] get to hold on to their language, like keep it and they have to speak it all the time in there and they read it. (Katie)

I think it was positive because it had Spanish, it had the author’s name in Spanish and the title in Spanish and the whole book was in Spanish. I thought that was cool. (Haley)

Yeah, like our teacher knows four languages . . . he’s pretty cool. (Haley)

Yeah, it does. It tells you where you’re from and what did it look like, and where they [others] were from. (Johnny)







Figure 23. Photo 23. “There is Miss Navajo Nation . . . She is the one that cares for the Navajo Nation.” (Calvin)

When these students were asked if the pictures they took, representing multiple languages, were positive views of their education, they responded as follows:

Yeah, because kids would have to translate. ‘Cause they would look at it and translate what kind of job the would have. (Jordan)

Yeah, because she has Navajo jewelry, Navajo rugs, and . . . there is a Navajo basket. (Calvin)

### **Health**

Some of the students suggested that their personal wellbeing was an important aspect represented of their Navajo education. Students identified health in and out of their school and felt that this visualization was important in their education. The following are examples of students’ observations about health as

represented by the pictures they took and what they were thinking when they took the pictures representing the theme of *health*:



Figure 24. Photo 24. “It [bulletin board] shows all like muscles and it says “hi” in a lot of languages . . . on this white board. It shows like what we’re supposed to do to stay active and everything like that. One the bottom, we have our activity logs for our PE homework . . . These posters say little things like, ‘Work your heart, eat right. Work your body, you’ll be alright. You can do anything if you try and not cry.’ That’s a pretty good way to show people what we’re learning in PE . . .” (Katie)





*Figure 25.* Photo 25. “I took this picture in PE so it tells you what makes you healthy and what’s not healthy for you. It tells you what body part, muscles . . . skeleton looks like and the physical activities. I was thinking about all the kids that never had PE or never saw a PE lesson. Now they would know what it is and would know what it looks like.” (Johnny)

When these same students were asked if the pictures they took, representing multiple languages, were positive views of their education, they responded as follows:

Everybody needs to know about their bones, muscles, and everything. All my other schools, we didn’t have anything like this. (Katie)

Yes. Like I said, if they never saw it or experience it, they don’t know what to do. I walk the dog. I have to run, walk, and exercise everyday so I don’t get too lazy to do it. (Johnny)

### **Student Question 10: Navajo Education**

Question 10 asked, “What does Navajo education mean to you?” The Navajo students responded as to what Navajo education meant to them by sharing their own experiences. Consequently, two main themes emerged: the *difficulty of learning a new language* and the *importance of learning their heritage language*.

Although challenges of learning the Navajo language were identified, the significance of learning their heritage language was equally expressed.

Examples of the difficulty of learning a new language included:

Honestly, it's pretty hard. But I guess learning any new language is hard.  
(Katie)

A very important and hard subject to me. It's pretty hard because you have to add the slashes, the high tones, and all this stuff. It's pretty hard but if you start from Kindergarten, once you start it's not that hard once you get the hang of it. (Haley)

It's hard and you just have to keep learning. (Jordan)

Examples of the importance of learning their heritage Navajo language included:

I think it's really fun and it helps me because I get to talk to my great-Grandma and . . . now I mostly understand what she is saying. (Katie)

It means a lot to me because my whole family is Navajo and you learn more about it. So . . . if something happens, like the Navajo language is gone, there will be some people [students] that still have that tradition going on. (Johnny)

It means that I am Navajo and I like to have more Navajo in my education.  
(Calvin)

It's . . . really good for us. We'll learn Navajo and could use it for a job in the future . . . (Jordan)

It means helping a language that is . . . still trying to recover over the years. So our language can still be a language for maybe 20 years from now. (Jacob)

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether an alignment exists between the mission of Puente de Hózhó Trilingual Magnet School and the visualization of how current Navajo students view the education at the school. The study was guided by two research questions:

1. What does education look like through the eyes of children at Puente de Hózhó Trilingual Magnet School?
2. Does this visualization align with the mission of the school?

The study utilized a qualitative research design for the purpose of constructing an understanding of current educational practices from the viewpoint of Navajo students in a trilingual school outside the boundaries of the Navajo Indian Reservation that offered Navajo language.

#### Conclusions

Jeffery (1981) described one capability of photography is to encapsulate A *Small World* as “pictorial microcosms” and “functional introductions to complex societies” (p. 62). This research accomplished just that. Within snapshots taken on disposable 35mm cameras, Navajo fifth grade students from Puente de Hózhó captured the “pictorial microcosm” of their school. These pictures provided “functional introductions to complex societies” that they identified as the visualization of their education. To answer the research questions, there were 10 themes that emerged from analyzing the student data: (a) home life on the

reservation; (b) written Navajo language and grammar; (c) music; (d) kinship; (e) acquired learning and student interests; (f) multilingual environment; (g) roles in and out of school; (h) health; (i) math and technology; and (j) cultural imagery. These themes represented the unique experiences of students and their education at Puente de Hózhó Trilingual Magnet School.

Analysis of this research concluded that the students' visualization of their education at Puente de Hózhó was aligned with the original mission of "To create an environment for students of different languages and cultural backgrounds to work harmoniously together" and the vision of "Academic Excellence, Bilingualism, and Cultural Enrichment." Students at Puente de Hózhó held inherent connections to their families' home life on the reservation. Navajo orthography advanced the study of the Navajo language and the rules associated by grammar. Music was seen as significant and associated with social gatherings and healing ceremonies. Kinship identified important relationships acknowledged by the students. The students' interests helped them deal with the challenges of their unique educational process. The multilingual environment promoted diversity and creativity. Students identified the roles and purpose they have in school and that of others. They described the importance of health, relating to their physical and personal well-being. Math and technology were identified as important components of their learning.

The students were found to be content and excited in navigating and exploring their unique language and cultural experiences. The students described the bilingual learning process as hard and frustrating; conversely, they described

the invaluable benefits of relationships they have built with their elders through many wonderful stories. The student voices represented a relationship of natural connection to their cultural heritage extended and experienced in their school at the same time excelling academically. The results of this investigation confirmed findings from previous research (Roessel, 2007) that students are aware of their environment; that students recognize the meaningful benefits of their cultural education; and that students understand the fundamental nature of their experiences. The juxtaposition of student experiences, captured verbally or otherwise, and the ongoing sequences of education present an opportunity to measure and evaluate associations and connections between and among the students and their education; the closer measure between the two, the higher the likelihood that the aims of education will be reached. Furthermore, this investigation confirmed the ability of American Indians to adapt for learning (Meriam, 1928); understandably, for Navajo students to embrace their heritage language and culture whilst making progress and evolving.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research is suggested in several areas:

- Additional research needs to be conducted with regard to exploring Navajo students' perceptions of their education within the various school systems on the Navajo Indian Reservation to see if alignment exists between the mission and vision of the schools; including, Bureau of Indian Education schools; Arizona, New



Mexico, and Utah public schools; faith-based schools; and Navajo Community Contract and Grant Schools.

- Additional research needs to be carried out as to the exploration of Navajo parents' perceptions of their children's education to see if an alignment exists with the vision and mission of their children's school; including, Bureau of Indian Education schools; Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah public schools; faith-based schools; and Navajo Community Contract and Grant Schools.
- Additional research needs to be conducted with regard to capturing teachers' perspectives of the education that they are providing to see if an alignment exists with the vision and mission of the school in the schools in which they work; including, Bureau of Indian Education schools; Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah public schools; faith-based schools; and Navajo Community Contract and Grant Schools.

### **Concluding Remarks**

While conducting this research, I learned a great deal more of my family history, tracing my lineage back well before the 1863 Navajo Long Walk. Having developed a historical framework in a linear chronological context, I then juxtaposed Navajo history and my personal family history to gain a working knowledge of the interconnections. As a result, this research turned out to be more than an academic obligation; rather, it became an invaluable journey about the complexities of life, identity, change, and family.

I am fortunate to have received a traditional Navajo education (Thompson, 1974) by my family and extended family—an education that prepared me to live the life of an accountable person; an education taught me how to function in Navajo society; an education that helped me make a living; and an education that nurtured accepted behavior and responsibilities. As a child, I remember sitting by my paternal grandfather Kee Yazzie and other Navajo medicine men during ceremonies in the Hogan. As their designated helper, I would unravel their medicine bundles and arrange the content at the edge of a thin, leveled layer of sand. Regardless of my age, responsibilities were assigned to me so that I would practice traditional learning. When the singing started, they went all night and continued into the morning. There were so many different songs. My favorites were the songs about animals and insects that could only be told during the winter. As I got older and thought more about those songs, my grandpa Kee would tell me more about the songs each time. I remember him telling me about one song in particular as told in time-honored Navajo narratives. In the beginning, time had come for all animals, birds, and insects to decide their form, color, and whether they wanted to be day- or night-time creatures. When choosing colors, the bear was running out of time so he dabbed his hand on the black ashes and applied the color only to his nose. The crow was thrown into the ashes by the other animals because time was running out. When it came time to choose whether to be day or night-time creatures, the blue jays chose the day and the owl chose the night. Time was running out for the moth to choose.

Undecided, time eventually ran out for the moth and it was decided for him that he would be a night-time creature.

Years later, it dawned on me that I had lingering questions as to why the moth was attracted toward light. Every explanation that grandpa Kee had given to me was carefully recalled and the sum of recollections allowed me to reconstruct the narratives; in essence, grandpa Kee piecemealed the answer to me even long after he had passed. The moth did not act upon a decision he was given and therefore was placed into darkness. After being placed into darkness, the moth realized that he wanted to be a daytime creature and has since tried to cross over from dark into light. So while lepidopterists, moth scientists, and others have their own theories as to why the moth is attracted toward light—flying into the headlamps of vehicles, getting burned by light bulbs, and snapping into campfires—our Navajo narratives serve as important teaching tools, focusing on cultural values, rules, and taboos. In the case of the moth, we never want to put ourselves in the position of the moth, living in a state of fright, by indecision, and to understand that there are consequences for the choices that we make and the impact that those choices will have on our lives.

As such, it is through this dissertation that I provided a historical examination of Navajo education, its effects on Navajo children, and a contemporary investigation of how Navajo children see their present day education. This research served as my contribution toward the goal of ensuring that developmental programs within educational institutions that serve Navajo

children continue to improve and provide not only for basic educational needs, but also the cultural needs of Navajo children.

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APPENDIX A  
PARENT PERMISSION FORM

**A PHOTOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF NAVAJO CHILDREN'S  
VIEWS OF THEIR EDUCATION**

**PARENTAL LETTER OF PERMISSION**

Dear Parent:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Dee Spencer from the Educational Administration and Supervision (EdD) program in the Mary Lou Fulton Teacher's College at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore what Navajo Education looks like from the viewpoint of the students.

I am inviting your child's participation in a project that will involve taking pictures in response to question, "What does education look like to you at Puente de Hozho Bilingual Magnet School?" These pictures will capture representations of how they see their education at their school. After the pictures are developed, your child will be asked follow-up questions about the pictures they took and what they were thinking when they took the pictures.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to have your child participate or to withdraw your child from the study at any time, there will be no penalty (it will not affect your child's grade). Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

Although there may be no direct benefit to your child, the possible benefit of your child's participation is to explore and self-identify their unique education design. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your child's participation.

Confidentiality will be maintained by assigning fictitious names. Responses will also be confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your child's name will not be used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call me at (928) 814-5052.

Sincerely,

	ASU IRB Approved
Sign <i>SM</i>	
Date 12/5/11-12/4/12	

Lamont L. Yazzie

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child \_\_\_\_\_ (Child's name) to participate in the above study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

APPENDIX B  
CHILD CONSENT FORM

**A PHOTOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF NAVAJO CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF  
THEIR EDUCATION**

I have been told that my parents (mom or dad) have given permission (said it's okay) for me to take part in a project about what my education looks like to me.

On one day, I will be asked to answer interview questions about my background and will take pictures of what education looks like to me. One another day, after the pictures that I took are developed, I will answer questions about the pictures that I took.

My name will not be used in the project. I will be assigned a fake name so no one can identify me.

I am taking part because I want to. I know that I can stop at any time if I want to and it will be okay if I want to stop.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sign Your Name Here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Your Name Here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If you have any questions, please call Lamont Yazzie at (928) 814-5052.

APPENDIX C

ASU IRB

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

**To:** Dee Spencer  
ED

**From:** Mark Roosa, Chair, SM  
Soc Beh IRB

**Date:** 12/05/2011

**Committee Action:** Expedited Approval

**Approval Date:** 12/05/2011

**Review Type:** Expedited F7

**IRB Protocol #:** 1111007137

**Study Title:** A Photographic Case Study of Navajo Children's Views of their Education

**Expiration Date:** 12/04/2012

The above-referenced protocol was approved following expedited review by the Institutional Review Board.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without approval by the Institutional Review Board.

**Adverse Reactions:** If any untoward incidents or severe reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Soc Beh IRB immediately. If necessary a member of the IRB will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Soc Beh IRB. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given. Please retain a copy of this letter with your approved protocol.

APPENDIX D

FLAGSTAFF UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT APPROVAL LETTER



## Flagstaff Unified School District

3285 East Sparrow Avenue

Flagstaff, AZ 86004

928-527-6002

### Flagstaff Unified School District Statement of Research

Date: December 7, 2011

This letter serves as an indication that the research described below has been reviewed by the office of the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction and the Department of Research & Assessment and been **APPROVED** for research to take place in the following schools during the dates specified. Any participation by the schools is completely **VOLUNTARY**.

Dates in Which research must Occur: December 7, 2011 – December 6, 2012

Schools where research may occur: Puente de Hozho Bilingual Magnet School

#### **Purpose of Study**

This study will explore the view of education from the viewpoint of Navajo students at Puente de Hozho Elementary School. Ten (10) students total, in the 5th and 6th grade, will be selected to participate in this ethnographic study. Participating students will be asked five (5) questions, providing a basic background of the students. Thereafter, images will be created by 10 Navajo students participating in the research through pictures that they will take, responding to the question, "What does education look like at Puente de Hozho?" After pictures are developed, students will participate in a photo-elicitation process of answering six (6) questions, using photos to prompt memory of why they took the pictures that they did. From this process, data themes of the responses will be developed and measured for alignment with the vision and mission of the school.

Additionally, five (5) educators will be asked to participate in providing a basic background of themselves and the school by responding to five (5) questions.

Primary Investigator: Lamont Yazzie

Assistant Superintendent of  
Curriculum & Instruction



Dave Dirksen

Director of Research &  
Assessment



Robert P. Hagstrom

CC: Dawn Tubakoff





