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Learning Citizenship For and From Diné Communities: Developing Organic Social Studies Curriculum For the Navajo Nation

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This article describes a framework for social studies curriculum that is designed to foster critical citizenship in Navajo schools. By orienting students to research the physical, historical, economic, political, and cultural dimensions of community life, Rosemary Ann Blanchard aims to promote social studies that not only reflect the human environment in which Navajo students live, but also arm students with critical thinking skills necessary for understanding and transforming what goes on around them.

The human resource of the Navajo Nation is its most valuable resource . . . An appropriate education for Navajo people is one that fosters . . . knowledge of Navajo culture . . . [and] the development of Navajo citizenship (Title 10, Navajo Nation Code, Sec. 102).

Courses or course contents which develop knowledge, understanding and respect for Navajo culture, history, civics and social studies shall be included in the curriculum of every school serving the Navajo Nation (Title 10, Navajo Nation Code, Sec. 112).

Spirituality, intellect, planning, and life have been instilled within us; through these attributes we attain knowledge and wisdom. We shall combine the best learning and knowledge of other societies with that of our own for the benefit of our future (Overall Diné Education Philosophy, adopted 1994).

Education for Navajo Citizenship

Through its political representatives, traditional spokespersons, school leaders, and community members, the Navajo Nation has chosen to continue and foster its nationhood, as the above policies attest. As with any nation, to do this, the Navajo Nation must prepare its children to carry forward the vision, dreams, social arrangements, economic structures, and organizational identities of its communities. Given governmental policies of Indian assimilation and cultural genocide ever since first contact between the Diné and the United States, the transmission of local community knowledge in Navajo settings has been problematic to say the least.² Lately, however, there is considerable consensus among Navajos that Navajo culture in some manner belongs in the education of Navajo children. Nonetheless, much of the social studies education that Navajo elementary and secondary school students continue to receive fails to provide them with the tools appropriate for Navajo citizenship that social studies education should provide.

Schools are powerful agents of socialization. Students are sent to them to learn "real facts" about the "real world." Adult authority figures in schools who possess knowledge of these "real world real facts" transmit them to students in an environment structured to make the transmission credible. When the realities that the students

¹ I wish to acknowledge generous encouragement, advice, guidance, and information from Lawrence Senesh, Professor Emeritus of Economics, University of Colorado, in developing this manuscript. Dr. Senesh's Organic Social Studies Curriculum model and Learning Society model are as relevant and innovative today as they were when first developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

² For a truly chilling documentary history of the systematic efforts of the "friends of American Indians" to use education as a means of extinguishing American Indian cultural and political identity through the operation of off-reservation boarding school education, see Prucha (1973).

experience in their families and communities are ignored or excluded from these formal knowledge transmission sessions, explicitly and implicitly, important questions loom: what is real, the world described in class or the world in which the student lives? Which reality is more important, more valid? How relevant and useful is classroom knowledge in understanding local aspects of Navajo students' lives? How relevant will their Navajo realities remain when they go out into the world?³

When I ask Navajo college students what they have learned that prepares them to assume the responsibilities of citizenship in the Navajo Nation, I often draw blank looks. Many young Navajos see themselves as citizens of the United States and "enrolled members" of the Navajo Tribe. I once asked the students in my Tribal Government class what the difference was between being an "enrolled member of the Navajo Tribe" and a "citizen of the Navajo Nation." The class pondered the question. Several students sat straighter in their chairs. Finally someone said that "citizen of the Navajo Nation" sounded more important, but was not sure why.

What are the tools of citizenship? How does a young person acquire these tools? How does a young person develop a sense of responsibility toward the community and its institutions, public resources, working adults, fragile elderly, and peers? In my opinion, answers to these questions are few and far between. As a result, there is a serious problem in American education in general. The growing disaffection of American young people in our cities and suburbs suggests that in many cases the tools of citizenship and community responsibility are not being effectively passed on. American culture itself is at risk through the inattention of its preoccupied adults and inadequacy of its social studies learning.⁴

I believe that if educators in the Navajo Nation can begin the difficult but engaging task of developing a comprehensive, organic curriculum in social studies, preparing Navajo children from first grade through high school to assume responsibilities as citizens of the Navajo Nation and concerned, knowledgeable members of their local communities, educators from across America will be knocking at Navajos' doors asking for advice on how to rebuild America's sense of civic and community belonging. A century after off-reservation boarding schools were developed to destroy Navajo and other American Indian civilizations, such a role reversal would be fitting and appropriate.

Introduction to the Organic Social Studies Curriculum

A key to fostering critical citizenship in schools lies with the development of organic social studies curriculum. The term "organic curriculum" was developed by Lawrence Senesh in the 1960s at the University of Colorado at Boulder. At that time, Senesh was frustrated with the fragmentation and minimal expectations of U.S. social studies curricula. Only one major concept tended to be taught each year; totally different emphases would usually prevail the next. At few points did the different threads of human community as experienced in society come together as an organic whole.

Senesh's field was economics. He suspected that even young students were capable of grasping fundamental economic concepts if the concepts were presented in connection with familiar realities. For example, decisions in the family about purchasing goods and paying for activities reflect fundamental economic concepts. To prove his theory, Senesh prepared and taught some lessons in economics to a first grade class. The experiment was successful. The first graders grasped fundamental economic concepts when they were presented in relation to the children's own experiences. If students could grasp fundamental economic concepts in first grade, Senesh wondered, what might they learn in second grade? Then he thought, why not use the same fundamental ideas for

³ Paulo Freire (1973) has presented a critical, interactive model for the education process. However, the typical elementary classroom (and too many high school classrooms as well) are closer to the model presented here than to Freire's ideal.

⁴ American educators and political and civic leaders, concerned with the need to prepare responsible, informed, rational, humane and participating citizens who are committed to the values and principles of American constitutional democracy, recently participated in the development of National Standards for Civics and Government, working through the Center for Civic Education (5146 Douglas Fir Road, Calabasas, CA 91302). The standards were released on November 15, 1994. As this manuscript is written, I have not yet had the opportunity to review the National Standards in any detail. At first glance, however, they appear to address a part of the need for wholistic understanding of one's social and political environment. Civics alone, however, of necessity, fails to address many aspects of community life which frame our understanding of who we are and how we interact with each other and with our world. These community components are essential to the Organic Social Studies Curriculum. In addition, the national standards do not appear to address the particular situation of Native American children whose citizenship in their American Indian nation is both distinct from and incorporated within their American citizenship. As the National Standards for Civics and Government come to be considered by BIA, state and local education leaders, it is essential that leaders of American Indian nations assure that their children's civics education in ANY school fully incorporates education in their tribal citizenship into the basic social studies offerings. Anything less will continue the historical role of dominant society education as an adversary to the cultural and political continuity of American Indian nations.

second and all other grades but with increasing depth and complexity as the child matures? With such an approach, the fundamental ideas could grow like an organism.

"Organic curriculum" arose from this notion of the organic growth of children's understanding of economics in the context of social studies education. Economics, however, is only one of the social sciences relevant to social studies education. Soon, Senesh gathered a team of experts in sociology, anthropology, political science, and social psychology to identify the fundamental aspects of the social science disciplines that should be integrated into a grade 1-12 social studies curriculum.⁵ What resulted from this work was a textbook series for grades 1 through 8, *Our Working World*, published by Science Research Associates in 1973, and an accompanying methodology that involved much more than a series of textbooks. It is the methodology, rather than the textbook series, that I present here as a model for the development of a Navajo-specific social studies curriculum.

The introduction to the curriculum guide for *Our Working World* establishes the goals of the organic social studies curriculum methodology. I believe that these goals are vital to the social studies education goals of the Navajo Nation:

The ability to relate the fundamental ideas of the social sciences to real life cannot be acquired suddenly. Development of this ability should begin early in life, at the first level of elementary schooling, when the child is curious about the life around him and is searching for the meaning of what he observes. This curiosity allows the child to be receptive to ideas that can make his experiences more meaningful to him. He can then apply at succeeding levels the same ideas but in greater depth as his world of experience expands (Senesh, 1973).

When children begin early to work with the ideas that are the basic tools of the social sciences, their command of these tools can grow steadily. They can learn to use the tools to analyze social problems of increasing depth and complexity. As Senesh states, "When young people use the basic tools and can see [their] society as meaningful, they are encouraged to participate in [that] society. As adults, they will be prepared to cope with their world and to work realistically for changes that can bring it closer to their dreams of what it should be" (Senesh, 1973).

The Navajo Nation is a developing nation. In the coming decades, the Nation must build an adequate economic base for its survival as an autonomous society within the United States. The economic base must coexist with and support an authentic Navajo cultural life, grounded in traditions and in harmony with the contemporary circumstances of Navajo people. Families, clan groups, and communities all must be able to function appropriately within the social structure. The promotion of economic activity and community growth must coexist with a most careful stewardship of the environment and natural resources of the Diné land base.

The political institutions of the Navajo Nation will be called upon to support this economic growth and cultural continuity. The Nation will be carried forward on the shoulders of its people. In short, there is no time to waste in preparing Navajo children and youth for the demands of adulthood. What I suggest here is that an organic social studies curriculum, grounded in all the social science disciplines, centered in the communities and society of the Navajo Nation, taught in an interactive, community-centered manner, can help in this task.

The Community Social Profile

The essential tool for building an organic, Navajo-specific social studies curriculum is the Community Social Profile. This living document is developed within the student's community, reflects the community, and infuses the social studies curriculum with community specificity.

Ideally, the Community Social Profile would be developed at the level of the Navajo Nation as a whole with more specific content developed within particular communities where the curriculum is taught and where the students live. This would require some coordination and consensus on social studies goals at the level of the Navajo Nation itself. Development of a Community Social Profile for the Navajo Nation could be sponsored by a University-based program and developed in cooperation with Navajo undergraduate and graduate students and with Navajo students at the community college level, for example, students at Navajo Community College, University of New Mexico at Gallup, or San Juan College. Much of the community-level data gathering could be undertaken as part of the social studies education of high school students in the individual community.

What is the Community Social Profile? It is a concise, clearly written description of the social system of the community, situating it within the social system of the Navajo Nation. Senesh's model for the Community Social Profile was developed to work in identifiable community units as diverse as rural counties and major met-

⁵ Additional competency areas identified in working papers, manuscripts, and reports on Organic Curriculum include geography, law and the search for justice, and, most recently, ecology (Senesh, no date; Senesh & Muth, 1977; and Boulding, Kuhn, & Senesh, 1973).

ropolitan areas. I feel that a Navajo Nation-wide Community Social Profile (CSP), with room for more local, community based content, would be a powerful tool for developing a Navajo-specific social studies curriculum.

A CSP deals with five different dimensions of community life. The first dimension, the physical environment, describes topography, climate, and natural resources. It indicates how these resources have shaped the life of the community. The second dimension, the history of the community, considers historical factors that have led to the particular patterns of settlement within the community, the development of the community's way of life, and changes in that way of life over time. The influence of science and technology on the history of the nation and community is an important aspect of this view of history. The third dimension of the CSP explores the economic aspects of the community. This part shows relationships between economic issues, the future development of the community, and the community's ability to absorb youth into a local labor market. The fourth dimension of the CSP addresses political structures and processes. This aspect of the social profile looks at the distribution of political power and its effect on policy making. A specific concern of this dimension is to identify opportunities for involvement of youth in the political process and the significance of different levels of government (e.g., Chapter, District, Nation, surrounding states, and United States) in planning for the future. The fifth and final dimension of the CSP examines the cultural views of the community. This aspect provides a vehicle for identifying traditional and contemporary value commitments and the impact of these value systems on the individuals, families, business, education, career choices, mobility, and support for public life in the Nation and community. A significant element of this dimension is to explore the different sources of learning such as family, extended family, religious groupings, school, peer groups, mass media, and the impact of these various influences in shaping personality development and the overall social environment.

I try to maintain flexibility regarding the scope of the Community Social Profile and its level of development so that the starting point for this effort could be that level at which someone is willing to start. If an individual school district or community school within the Navajo Nation, for example, were to start developing a community-based organic social studies curriculum, then the first levels of development of the CSP would necessarily be more localized, with the Navajo nation-wide data remaining on a more generalized level for the time being.

A Community Social Profile is an educational experience in its own right as it is developed, refined, and updated. It is a living tool for educating children and young people about the social studies of their nation and community. It is always an unfinished document. Much of the information for the Community Social Profile can be gathered by students, particularly high school and college students, under the guidance of university-affiliated researchers, community college teachers or the social science department of a school district or community school.

Because the CSP must reflect the reality of the nation and community as they are actually experienced by the people, the development of this tool should ideally take place under the guidance of a citizen group or oversight committee. In thinking about this possibility, I have wondered if the Navajo North Central Association could provide through its member schools an oversight committee to guide the development of the Navajo Nation-wide core of a Community Social Profile. Since the document would be being developed to provide a resource underlying social studies education in the K-12 level of schooling, Navajo NCA might be an ideal body to provide a concerned committee of potential users to guide the effectiveness and accuracy of the document. Other, more community-based advisory bodies and advisors from government, business, and social sectors of Navajo society would also be important guides in this process. Persons recognized as holding traditional knowledge would be essential to guide the development of CSP components dealing with traditional cultural practices and beliefs and their contemporary place in community life. Community entities from all contemporary religious and social groups present within the Navajo community would likewise be the appropriate guides to their own values, organization, and activities.

As the Community Social Profile is developed, one or more citizens groups should review, and where appropriate, amend the document to assure its accuracy. The purpose here is not to gloss over realities but to assure that the document maintains its community-level authenticity.

Establishing Holistic Goals for Diné Social Studies Education

With the CSP as a working tool, the oversight committee could identify educational goals for the teaching of social studies in the Navajo Nation, using the CSP as a basis for generating local curriculum guidelines. Examples of goals that could be developed in connection with a CSP include the following:

- Students will develop greater community awareness, increasing their personal options and improving their sense of citizen responsibility to the Navajo Nation.
- Community study will be a part of the social studies curriculum at all grade levels, K-12.
- To make the learning experience more meaningful, the academic program will be combined

with community work experience appropriate to the grade, age, talents, and interests of the students. Service learning will be incorporated into the educational experience of students.

- Students will become more aware of the forces that generate change in the community, the forces that provide continuity, and ways in which both change and stability affect options for youth.
- Students will have the opportunity to learn from different generations. Each generation has its unique experiences. School and community shall help students relate to older generations, including their experience of change and adaptation to the changes in social structure, political structure, technology and the like which accompanied the recent history of the Navajo Nation and the United States. Seeing that the past has not been static, students will gain a greater sense of the dynamic potential of their own future.
- Students will develop an understanding of the cultural basis for Navajo values and the ways these values influence interactions among people in the Navajo Nation.
- Students' goal awareness as individuals, family members, citizens of the Navajo Nation, and citizens of the United States will be developed. Students will become more practiced in making choices, as well as weighing the advantages and costs of various life choices.

The above are examples of possible goals for a Navajo-specific social studies curriculum. They should not be used as prefabricated goals. I am wary even of listing goals. The essential feature of the goals that arise with the CSP and guide the social studies curriculum is that they must be developed interactively and collaboratively. The oversight committee is clearly the facilitator of such a process. However, community members, social studies teachers, curriculum writers, and parents all should participate in this process of goal development so that all will own the result.

The essence of this methodology is that it incorporates historical and traditional Navajo reality with the most contemporary elements of community life: changing technologies of communication, economic bases and development, and contemporary issues in Navajo government. Through the CSP, students are guided to holistic, organic understandings of all the social and cultural elements of their world and the impact of all these factors on their nation, community, and own life choices.⁶

Educating for Awareness

A goal of the organic social studies curriculum is to foster levels of awareness in students as they grow within the school, home, and community. Senesh has identified types of awareness that should be cultivated in children through their social studies education (Senesh & Muth, 1977).

Value Awareness. This sensitizes students to the ideals and objectives that people find good and desirable. This awareness includes personal values that guide people in their individual behavior and decisions, and community values that guide people in their social behavior and group decisions. Values help to define social problems by revealing the distance between what is and what one's values insist ought to be. Navajo students need to become aware of the distinctly Navajo values that underlie their life choices and their way of living in their communities. They also need to identify specific values expressed by different segments of the larger American society as well.

Social Reality Awareness. This awareness helps students relate the social science content presented to them in the classroom with the social reality that they encounter outside the classroom. Senesh & Muth (1977) note that social reality awareness activities should help students understand the world in which they live. They should learn that events and changes within and beyond the community are affected by both natural forces and human actions. These changes affect both the community and the individual. Navajo students need to become aware of the reality of the Navajo Nation as a "domestic dependent nation" exercising a recognized sovereignty and self-determination, yet politically, economically and socially interconnected with the United States and with communities surrounding the Nation as well.

Problem Awareness. Arising from the interplay of values awareness with social reality awareness, problem awareness represents the gap between the goals generated by a people's values and social reality. Likewise, con-

⁶ Robert W. Rhodes has noted that American Indian students learn more effectively when classroom subjects are presented wholistically, incorporated into the reality the students experience outside the school. His recommendations for effectively teaching Native American young people reinforce many of the methodological choices found in the organic social studies curriculum model. See his article in this issue, as well as Rhodes (1994: 28-32).

flicts within the community on goals and value bases can also create social problems. Problem awareness must not be an occasion to indulge in despair. Rather, students should become accustomed to looking critically at problem situations, analyzing their characteristics, and developing strategies for addressing them.

Systems Awareness. This awareness introduces students to the natural and human-made systems within the community and nation. Natural systems (the ecology), human-made systems (social system), and humans themselves (systems within their own physical reality) are all components the community. The community is strongest when harmony exists among these three systems.

Spatial Awareness. This form of awareness is particularly important for Navajo students. Navajo historical and cultural reality is grounded in the land within the four sacred mountains where the Diné live. The cultural significance of place needs to be addressed as a social reality. In addition, students need to understand the nature of the land where their nation is settled, including its physical characteristics, resources, and limitations.

Historical Awareness. This is also an important component of a Navajo organic social studies curriculum. The historical roots of contemporary Navajo life are many and varied, and rarely adequately or accurately covered in generalist social studies texts (Hoxie, 1984). Historical awareness involves not only the big historical picture of the coming together of the Diné, but also their migrations, struggles with other national groups, and struggles with and within the United States. There are the "little" histories of individual communities as well. How did any one particular place come to be a community? What events changed the lives of the older generation? The history of the impact of World War II on Navajo people, economically, experientially, etc., should be shared with the current young generation. Historical awareness, note Senesh & Muth (1977), can help students to realize that just as the present is the outcome of the past, so the present is a moment in history whose outcome will become evident in the future.

Work Awareness. Activities in this area serve two functions--to make students aware of the employment possibilities offered within and near their nation and community and to give students the experience of meaningful work. Classroom activities could introduce students to work and workers in different settings within and near the Navajo Nation and in nearby population centers such as the growing computer industry around Albuquerque. The practical experience component of this awareness could be incorporated into the many tribally and federally funded "youth employment" and youth development programs already existing in the Navajo Nation. With a "work awareness" focus, however, these youth employment activities would be more carefully structured to stimulate the students' understanding of work in their life and in the life of the community.

Leisure Awareness. This sort of awareness confronts students with the reality of the choices that they make and could make in regard to their "unprogrammed" time, and the consequence of these choices. The ecological consequences of wasteful leisure-time activities, the availability or absence of opportunities for personal development, the impact of individual leisure choices on the student, the student's family, the community--all these consequences of leisure pursuits can be studied and evaluated. Students can explore ways of deriving greater satisfaction and benefit from their leisure time and of discovering leisure pursuits that benefit the community.

Future Awareness. This awareness is essential for young people. The critical connection between what has been, what is now, and what can be must be made real for Navajo young people. In common with American Indian people throughout the Americas, Navajo people have experienced devastating assaults upon hope and on optimism for the future. The conquest, military occupation, and deculturalization of the past and uncertainties of the present often make the future look more threatening than hopeful. Worst of all, the future too often appears disconnected from the present, as young people make choices today with no awareness of the impact these choices have on their future life chances. Future awareness activities engage students in identifying the elements in today which can bring about consequences for the individual and for the Nation tomorrow. Students are guided to reject despairing images of the road ahead and to discover the opportunities which lie in change, particularly for those grounded in awareness of who they are. The Navajo Nation is being built by the hands and dreams of its people. This task of building the Navajo Nation must be presented as a challenge enlivening the future of each generation of Navajo youth.

Knowledge Awareness. This, Senesh's final category, introduces students to grade-appropriate illustrations of the theoretical framework that underlies the social science analysis of human reality. Concepts from political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, law, psychology, and the like can be introduced through concrete examples and explanations of known phenomena. The awareness of these analytical tools grows gradually and

holistically throughout the entire course of the child's education. By the time students encounter the formal social science disciplines in a college setting, the concepts should be familiar with examples coming to mind from class experiences as far back as primary school.

Cultural Awareness. To the awarenesses that Senesh & Muth have identified, I would add cultural awareness. This includes not only awareness of Navajo culture, but awareness of culture in all its expression in the larger American society, in neighboring American Indian societies, in the Hispanic communities around the Navajo Nation, as well as in the popular television, film, and music media (which have their own distinctive culture that must be looked at separately from American culture generally). Students need to become attuned to the cultural significance of the differences and similarities among peoples. Just as Navajos and other native peoples struggle against stereotypes, it is important to challenge stereotypes that Navajo young people may harbor about "Anglos," African Americans, and other identifiable groups. American culture is not monolithic. Culture awareness education for Navajo young people should include awareness of Navajo culture and the way it is expressed in the lives of Navajo people and a conscious awareness of the many cultural variations which find expression in American life.

Examples of Possible Classroom Activities

These awarenesses are not in and of themselves the subject matter of the social studies curriculum. Rather, they inform the subject matter, underlying the examples, discussions, explanations, and experience of concrete social phenomena that students encounter in their social studies classes. Activities appropriate to the various grade levels of the students should be developed within the context of the curriculum to foster these awarenesses. I will give only a few examples of awareness activities appropriate to elementary and secondary social studies classes.

At Any Grade Level. The class may prepare a bulletin board, dividing the board into four sections: changes in the community that affect our lives; changes in the Navajo Nation that affect our lives; changes in the United States that affect our lives; and changes in the world that affect our lives. Once a week students should bring in articles and illustrations that deal with contemporary events. Students can discuss how these events affect the welfare of their community. The class can choose the most expressive articles each week and post them in that section of the bulletin board.

The concept of *k'é* (often translated as expressing the harmonious/peaceful interaction within the kinship/clanship system) can be expressed by examples to aid Navajo students of any level (and their non-Navajo classmates) in recognizing the role of *k'é* in defining everyday situations. Students could be asked to identify one occurrence they have observed or experienced each week in which an understanding of *k'é* aids in understanding the occurrence. What was appropriate *k'é*-like behavior in the incident? How closely did the actual actions of the parties involved conform with *k'é*?

Teaching stories (appropriate to the season) can be a valued activity in classes of any level. Students can discuss the "lesson" in the story. Coyote stories are fertile sources of values clarification. Coyote always gets in trouble, and always because he has acted in an inappropriate way and been influenced by self-centered motives. These and other stories help to clarify both universal and uniquely Navajo values and generate discussion of the consequences that follow upon appropriate and inappropriate actions.⁷

At the Middle or High School Level. To help older students become aware of the problems of change and adaptation faced by the community at different periods of its history, students can study the community and identify periods when natural, technological, and human forces challenged predictability. The period after the return from the Long Walk and the period immediately after World War II come to mind as fertile periods for such study. By researching together, the class may prepare papers on how generations of the past faced these challenges and adapted their lives. As part of their research, students might interview elders within the community.

The above, again, are just examples. They show how students might be guided to greater awareness of the many dimensions of the life of their community and nation. Further development locally is needed to address issues such as levels of activity at different grades, the integration of the Navajo-specific social studies materials into the mandated social studies competencies of the school or school district, as well as the training of social studies teachers in curriculum development and community-centered teaching methods.⁸

⁷ As starting points, see Mabery (1991), Roessel & Platero (1974), Browne & Whitehorse (1991), or invite a storyteller from the community to visit the class and share an appropriate teaching story. Children could ask their own grandparents or older relations to share an appropriate teaching story that the child could bring back to the class.

⁸ A number of federal education laws and the laws of some states as well give American Indian nations the power to

A Call for Collaborators

My point is to start building a social studies that expresses the human environment in which Navajo students live. Educators in the social sciences must explore ways and methodologies to incorporate the reality of the Navajo social, cultural, economic, political, historical experience into the world reality presented to students in their social studies classes. Learning starts where we are. Navajo students (and their non-Navajo peers living with them) are in the Navajo Nation. That nation is the social reality they experience in their lives. It must become the reality they experience in their social studies classes.

This article, I hope, is a beginning. It is meant to generate dialogue with social studies teachers, curriculum specialists, community members, and social science researchers. What is offered is a methodology that is adaptable to the realities of the Navajo Nation and its communities. I encourage those with whom these ideas are shared to bring their own ideas to this dialogue. Social studies is an essential nation building tool. The use of that tool in the building of the Navajo Nation has already begun in work of many schools and educators. My aim is to help make that tool even more effective and relevant.

I welcome comments, suggestions, criticism, and especially, strategies for making Navajo social studies a dynamic part of the education of Navajo children and youth. I can be reached through the Department of Sociology, Human Services and Tribal Studies, University of New Mexico at Gallup Campus, 200 College Road, Gallup, NM 87301; e-mail: rblnchr@unm.edu.

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incorporate their tribally specific education needs into the basic educational program of their children. Under the Impact Aid law, in particular, Indian nations have a right to participate in planning the education program of their children with the school districts educating them. This planning, necessarily, can and should include course content, teacher training and integration of tribally specific education needs into the recognized competencies that guide a school district's education program.