

## **A Bridge for Our Children: Tribal/University Partnerships To Prepare Indigenous Teachers**

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*... my mother instructs us to be a bridge for our children between the two worlds by teaching them the richness of the Navajo culture and language.*

— Salita Begay<sup>1</sup>

*Being Hopi is more than identity, it is a way of thinking, viewing, and life.*

— Samantha Honani<sup>2</sup>

This article is about bridge building: building cultural bridges of authentic collaboration between the university and the Navajo<sup>3</sup> and Hopi nations; building curricular bridges between the White, European culture and the cultural worlds these nations seek to preserve; and building bridges between languages, the language of the colonizers—English—and the Navajo and Hopi languages that are vulnerable to extinction. As bridge builders we locate our work between the future—with a commitment to the students our students will teach—and a distant past, prior to Contact, when American Indian communi-

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ties effectively educated young people into their tribal history, language, values, science, and all other forms of knowledge necessary to maintain their way of life.

After Contact, everything changed. Schooling for American Indian students became a process of deculturalization (Spring, 1994), a process of colonizing the minds of conquered people (Adams, 1995; Szasz, 1999) by erasing their language (Fordham, 1998; Spolsky, 2001), denigrating their culture, and teaching exclusive acceptance of the dominating white male Eurocentric culture. This legacy of institutional racism (see Huff, 1997) persists today in educational institutions at every level. As Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) explain,

Until recently, there was very little literature that addressed how to get . . . educators to understand Native worldviews and ways of knowing as constituting knowledge systems in their own right, and even less on what it means for participants when such divergent systems coexist in the same person . . . Our challenge now is to devise a system of education for all people that respects the epistemological and pedagogical foundations provided by Indigenous as well as Western cultural systems . . . [to] reconnect education to a sense of place and its attendant cultural practices and manifestations. (p. 9, 10)

University/tribal collaborations to prepare Indigenous teacher/scholars are crucial if we are to meet this educational challenge.

The pattern of under-representation of Indian educators replicates the national pattern of other cultural groups. Many students of color are attracted to fields outside of education where recruiting is more effective, and where monetary rewards and prestige are higher. High student attrition rates, students' difficulties with standardized tests and college admission requirements, and the unresponsiveness of colleges and universities to the needs, abilities, and expectations of students of color are formidable obstacles.

We write of our work with the Hopi and Navajo nations to share how we face these obstacles. We also write conscious of the damaging legacy of much educational research about Indigenous peoples (see Smith, 1999) and join Villenas, Deyhle, and Parker (1999) who advocate for the inclusion of Critical Race Theory analysis to "provide educational researchers with an interdisciplinary, race-based interpretive framework aimed toward social justice . . . [a] perspective that has generally been absent from mainstream educational research" (p. 32). This perspective is crucial for addressing racism and for informing our development of curriculum that can heal the damage of colonial schooling. Drawing upon the Indigenous practice of oral storytelling (Hermes, 1998; Smith, 1999), we write here with careful attention to the words and perspectives of those most nearly touched, the former students and staff members.

While there is much scholarly conversation about the importance of culturally responsive teachers (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001), we find minimal attention to the particulars of programs like ours that are focused specifically upon increasing the number of culturally responsive Indigenous teachers through tribal/university

partnerships, and insufficient appraisal of what is working within such initiatives (see Hermes, 2005; Pavel, et al, 2002 for exceptions). We write to help fill this gap and to encourage others to engage in similar bridge building initiatives.

### **Northern Arizona University**

Northern Arizona University (NAU) is nestled at the base of the sacred San Francisco Peaks adjacent to the Hopi and Navajo reservations. Its Mission Statement includes the goal of becoming the nation's leading university serving Native Americans. The programs we describe here, Hopi Teachers for Hopi Schools (HTHS) and Learn in Beauty (LIB), were created in response to this mission, but with different philosophical orientations. For HTHS, a primary goal was to provide funding for student participants to become certified teachers on the main campus and thereby benefit from all campus resources designed to enhance student skill preparation in writing, math, science, and to participate fully in the intellectual life of the campus. For LIB, a primary goal was to provide quality place-based (see Cajete, 1994; Gruenewald, 2003; Smith, 2002) teacher professional development by offering courses on the reservation. LIB worked with three participant cohorts from 1998-2004. HTHS worked with two participant cohorts from 2000-2006. Both programs continue to seek new funding. Both program approaches have strengths and challenges that we seek to illuminate in what follows.

### **Hopi Teachers for Hopi Schools**

*Hopi Education, like the planting, nurturing and cultivating of corn, is the seed that bears fruit in the uniqueness and essence of Hopi—enduring, spiritual, adaptable, productive, diverse—in harmony with life. (1995 Hopi Summit on Education)*

The 1995 Hopi Summit on Education established a goal of 100% Hopi teachers for all schools on the Hopi reservation. HTHS was designed to help realize this goal (see White & Hermes, 2005; White, Paymella, & Nuvayouma, 2003). Created in 2000 through a collaboration between the Hopi nation and NAU, the key initial partners were Carolyn J. White, then the chair of the NAU Department of Instructional Leadership, and Harvey Paymella, then the director of the Division of Education for the Hopi Nation. Funded with a Professional Development grant from the Office of Indian Education, U.S. Department of Education, the program recruited 20 participants each for two cohorts.<sup>4</sup>

### **Participant Recruitment**

We received notification of funding a few weeks before the program was to begin. Collaborating with colleagues at NAU, the Hopi Division of Education, Hopi Jr./Sr. High School Board, and Northland Pioneer College, we placed ads in newspapers throughout Arizona, and posted flyers at trading posts and other public

places on the Hopi nation. Fifty applications were received. To be eligible, participants needed to document their likelihood of successful admission to NAU and the Teacher Education Program and to have completed enough coursework to be within two years of graduating with their teacher certification. They also needed to be willing to relocate to Flagstaff to attend school full-time, and to sign a contract committing to teaching in a school with a significant Native American population following graduation. The hope was that the graduates would teach in schools on the Hopi reservation. Each viable applicant was interviewed by a team of representatives from the tribe and the university.<sup>5</sup> The selected participants received funding for tuition, fees, books, a \$1250 monthly living stipend, plus an additional \$200 monthly to help support each dependent under the age of 18.

### **Program Features**

The Hopi Tribe has a great need for well-trained teachers who can implement collaborative, culturally honoring teaching approaches to better serve Hopi children. With Cohort I, we met this challenge with an elementary-level teacher-training program that was informed by the Professional Development School literature about how to nurture “teacher-scholars” whose practice is based on critical and reflective inquiry and who recognize, understand, and effectively negotiate the complexities of multiple cultural communities in constant pursuit of educational practices to maximize *all* children’s learning and development. Grounded in the real world of Christensen School and daily internship experiences, students were supervised by trained mentor teachers and university personnel, courses taught in blocks with a critical multicultural focus.

Few Native students have had the opportunity to enroll in the PDS programs because of a lack of finances. HTHS funding allowed participants to choose this option. The program also offered academic advising, tutoring, monthly meetings, and workshops designed to assist participants with negotiating challenges at the university, such as learning strategies for speaking with professors when ceremonies and other cultural responsibilities required an absence from class. Teacher professionalism was an important focus that was fostered through special courses, one about parental/community participation and one about tribal sovereignty (see Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001), and through professional conference presentations. Cohort I participants presented at the International Reading Association, National Association for Multicultural Education, and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Cohort II participants presented at the National Indian Education Association, American Educational Studies Association (AESA), and the Alaskan Rural Systemic Initiative National Science Foundation Conference. However, the most significant challenge came in 2004 when participants presented at the Hopi Summit on Education. That was the audience for whom they were the most concerned about demonstrating their emerging competence as bicultural teacher/scholars.

When we traveled to Mexico City to present at AESA, we traveled on to Oaxaca to participate in Day of the Dead<sup>6</sup> and to visit with Indigenous groups we had read about (see Esteva & Prakash, 1998) to learn about their de-schooling (Illich, 1973) approach to nonformal education and the strategies they employ to maintain their language and culture. As we talked with Gustavo Esteva, one of the participants, Melissa Yazzie, asked him if he thought the program purpose to prepare Indigenous teachers for schools on the reservation was ill advised. His response was, "Become Schindlers, use the system to save as many children as possible." When we traveled to Alaska, participants were able to meet more Indigenous people from around the world and were invited to know even more deeply the common nature of Indigenous struggles with infusing language and culture into schools (see Barnhart & Kwagly, 2005).

HTHS continued through initial certification and supported the beginning teachers through the transition into their first year of teaching. As we know, without proper support and follow-through, most teachers fall back on styles of teaching that reflect how they were taught, or leave the profession altogether.

### **Challenges**

When we began working with HTHS Cohort I, we encountered many unanticipated challenges. Two participants withdrew during the first week, a third mid-semester, and a fourth at the end of the first semester. Fortunately, we were able to recruit new participants, and continue to refine our flexibility! The program had been designed to enroll all Hopi participants who would participate together in the Christensen PDS Partnership Program. We envisioned that they would continue as a cohort and be hired together, a powerful group of teacher/leaders who would support each other in working to improve Hopi schooling. However, as we sought to respond to the contingencies of the participants' lives, we discovered that some of them needed different coursework to complete their certification, and some decided that they wanted to be secondary teachers. As federal guidelines were continually clarified, we learned that we needed to admit all qualified Indigenous students, regardless of Tribal affiliation. These changes meant that not all of the participants took classes together, not all were involved in the PDS program (66% of Cohort 1 completed this elementary program), and not all were Hopi tribal members. The U.S. Department of Education notified us that following graduation, participants could postpone their teaching commitment and continue with graduate study. Many of the program graduates chose to do so. We noticed that one of our highly qualified graduates, with an outstanding GPA and glowing recommendations, had not found a teaching position. Following several conversations, we learned that she had a fear of this change. Once we gave her more support, she was quickly employed as a teacher where she remains today.

After Cohort I students graduated, we contracted Mary Hermes to conduct an external evaluation. Her visitations with teachers during their induction year sug-

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gested several areas where the program needed to be strengthened: language, more attention to social foundations and stronger political preparation regarding NCLB.

We sought more inclusion into the university coursework of what Sandy Grande (2000) terms “red pedagogy.” This pedagogy embraces the following commitments: (1) the quest for sovereignty and the dismantling of global capitalism as its political focus; (2) Indigenous knowledge as its epistemological foundation; (3) the Earth as its spiritual center; and (4) tribal and traditional ways of life as its sociocultural frame of reference (p. 355). We also increased the focus upon concrete strategies for addressing cultural, state, and national standards within participants’ future classrooms while maintaining their philosophical commitments to serve children in the ways they determine to be most culturally appropriate. The program enabled some of our graduates to critically assess the importance of culture and language for their life and for the lives of their students, and to see what they had lost through their early schooling experience. They now face the challenge of learning their Native language. It is important to note that each graduate has her or his own understanding of her or his culture and what is appropriate to include in classrooms. These are complicated tensions debated by members of the Hopi Tribal community<sup>7</sup> and negotiated by the teachers each day within their classrooms.

#### **Outcomes**

Ongoing assessment and feedback from participants was a crucial feature of HTHS. The following are participants’ comments about their experience with the program: “The Hopi Teaching Program is the greatest opportunity I have ever been given. The responsibility of becoming a bicultural teacher is tremendous.” “We have a support system of peers and mentors to ensure that we are successful.” “The financial benefit of the program is enormous since I have a family.” “Without HTHS, it would have taken me 10 years to complete my degree!” “The program gives me different perspectives for becoming an effective Native American teacher.” Most of the 21 Cohort 1 graduates are currently teaching on the Hopi and Navajo reservations, as are the 17 graduates from Cohort II. Three students are still finishing their degrees.

### **Learn In Beauty: A Professional Development Project for Navajo Bilingual Teachers**

*The Navajo language is an essential element of the life, culture and identity of the Navajo people. The Navajo Nation recognizes the importance of preserving and perpetuating that language for the survival of the Nation and places great value on a Navajo specific education that supports the Navajo self identity of its teachers and students. (Navajo Tribe, 1984)*

Krauss (1996, p. 17) places the Navajo language among those in Category A of the threatened language categories: Indigenous languages still spoken by

children. However, a 1991 survey of 4,073 Navajo Head Start students found that 54.3% spoke only English, 17.7% spoke only Navajo, and 27.9% spoke both Navajo and English. These statistics indicated a need, then, and a growing alarm, now, to include instruction in Navajo language and culture in all schools serving Navajo students (Division of Diné Education, 2003c). Although NAU has graduated many Native Americans with Bachelors degrees in Elementary Education, a majority of these graduates were not fully endorsed in ESL or bilingual education. The LIB Master's Fellowship was created to address this need. Working with a consortium of seven Navajo Nation school districts,<sup>8</sup> this five year project was funded with a Title VII USDOE Teacher and Personnel Grant. It enabled 100 Navajo teachers to obtain bilingual endorsement and a master's degree.

#### ***Participant Recruitment***

Project Director Louise Lockard, Project Manager Regina Hale, and the mentor teachers worked with the Diné Scholarship Office to identify qualified applicants who were enrolled tribal members and to assist them with the application and admission process. The students were selected on the basis of the following criteria: academic excellence, as documented by a GPA of 3.0 in undergraduate work; Navajo language proficiency as demonstrated by Navajo tribal language certification; English language proficiency as demonstrated by the language arts component of the Arizona Teacher Proficiency Exam; in the initial years of teaching; excellence in classroom performance documented on the district observation measure; and a commitment to professionalism based on participation in community and professional organizations. The 14 mentors were selected on the basis of the following criteria: academic excellence, completion of a M.Ed. in Bilingual Education or Curriculum and Instruction with a GPA of at least 3.0; at least three years of classroom experience in a bilingual setting; Navajo tribal language certification; excellence in English communications skills demonstrated through oral presentations, publications, and community service; excellence in classroom performance documented on the current district observation measure; and demonstrated commitment to professionalism based on participation in community and professional organizations.

#### ***Program Features***

At NAU 36 units of coursework are required for the Master's Degree in Bilingual Multicultural Education. During the academic year, these courses were offered over interactive television at five sites on the Navajo Nation. Each instructor gave particular attention to Navajo Language and Culture. Additional cohort courses were offered during summers on the Flagstaff campus. This design allowed students to enroll part-time in professional coursework while they continued to live and teach in their communities. The program also sought to support school reform by strengthening the existing network of consortium schools. Using the Diné Learning



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Framework as the foundation, program participants worked together to design and implement curricular materials that reflected the Diné philosophy of education, integrated community values and issues, and were aligned with state and national content area standards. Exemplary practice was identified and disseminated on the project web page (see <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~ll3/beauty/>).

A special feature of the program, the Summer Institutes provided an opportunity for the program participants and the mentor teachers to share their work with national and international educators. The first Institute was held at Little Singer Community School, with 186 participants. Jonathan Lewis, a traditional Navajo counselor, gave the keynote address, "The Value of Navajo Language and Culture in Moral Education." An address was also given by James Crawford, "The Anti-Bilingual Movement in the U.S." Each mentor teacher presented a workshop. Presentations included: Etta Shirley, "The Long Walk"; Marilyn Tso, "Sheep and Rocks"; Gladys Yellowhair, "Thematic Units in a Navajo Language Immersion Program"; and Rosie Jones, "Integration of Thematic Units with the Arizona State Standards." A special presentation, "The Gathering of Dine Philosophers," with traditional educators from the Little Singer community, was conducted in the hogan.<sup>9</sup>

The second Institute was held at NAU and selected conference papers were published in a monograph titled: *Learn in Beauty*. The third year, the project co-sponsored the Eighth Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Conference, attended by 524 educators from the United States, Canada and Australia. Lori Quigley, Phyllis Bardeaux, Yolanda Smith and Jennifer Maybee from the Seneca Nation Education Department demonstrated a variety of curriculum materials created through their Seneca language immersion program. Other featured speakers included Oscar Kawagley, who spoke on "A Yupiaq Worldview: A Pathway to Ecology and Spirit"; Akira Yamamoto, Ofelia Zepeda, Tessie Naranjo and Mary Linn reported on the current Indigenous language maintenance and revitalization programs in the United; and Courtney Cazden discussed "How Technology Can Promote the Teaching of Indigenous Languages."

The fourth and fifth Institutes continued this process of mentor teachers presenting with other educators from across the country. Some graduates of HTHS became graduate students in the bilingual /multicultural program and one, Denise Masayesva, presented at the fifth institute. A student reflected on the summer institutes: "It is really informative with teachers from different corners of the reservation and the country. We walked out of there with two bags full of materials that I use in my classroom."

In addition to the Summer Institutes, each year three Diné dual language workshops were conducted at the schools. Conducted by the Mentor teachers, these workshops provided additional opportunities to share lesson plans, materials and teaching strategies. They were also important occasions for strengthening LIB's learning community.



### **Challenges**

LIB was challenged by limitations of resources and communication. The seven participating school districts served over 10,000 students and covered a geographical area roughly the size of the state of West Virginia. Although an Annenberg Rural Challenge Grant initiated this consortium under the direction of the Dine Division of Education, there were often mis-communications about project activities and class schedules and about the mission of supporting Navajo language and culture as a foundation of the school curriculum. The NAU Interactive Television Classrooms were located in high schools in five of these school districts. This course delivery model was challenged by storms, power outages, failures in technology, impassable roads, and sometimes locked classroom doors. The instructors from NAU often traveled for many hours to meet with students and mentor teachers. Part-time instructors from as far away as San Francisco and Tucson traveled to these sites for weekend classes.

Other challenges to the success of the graduates of LIB took the form of legislation to impose standards-based curriculum on schools, and, since the passage of Proposition 203 in Arizona in 2000, to limit the language of instruction for English Learners to English only. Although graduates of the program are fully certified and have strengthened their identities as bilingual teachers within their communities, they often lack support for developing new materials, infusing Navajo language into the content area curriculum, and speaking openly about the importance of their language and culture for future generations. The goal of a contextually-responsive teacher education curriculum at NAU which prepares bilingual teachers onsite has not yet been realized. As teacher educators we must continue to work to overcome the cultural and historical biases which challenge and limit our efforts.

### **Outcomes**

To understand the effectiveness of the project, we interviewed former program participants individually or in pairs. The tape recorded interviews were transcribed and the copies were reviewed by the participants. A follow-up interview was conducted to continue the discussion of questions which arose from reading the transcripts. We balanced between word-for-word transcription and edited transcription to accurately convey the meaning of the discussions (see Chee et al., 1991, Goodluck et al., 2000, Lockard, 1995). In response to the question, "Describe any ways that you will incorporate the Navajo language and culture into your classroom differently as a result of your participation in the Learn in Beauty Project" a student responded, "I do not hesitate to use the Navajo language especially during instruction." Another student said, "Being part of Learn in Beauty, I have been able to incorporate culturally relevant lessons using technology. My students really enjoy getting the best of both worlds."

Marilyn Begay, a Navajo Immersion teacher in grades 6-8 and a May 2003

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graduate of the project, said, “Having gone through the traditional way of teaching myself, I was using the translation method. Then, due to these classes, I changed my teaching methods. I appreciate the Learn in Beauty Project for offering a new dimension for those of us who teach students with a heritage language. I feel much stronger in promoting the significant values of Indian students.”

Esther Peaches, a June 2002 graduate, described her transformation as a teacher:

I have changed my teaching style 180 degrees, my students have thrived both socially and academically. I now empower my students to ‘go for it’ without feeling shameful about their cultural background. They have the power to make changes in their lives and their environment. I appreciate the project for offering a new dimension for those of us who teach students with a heritage language. I feel much stronger in promoting the significant values of Indian students. This type of study brings us much closer to our family and home and at the same time gives us an opportunity to further our education. Learn in Beauty makes what has been impossible very much possible.

LIB increased the capacity of the consortium sites to provide a quality education to English Learners and to provide continual support to new bilingual and ESL teachers. The capacity of NAU to provide graduate and undergraduate teacher education programs onsite in rural communities was strengthened. This project also served as a model of long-term collaboration between a college, a tribal education department, public, and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools to serve language minority students in rural settings.

This project has empowered teachers to make instructional choices that honor their professionalism and their language background. Knowledge learned in one language paves the way for knowledge acquisition in a second language. Early literacy in a child’s home language supports literacy development in English and academic achievement in all content areas (Hudelson, 1987; Leslow-Hurley, 1990). LIB worked with the Division of Diné Education to implement the *Diné Culture and Language Curriculum Framework* and the *Diné Language Standards* (Division of Diné Education, 1996, 2003a & b) and with the participating districts to provide quality education for LEP students in accord with school wide plans. Navajo language curriculum was extended through experiential learning in a community setting in which the values of “place” and culture were reinforced (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). As Battiste (2002) notes, “Indigenous knowledge benchmarks the limitations of Eurocentric theory—its methodology, evidence, and conclusions—reconceptualizes the resilience and self-reliance of Indigenous peoples, and underscores the importance of their philosophies, heritages, and educational processes” (p. 5).

As we reflect upon the outcomes of this project, we think of Helen Dineyazhe, a third grade bilingual teacher at Canyon DeChelly Elementary School, who learned the Navajo language as an undergraduate student, joined our program and completed her Master’s degree and bilingual endorsement, and now serves the community as president of the Chinle Teachers’ Association. Her leadership toward improving education for children on the Navajo nation, and revitalizing the Navajo

language, is what the program was designed to accomplish. Her achievements are representative of the accomplishments of most of the program graduates.

### **The Power of Collaboration**

Strong, positive, trusting relationships are the crucial foundation for the development of collaborative projects such as HTHS and LIB. Carolyn learned of the funding opportunity through her positive relationship with a Navajo colleague, Joe Martin. Having worked many years on the Navajo Nation as an educational administrator prior to joining the NAU faculty, Joe had earned the trust of colleagues across the country who alerted him to this opportunity. Because of the trusting relationship Carolyn and Joe had developed, he told her of the opportunity. There was only one week before the proposal was due to be submitted and the request for proposals required a tribal partner. Because of Joe's trusting relationship with Harvey Paymella, he was able to call Harvey, tell him of the opportunity, and Harvey traveled the hour and a half from the Hopi reservation to Flagstaff that same day to meet with Carolyn to begin working on the proposal. Although we have not been able to institutionalize these programs, we have continued to collaborate with the Hopi and Navajo nations and we continue to seek funding opportunities to sustain this important work.

As we have written this article together, we have come to realize the multiple ways that our projects could have benefited from more collaboration. It is too often the case that we get so busy with the daily work that we forget to open our horizons and reach out more to our colleagues to learn about their work. Our students would have benefited from knowing more about the activities of both programs, would have benefited from learning from each other.

The following narrative written by HTHS graduate, Samantha Honani, illuminates the significance of these programs for the education of Indigenous students:

I am a product of the standard educational system. Having gone to schools both on and off the reservation, these institutions neglected to incorporate Native American language and culture. My teachers were primarily Anglos who had a vision of teaching Indian children the ways of the world. They usually had a very strict and organized classroom setting, filled with methods and materials foreign to us. Each morning we were required to face the U.S. flag and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Why did we do such a meaningless thing? We had no clue what we were saying and why we were saying it. It was just something, along with worksheets and memorization, we did for our teachers. I cunningly slipped through my classes pretending to comprehend and learn what these teachers were feeding me; they content that I remained quiet as they lectured.

During my junior high school years I chose to be bussed to a new Navajo junior high school almost 30 miles from my home. The schooling conditions were somewhat better because we had predominantly Native teachers. However, these Native teachers were influenced by the dominant ideology and trained us with the conventional

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Eurocentric methods. I began to see a pattern of how I would soak in what was taught and regurgitate the material later on tests that would only take me on to the next grade.

At this school I learned to appreciate my neighboring tribe, the Navajo, as I made friends with many of them. This early experience instilled many values, such as respect and acceptance for cultural differences. This experience also led me to transition easily into the high school dormitories that were filled with a diverse mix of Native students. I lived four years away from my family and the Hopi reservation at the Kinlani Bordertown dormitory and attended Flagstaff High School. I was merely a speck at this school, a number that was added in the population count of whites, blacks, Hispanics, and all the other minorities. I felt unseen by my teachers and the other students. Was I shy? I was scared. I didn't know if I was socially capable of dealing, if I was too "Indian" or "rezzed out." It wasn't until I learned how to leave my cultural identity at the dorms and transform into a person who was talkative and cool that I began to love this new and exciting way of life. Instead of returning to Hopi on the weekends, I stayed in Flagstaff where the dominant white society began to fill my spirit with materialism and a different sense of self. Living and growing into young adulthood in Flagstaff shaped who I am today. I have surrendered most of the Hopi way of life, trading my culture and language for an urbanized lifestyle and an education that valorizes the dominant ideology.

Being a Hopi Indian is a born characteristic that is unknown to me. Being Hopi is more than identity, it is a way of thinking, viewing, and life. Although I am a part of the tribe and identified as one, I see myself as not being one. It was only recently that I began to see the schools and their teachings as responsible for my loss of culture and language. I see now how crucial it could have been for me to experience the integration of these cultural lessons throughout my schooling. Through HTHS, I found myself questioning my philosophy of education. Would I continue to deprive my young Hopi students of Hopi knowledge? Would I continue the cycle of deculturalization? Or will I stand up and incorporate what is really important into my curriculum? One crucial tool is an understanding of tribal sovereignty. I now understand that by using our sovereign rights, through the treaties our ancestors made with the United States government, we are enabled to teach our culture and language in our reservation schools. Unfortunately, many of the schools do not use this tool, and the wheels of assimilation continue in full and swift motion. I, however, now take on the responsibility of helping to prevent other Indian students from losing their identity and Indian spirit. Reflecting upon my experiences, my losses and achievements, one thing is clear: I refuse to remain lost among my people. I am coming to the ways of Hopi; I am coming home.

### **Postscript**

A reviewer of this manuscript asked about how our experiences might inform "the larger democratic project of diversifying the teaching corps in U.S. schools." As sovereign nations existing within the geographical boundaries of the United States, the Hopi and Navajo people are not concerned with diversifying the teaching corps. They want to maintain their language and culture and are keenly aware that Indigenous teachers are better able to accomplish this agenda. Indigenous people

have a complicated relationship with democracy. For more than 200 years the rhetoric of democracy has been used against them, securing democracy used as an excuse for creating educational systems designed to deculturalize Indigenous students (see Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Grande, 2004; White, 2006). Nonetheless, our work can inform the work of colleagues desirous of increasing and enhancing the preparation of teachers of color, and as Lomawaima and McCarty document (2006), “Native visions for an Indigenously rooted and inspired education hold a promise for schools and a promise for a nation . . . a model for meaningful, challenging, locally controlled education for all Americans” (p. 170).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Salita Begay, a former participant in the Learn in Beauty Program, quoted from an unpublished interview.

<sup>2</sup> Samantha Honani is a former participant in the Hopi Teachers for Hopi Schools Program.

<sup>3</sup> The words *Dine* and *Navajo* are used interchangeably on the Navajo reservation and will be so used within this manuscript. *Dine* translates to English as “the people.”

<sup>4</sup> HTHS was one of about 20 similar projects funded nationally through a competitive proposal process for the purpose of addressing the chronic shortage of Indian teachers for Indian schools.

<sup>5</sup> Later iterations of this program—*Itaa Tsatsayom Mopeqwya* (Our Children Come First) and *Alchini Ba* (For The Children)—improved upon this process by having the interviews conducted at the tribal education offices. We hoped that this would enhance students’ appreciation of the tribal investment in and expectations for them as future teachers. We also hoped that it would increase the likelihood that participants would envision the tribal education office as an important component of their extended support community, and a crucial base of authority for their future work as teachers (see Tozer, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> This was a complicated experience given the participants’ differing cultural beliefs about this activity. Some traditional students were comfortable participating as long as they followed the experience with an appropriate cultural remedy. Other students chose to not participate. For some participants, the trip was amazing because it was their first time on an airplane and first time encountering Indigenous people outside of the U.S., people with similar patterns for weaving rugs and similar designs on other art forms. Learning more about the history of colonization in Mexico had a powerful impact upon the participants. A sense of global kinship emerged that was further strengthened during the Alaska trip.

<sup>7</sup> See Hermes (2005), for a thought provoking discussion of the complexities involved in teaching Indigenous language and culture within schools. As she states, “The add-on strategy has, in a sense, been the affirmative action of Native education. It is not a perfect solution for change, but it is a step in the right direction. It is my hope that through discussion and investigation . . . a variety of new strategies for restructuring schools to deeply represent and support Indigenous cultures and revitalize Indigenous languages will emerge (p. 53).

<sup>8</sup> The consortium included the Kayenta Unified School District, the Ganado Unified School District, the Chinle Unified School District, the Window Rock Unified School District, the Rock Point Community School, the Tuba City Unified School District, and Little Singer Community School. Each of these districts was identified as seeking to implement the *Dine* (Navajo) Language and Culture Perspective into their schools. As outlined in the *Dine* Language and

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Culture Standards, this perspective is based on the following premises: (1) education is best when it reflects a sense of place; (2) education should be based on the philosophy and values of those being educated; and (3) preparation of teacher/mentors should reflect the Dine perspective of education. Each of these school districts actively works toward a reciprocal relationship between the schools and the community, involving the community in the identification of issues to be explored in the teaching process.

<sup>9</sup> A Hogan is a traditional, octagon-shaped, Navajo structure used for ceremonial purposes.

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