

A CURRICULUM BASED ON THE FUNCTIONAL
NEEDS OF THE NAVAJOS

by

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To Oregon State College the writer wishes to express his appreciation of the friendly spirit of democracy as found on its campus.

G. H. D.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Navajo Indian of the Southwest is still the same colorful creature he was decades ago. His legends form the basis for many fanciful tales, and the facts of his life are still stranger than fiction. He retains the bright costume, adorned with jewelry of his ancestors, their language, their mores, and their belief in the evil spirits that even yet play such an important role in his life.

It is constantly a source of wonder that so large a group of people can live within the confines of our own country and be so little touched by its culture, language and customs. Generations of children live, marry, reproduce, and die without having seen the inside of a school; without having been off the reservation, or without having seen any store larger than the Trading Post. Time is no element in the life of a Navajo. He is most deliberate in his decisions and actions, and consequently the bustle and flurry of the white people are a constant source of amusement and amazement to him. He still rides long distances in a wagon drawn by a team of horses or on horseback, and spends a whole day bartering for a few groceries. The

agencies dealing with the Indians, failing to understand the slow working of the Navajo's mind, have failed in their objectives sometimes because they became too impatient for immediate action and results. —

The Navajo lives in a vast area of sage brush and sand with always a shortage of water. However, he has learned to adapt himself admirably to his environment, and somehow wrests an existence from that very arid country. The mesas are picturesque and majestic with the variety of colored sands and changing shadows and form a proper setting for our red brother.

With the years have come changes in the Navajo and to his country. Erosion has taken and still takes a tremendous toll each year from the soil which is the basis of most of his economic life. Until now he could remain an Indian aloof on his reservation, but white man's methods and culture are pressing in on him, and to a greater or a lesser degree, he is forced to become more like his white neighbor.

The Statement of the Problem

The thesis of this study is that a curriculum to be of the most benefit to the Navajo Indian must be built on an understanding of his mores, his economic life, and general culture patterns; too, the level of the whole

group must be raised at the same time. In the past this was not true when the Navajo youth was taken from his home reservation to be sent miles away into the environment of white culture to be educated. This, of necessity, means that adult education must go hand in hand with the education of the Navajo youth. Some believe the Indian should be kept as native as possible so he will not lose his tourist appeal. The writer has taken the position that the Navajo Indian will eventually become assimilated into our great body of Americans as have the Scandinavians, Germans and other groups.

Anson Phelps-Stokes says:

That American self-respect is involved in the Navajo Problem should be a conviction of real meaning to all of our citizens. Until the American people successfully fulfill their obligations to the American Indians, they have failed to demonstrate their ability to deal with the earliest and one of the most important of minority groups of the American Democracy.¹

Commissioner Burke² says, "Practically all our work for the civilization of the Indian has become educational."

Value of the Problem

Each school, trying to serve the Navajo Indian, makes its own curriculum as the pressures of time and authority

¹ Jones, Thomas Jesse, et al. The Navajo Indian Problem. Introduction by Anson Phelps-Stokes, p.ix.

² Lingest, G. E. E. The Redman in the United States. Foreword by Commissioner Burke.

demand. In interviews with people in positions of authority, the writer found many who said a more definite curriculum is needed but it must be built on two main premises: first, that the Navajo will eventually become assimilated into our culture; and second, that it must be built up around the present economic needs and resources with an eye to improvement.

At the present three main classifications of schools serve these people: the Public School, the Mission School, and the Government School. Each differ in its approaches and goals. A curriculum based on the functional needs of the Navajo should be the goal of all who serve him.

Beatty says:

Because the Indians have been in contact with English-speaking whites for more than three hundred years, and because many of the Indian dialects were used by a very limited number of people, most of us take for granted that the Indians have accepted English as a substitute for their own language.

As a matter of fact this is far from true. It is estimated today that fully ninety-five per cent of the 45,000 Navajos living in Arizona and New Mexico depend entirely on their own language and have no use of English. Almost all children entering school for the first time are non-English speaking.³

³ Beatty, Willard W. Revising Ideas about Indians. The Clearing House, January 1938, pp.268-271.

Lucy Wilcox Adams says:

It is not easy to plan an educational program in a territory where the centuries jostle one another; where customs, religion, habits and language compete in a struggle that is sometimes pitiful or ludicrous, sometimes tragic, but always dramatic; where the world-old conflict between the shepherd, the farmer, and the trader is being played for the last time on American soil; and where the older struggle between man and nature is reduced to the simplest terms of water, grass and wood. The program is concerned with the development of the instruments of self-government among the Navajos, but the tasks of planning and of democracy are not easy to harmonize.

In the clash of centuries, of cultures, of economic and administrative ideals, the school, in its relation to adults occupies the position of middleman. Its task is not the propagation of any specific program, but the acceptance of new and improved ways of living.⁴

The Navajo Reservation

The Navajo reservation is located in northeastern Arizona and extends across the borders of southern Utah and western New Mexico. It covers an area of almost 25,000 square miles--some 16,000,000 acres. It is equal to the state of West Virginia and nearly three times as large as the state of Massachusetts. It is the largest of the Indian Reservations. This vast area is principally semi-arid desert plateaus, and mountains ranging

⁴ Adams, Lucy Wilcox. Navajos go to School. Journal of Adult Education, April 1938, vol.10, pp.152-153.

from 5,000 to 10,000 feet in altitude. It is a beautiful country, but lack of water makes vegetation so limited that it is with difficulty that 45,000 Navajos are able to live there. The soil has always been poor, but now since the Navajos have overgrazed the land, the top soil is fast washing away to be deposited in Lake Mead behind Boulder Dam.

Health, Sanitation and Recreation

The Navajos are a sturdy race. In spite of the ravages of disease, and ignorance of the laws of health and sanitation, they have increased from a tribe of some 10,000 in 1868 to 45,000 in 1938, or seventy years later. As yet the available hospitals on the reservation, although limited, are usually not filled.

Phelps-Stokes Inquiry indicates that in recent years an increasing number of women come to the hospitals for confinement, although it is estimated that as many as 75 per cent of the babies born receive only the service of a midwife.⁵

Still on certain parts of the reservation, less in contact with white culture, girls are assisted in childbirth by a midwife and a medicine man who places a board

⁵ Jones, Thomas Jesse, et al. The Navajo Indian Problem, p.87.

across the abdomen and puts his weight on it as his contribution to the proceedings at hand. Of course often the mothers are seriously injured by such practices, but if so, it is considered the work of a "chindi". Births take place, as do all other functions of family life, in a hogan or Navajo house. The hogan is a many-sided, one-roomed house built of piñon logs and mud. At about head height, logs are laid across the corners, thus bringing in the top in a half-dome effect. When there is a hole left about two feet square in the center of the top, the work stops as this serves for purposes of ventilation, light, and smoke vent. There usually are no windows and the door is always to the east. The floor is dirt and has been wet and packed until quite hard. Furniture is very scarce. A few have stoves, but for the most part the fires are built in halves of old iron oil-barrels into which holes have been cut, one to serve as a door and the other as an outlet for smoke. The stove pipe may consist of several lard buckets with ends removed and wired together in an ingenious series. There may be a cupboard of some sort made of orange crates, or even a better one if the father or a son has gone to school and made one in the woodshop there. Beds are practically unknown, but sheep skins laid on the floor serve the purpose. In this one room, the food is prepared and eaten,

the family rest, live and sleep; and the sick are attended here with little or no chance for isolation. The tubercular patient spits on the floor and soon not only he, but each of the family in his own turn will be found to have active tuberculosis. One superstition in this connection has been to the advantage of the Navajo: if a person dies in the hogan, it must be burned because the "chindi" is in it. Perhaps many times it has been unnecessary, but also, unwittingly it has stopped the spread of contagion by this proceeding.

Very rarely does the Navajo have a toilet. This, however, has not been as great a problem as it may at first appear, as they do not live in villages and the average population is only two persons per square mile.

Phelps-Stokes Inquiry says that trachoma is quite prevalent. Some estimate as much as one-third of the Navajos are afflicted with eye trouble.⁶ The smoke in the hogan or around the open fire, if outside, is believed to be the basis of most of the difficulty.

The use of the medicine man is, of course, not the source of disease, but the use of "sings" and sand paintings certainly has not proved very effective in the cure

⁶ Jones, Thomas Jesse, et al. The Navajo Indian Problem. p.88.

of such things as: typhoid, appendicitis, severe burns, infections of all kinds, and like ailments.

Recreation is very limited on the Navajo reservation. Those who have been to school may get a group together and play football, basketball, or baseball. The greatest drawback to this is the fact that unless some organized group, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, Indian Division, sponsor the activity, they will not have necessary equipment. They are very fond of horses and riding; therefore, any game that can be played on horseback is thoroughly enjoyed. They have horse races, tug of war on horseback, musical saddle blankets, potato races, and other kinds of races.

The Navajo likes to gamble, and such things as the "chicken pull" and guessing which shoe hides an article, have long been a part of the recreation of these people. In nearly all these activities the men participate and the women sit by and look on.

Origin of Navajos

Van Valkenburg⁷ says that the American Indian is, so the anthropologists tell us, a Proto Mongoloid. A Mongoloid is one of the three major races of man: Caucasian,

⁷ Van Valkenburg, Richard A. Short History of the Navajo People, unpublished Government Radio series, p.1.

Mongoloid and Negroid. The Navajo by language is a member of the Athapascan Linguistic Family.

Scheinfeld⁸, in writing on this point, observes:
"The clearest trail is that of the Mongoloid. Beginning with about 15,000 B. C. we can follow their trek up from China through Siberia and then over by way of Alaska (probably connected at the time with Asia) and into North America."

Just how he came in from the north is not quite known, although generally it is accepted that he came along the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains.

Van Valkenburg⁹ says: "Washington Mathews (1844-1902) who lived among the Navajos, 1880-1888, estimates from legends he heard, that the Navajo came into the Southwest between 1200 and 1400 A. D."

Near Cornfields, Arizona, is a pueblo ruin which contains many pieces of pottery that show different ages of time by the better or poorer types, and lack of, or type of glaze used. The writer has been told, though the informant was not an authority, that the latest pottery taken from the ruin dates to about 1200 A. D. It is believed that the coming of the Navajo marked the ruin of Pueblo culture.

⁸ Scheinfeld, Amram. You and Heredity, p.342.

⁹ Van Valkenburg, Richard. A Short History of the Navajo People, unpublished Government Radio series, p.1.

The word "Navajo" means "great planted fields," and it is supposed that these people first settled somewhat east of the general area now used for the Navajo Reservation.

Van Valkenburg in writing on this point says that there was a marked change in the Navajo between 1630 and 1700. Previously he had been a farmer and an aggressive raider and thief; now he acquired sheep and horses which made him more mobile. He now had the opportunity to raid more extensively, to take stock and slaves, and vanish into more inaccessible and unknown country.

He lived this type of life until 1863. In 1846 the United States Government entered Santa Fe and declared sovereignty over this southwest area which included the Indian. The Navajos offered peaceful submission, but it was only an outward gesture. The older men made peace but the younger men made raids as before, and as a result, the Roundup and exile to Fort Sumner or Bosque Redondo on the Pecos in east central New Mexico, begun by the famous scout, Kit Carson, came in 1864. It was hoped they would now be converted into peaceful farmers. They were unhappy in this environment, and died in large numbers because they were not used to living in close quarters and, too, sanitation had never been in their program. Such crops as were grown were destroyed by

insects, drouths, high winds and floods. Four years later they were allowed to return to the area they now have, although it has been added to since that time, and have lived in peace with the whites and other Indians. This does not mean they were entirely subdued.

In 1887 Congress passed the compulsory school attendance law for Indian children. The Navajos were willing to send the sick or weaker children but the stronger were kept at home to tend the flocks. In 1892 Dana Shipley, then Agent for the Navajos, was seriously injured in a brawl with Black Horse over the question of school attendance.¹⁰

Culture Patterns and Economic Life

Dineh, The People, is what the Navajos call themselves. This characterizes the Navajo Indians' viewpoint. Many Hopis learn to speak Navajo, but the Navajo does not learn to speak Hopi as it is an inferior language.

The matriarchal system, with communal use of land has long been the system used by the Navajos, but this, like other things, is in the process of change.

The sheep, the hogan, the furniture, the children, and the jewelry belong to the wife. The horses, saddles,

¹⁰ Van Valkenburg, Richard. A Short History of the Navajo People, unpublished Government Radio series, pp.4-51.

silver jewelry, and perhaps buckskin and turquoise belong to the husband. The uncle on the mother's side of the family has more to say about the children than the father does. The married man belongs at his wife's place unless divorced, then he belongs at his mother's. The Navajo man is supposed never to see his mother-in-law nor she him, as it is believed blindness will result.

The wife sells her rug, sheep or wool at the trading post without dictate of husband though he may be along and may discuss the transaction with her. At any rate she will come to the post and may stand around for one, two, or more hours before she begins to do business. Then she may begin and trade for a few things, stop, and again wait for another hour or two before she finishes buying what she needs. She appears to think of only one thing at a time, so if paying cash for three articles, she will pay for each as she buys it. For the most part they do not handle cash but receive credit at the trading post from lamb-selling season to wool-shearing season and from wool-shearing to lamb-selling. The trader must buy enough at this season to pay his bill or he may never collect it. There is no law by which the trader can collect the bill except to refuse credit when it is needed later. Of course, the Indian could go to another trader, but that

soon becomes known and an Indian without credit is in a very poor condition, indeed.

The trader is the one to whom the Navajo turns when he needs help. In case of death, he gets the trader to bury his dead, if possible, as he fears the "chindi" if he has to work with a dead body. Too, if sickness comes to his home, he must hire the medicine man to conduct a "sing" or make a sand painting, and if he does not have the money, he goes to the trader. Sometimes he may pawn some of his goods for these things he does not have, but often it is credit. Most traders, the writer was told, have from three to eight thousand dollars worth of pawn in saddles, silver and turquoise jewelry such as belts, bracelets, rings and necklaces. These the trader cannot sell in less than thirteen months, although usually he does not sell them at all, but gives the Navajo a chance to redeem them later unless he has a very poor reputation for honesty. The writer has heard a trader, who has had fifteen years' experience trading and was raised among Navajos, say he thought that under similar conditions white people would be a lot harder to deal with.

The Navajo costume for the men consists, for a large part of them, of cowboy boots, bright colored shirts, a pair of Levis, a neckerchief, and a large hat of the ten gallon variety. For work they may vary the costume with

handmade moccasins and an ordinary blue work shirt without the neckerchief. For social occasions they will add a silver belt, beads, bracelets, rings and perhaps even a silver hat band. They usually wear ornamental belts of some kind--much like cartridge belts. The women usually dress alike. Their skirts are made full, of some eleven to thirteen yards of colorful cotton material and they are generally worn down to the shoe tops. The shoes are moccasins or yellow-lace shoes some six inches in height. The blouses are velvet and usually of a bright color. They are usually ornamented with silver buttons or silver coins sewed on after a copper-loop has been soldered on the back. The coins are at times interspersed with new safety pins. Earrings, bracelets, rings of silver and turquoise, as well as beads for necklaces, complete the costume except for the ubiquitous blanket. The hair is tied with a string of spun wool at the back of the head. Men as well as women use this hair dress, but of course, many now cut their hair as we do.

The Navajos in the past have not acted as a unit. Even in warfare they acted as separate raiding bands. Today under the council system the council is attempting to act for the group as a whole. The short wave radio station at Central Agency in Window Rock, Arizona has been used to send our messages in Navajo to such centers

as Tuba City, Crown Point, Leupp and Shiprock, where the school there broadcasts the message to the assembled group.

Marriage in Navajoland may be by tribal custom or by legal method; if by tribal custom, a divorce may be obtained by tribal custom; if, however, the marriage is a regular legal ceremony, then the divorce can be secured only by the same type of proceeding.

Kimbal in observing Navajo customs says that the Navajo tribe is divided into forty-five clans. A clan serves several functions. It regulates the choice of spouse as marriage into the clan of father or mother is forbidden, while choice of a partner from the clan of the mother's father or father's father is slightly favored. Within the clan individuals speak of each other as "my brother" or "sister." This means that they feel they are so close in relationship that they are like a brother or sister. When a person misbehaves one may hear a remark such as: "He does not act as if he is related" or "He talks as if he did not have any relatives." The advice of Navajo leaders often is "To act just as if you were related to anyone."¹¹

¹¹ Kimbal, M. Social and Economic Groupings and Leadership Among the Navajos. Unpublished speech before meeting of Principals of Navajo Reservation, Fort Defiance, September 6, 1939.

In 1934, there were over one and one-fourth million head of sheep and goats, or an average of twenty-seven head per Navajo on the reservation. With the soil erosion control movement, there came stock reduction to save the land.

Woelke says that in 1933, a lean year, the average cash income of a family of five was estimated to be \$300.¹²

Hoover adds that by 1936 the dipping records show 1,080,706 sheep units. In 1938 this was lowered to about 850,000 sheep units. The carrying capacity of the range is estimated to be about 550,000 to 600,000 sheep units.¹³

This means that the Navajo is losing one-half his earning power, when his standard of living was lower than most American groups at the beginning of this reduction program.

At Grand Canyon the writer was told by a Ranger that government engineers had found that an average of one million tons of soil passed a given point in the Colorado River every twenty-four hours, and at certain times this had been known to increase to the same amount per hour.

¹² Woelke, Walter E. The Economic Rehabilitation of the Navajo. National Conference of Social Work, bulletin, 1934, p.551, vol.61.

¹³ Hoover, J. W. Navajo Land Problems. Economic Geography, July 1937, p.293.

A large amount of this comes from the Navajo reservation.

Stevens in his Table 6 shows that the average yearly load of suspended silt in the Colorado River for the five years 1925-1930 taken near the Bright Angel Creek was 302,000,000 tons or about 830,000 tons per day.¹⁴

Previous Studies

A number of theses have been written on Indians, but the writer has not been able to find any written on the specific problem of the Navajo and any phase of his education.

Leslie M. Cronk in a masters' thesis, written at the University of Arizona in 1938 says:

The day school offers the best opportunity available at present to furnish schooling to Indian children and at the same time build up a needed home and community education. In the day school the youngster is at home far more than in school, because of this some connection is bound to exist between the home and the school, which is of course healthful to both. If the classroom work is effective, much of the benefit which the children receive in their education is carried into the homes and benefits the entire family.¹⁵

¹⁴ Stevens, J. C. The Silt Problem. Transactions of the American Society of Civil Engineers, p.224, 1936.

¹⁵ Cronk, Leslie M. Indian Education in Terms of Pupil and Community Needs, p.71.

In 1939 the Phelps-Stokes Fund sponsored an inquiry into the Navajo problem. During the year the findings were published in a paper bound booklet entitled, "The Navajo Indian Problem." This is, to the best of the writer's knowledge, the finest survey of the Navajo Indian that has been made to date. In the Chapter set aside especially to Education, Dr. Loram says:

Navajo problems and Navajo security and progress require education for life for all Navajos. Soil conservation, health, law and order, family life, morality and religion are all dependent on the education of the Navajo people in the common things of the common day and, sooner or later, in the forces and conditions of American life and of modern civilization. Present conditions of education and plans for the future are, therefore, of the utmost importance.¹⁶

What is commonly called the Meriam Survey of 1928 was perhaps the most significant statement written in the changing philosophy of Indian Education. Under the heading "Fundamental Needs" is written:

The most fundamental need in Indian education is a change in point of view. Whatever may have been the official governmental attitude, education for the Indian in the past has proceeded largely on the theory that it is necessary to remove the Indian child as far as possible from his home environment; whereas the modern point of view in education and social work lays stress on the upbringing in the natural setting of home and family life. The Indian educational enterprise is peculiarly in need of the kind of approach that recognizes

¹⁶ Jones, Thomas Jesse, et al. The Navajo Indian Problem, p.39.

this principle; that is, less concerned with a conventional school system and more with the understanding of human beings.¹⁷

Some elements of the old boarding school life, and in turn some returned students from such schools, have led certain Indian individuals astray. Vocational ambitions out of keeping with practical possibilities were fostered. The good in Indian life and culture was overlooked or repressed to further formal and narrow concepts of White civilization. Ideas and ideals were set up in Indian students inconsistent with the dignity of Reservation life.

It is hoped that this program for the classroom will eliminate this old attitude and that Reservation life and culture and farming in particular will assume the dignity and place in the minds of the pupils which it deserves.

It would seem that this can best be accomplished, not by preaching, but by giving Navajo culture, conditions, needs and possibilities their rightful place in the actual classroom vocational and institutional life of the school.¹⁸

Other Valuable Publications on Navajos

Educational service for Indians, a staff study prepared for the advisory committee on Education published in 1939, covers the Indian field, and as such covers the

¹⁷ Meriam, Lewis, et al. The Problem of Indian Administration, p.346.

¹⁸ Unpublished Tentative Classroom Program for Shiprock Navajo Agricultural High School, prepared by Don May, Assistant director of Navajo Education, March 15, 1938.

Navajo, but in the statistics it is hard to get, from the composite picture, an accurate picture of one tribe, such as the Navajo.

The Government has had workers who have been doing survey work, such as: A Short History of the Navajo People by Richard Van Valkenburg, a radio series--Station KTGM--United States Department of Interior, Navajo Service, Window Rock, Arizona, has been helpful in getting a better picture of the Navajo.

Indians at Work, a news sheet for Indians and Indian workers; Indian Education, a fortnightly field letter of the Education Division, United States Office of Indian Affairs; and the Navajo Service News, have all contributed much toward the government's philosophy of education for Indians, as well as to what extent they have been able to meet community needs.

Such books as: The Navajo Indians by Dana and Mary Roberts Coolidge; Indians of the Enchanted Desert by Leo Crane, and many others are, in general, written for public consumption and cannot be regarded as research work of the highest type. However, many regard the Coolidge book as the best thing of its type written.

The Government considers Oliver La Farge as best portraying the true Navajo viewpoint in his writings. "Enemy Gods," a rather vehement protest against the work of many

missionaries among the Navajos, is perhaps his best known work.

The Navajo is colorful and meets perhaps, to a larger extent than any others, our youthful picture of Indians. For this reason much has been written about them, but sometimes fact, fiction, and day dreaming have woven a queer pattern for his actual life.

CHAPTER II

PRESENT EDUCATION OF THE NAVAJOS

The education of the Indian in the past was not faced squarely by the government as it is today. At first the government furnished the buildings while those churches which were interested in Indians furnished the teachers. This division of effort did not seem to be satisfactory so out of this grew up the position of the government accepting full responsibility for Indian Education, while at the same time allowed those churches which wished, to accept responsibility for a given group.

Jones tells us that, prior to 1935, the Navajo reservation was divided into six separate agencies, each of which ran its own school or schools. The educational program was governed by the Uniform Course of Study for all Indian schools. This was introduced in 1915, was revised in 1922, and used throughout all the schools until 1930. During this time Indian children all over the country studied the same subjects on the same days regardless of their backgrounds, rate of progress, or the relation of the subject to their lives, conditions on their reservations, or to the conditions they might meet if they decided to leave the reservations. One-half of each day was spent in academic work which was patterned

after the public schools, while the other half was spent in pseudo-vocational work. Many times home economics credit was given the girls for tasks assigned in cooking, baking, ironing, washing, or sewing, while no attempt was made to teach the implications of the thing they were doing. These same conditions existed for the boys who were given like duties in agriculture, dairying, or general maintenance of buildings and grounds.¹⁹

At present there are five types of schools serving the Navajo children, namely; Government Day Schools, Government Boarding Schools, Non-Reservation Boarding Schools, Mission Schools, and Public Schools.

The Government Day Schools

The day school program is a relatively new program for the Navajos.

Jones tells us that in 1935 when the enlarged day school program was inaugurated, there were ten boarding schools, six government day schools, and six mission boarding schools on the Reservation. By 1938 the number of day schools had increased to forty-nine, while the number of government boarding schools and mission schools remained the same.²⁰

¹⁹ Jones, Thomas Jesse, et al. The Navajo Indian Problem, pp.53-54.

²⁰ Ibid. p.53.

What is most important is the fact that a new philosophy has developed with regard to Indian education. Now Navajo education is based on Navajo conditions rather than on the general Indian needs.

"The ends sought now are, namely: better health conditions, effective civic participation, efficient functioning with white people, and profitable use and control of reservation resources."²¹

The progressive ideas of W. Carson Ryan, former director of Indian education, and Willard W. Beatty, present director, have taken root more in the Day Schools than in the already established Boarding Schools. The Navajo parents who have been educated were schooled in the conventional school. They say, "We want as good schools for our children as the white people have for theirs." This means that when the parents go by the school and see the children in the yard doing an agriculture project, they think the children are playing, because in their background one went out of doors only at recess or noon. So we hear many Navajos say, "The children only play at the Day School; they don't learn anything." The idea of a curriculum based on individual or community needs is too far advanced for most to grasp as yet. The writer heard

²¹ May, Don. Unpublished course of study for Shiprock Navajo Agricultural High School, (1938) p.1.

a young man say at the Third Annual Southwestern Regional Council of the National Fellowship of Indian Workers, that he believed the schools should be traditional, with geometry, Greek, and Latin taught on the secondary level. He had been to school and was acting as an interpreter for one of the missionaries on the Reservation. This gives an idea of the reaction to the progressive type of school such as the Day School now is.

Jones says that during the first year of the enlarged Day School program, 1,813 more Navajo pupils were in school than during the preceding year. Even so it lacked uniformity in that some schools were started with poor buildings which had dirt floors, no seats, no desks, and no equipment of any kind. The teachers were Navajo, assisted by a white community worker.²² This sounds in part like the Mexican Rural School which started with a local teacher, and if he had no training he acquired it while serving as teacher. The big difference lay in the fact that Mexico had communities and the school was an outgrowth of it. In Navajoland communities do not exist, at least as we know them. By government survey and planning, schools were located where there seemed to be a general grouping of peoples, and a community consciousness

²² Jones, Thomas Jesse, et al. The Navajo Indian Problem, pp.54-55.

is being developed. Water is always a consideration on the Reservation, and even the Federal Government had to consider it in locating their schools.

Jones also tells us that in contrast to the first picture another type of school was built. It was an elaborate structure of Spanish design and costing such sums of money that a larger enrollment of students was necessary to justify the expenditure. At the same time the building was located in an area where transportation was difficult and during the winter months impossible. This school was staffed with white teachers, a bus driver, and housekeeper; often the latter two were a Navajo married couple. The school gave out clothes to the children, furnished a noon meal and medical attention. At first the enrollment was large but many did not return again until more clothing was needed.²³

In 1938 the policy of furnishing clothing was abolished and that year found only a few students in school at the beginning. However, as time went on, they returned as they saw they were only cheating themselves. The school is a fairly accurate guide to Navajo feeling at any time. Should an individual feel disgruntled, he takes his children from school to show his resentment.

²³ Jones, Thomas Jesse, et al. The Navajo Indian Problem, p.55.

At present the Navajo reservation is divided into ten school districts, nine of which are centered around a boarding school, the tenth being the Klagetoh Day School area. Each area has a principal who is responsible for ordering supplies and equipment, as well as the staff in his area.

The director of Navajo education, her assistant, and supervisors of home economics, elementary education, industrial arts, and land management education are located at the Navajo Central Agency at Window Rock, Arizona.

The day school is fast developing into a community center and adult learning center. It is a place of activity as can be seen by the table on adult accomplishment, Table I, page 29.

The school renders service to the community in a large variety of ways. Water at the school makes it a center for obtaining the much-sought after commodity to transport home for personal use or to use there for the family wash. The teacher may be asked to write a letter to Montgomery Ward and Company, or Sears, Roebuck for certain supplies. The mothers come to be helped in making clothing for the new baby; the men bring in the wagon to repair because here there are tools and perhaps an assistant to aid them. Many times rough box coffins are made, and sometimes lined to make them more pleasing. This

TABLE I

ADULT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Personal

	<u>Day</u>	<u>Boarding</u>
Adult Baths	28402	2838
Baby Baths	5604	1870
Class Shop Visits	30008	12303
Haircuts	8304	636
Hair Washings	11136	619
Information Secured	12509	2226
Letters Written	6590	799
Library, No. Using	1192	412
Men Hours Work	18264	1874
Medicine, First Aid	11157	1455
Orders Prepared	193	0
Stamp Purchases	5606	33
Phone Calls	10480	2156
Women Hours Work	25555	118

Clothing Upkeep

Family Ironings	8605	546
Family Washings	18385	495
Garments Required	3896	1915
Garments Dry Cleaned	1	3
Garments Dyed	2	0
Hose Darned	2211	25
Soap Made (lbs.)	1044	570
School Ironings	2656	44
School Washings	7508	353
Skins Washed	356	3
Wool Dyed (lbs.)	176	82
Wool Washed (lbs.)	2558	257

TABLE I (Continued)

Clothing Production

	<u>Day</u>	<u>Boarding</u>
Aprons	395	15
Bed Spreads	1	0
Blouses	3943	180
Coats	104	37
Coveralls, Overalls	70	14
Curtains	47	10
Dance Kilts	3	0
Diapers	12	0
Dolls	5	0
Dresses	1796	117
Dresses	2684	131
Gar., Baby, New Mat.	817	17
Gar., Baby, Old Mat.	144	28
Gar., Pre-School, New	367	55
Knitted Garments	5	0
Moccasins	87	33
Pajamas	23	0
Patterns	284	23
Quilts	123	24
Quilts, Baby	0	12
Shirts, Men	880	134
Shirts, Boy	311	53
Skirts	4447	313
Pillows	8	0
Pack Sacks	4	0
Towels, Wash Rags	1342	41
Trousers	1010	16
Undergarments	1189	57
Gar. Pre-School, New	329	37
Gar. School Children	2059	195
Vests	0	2
Waists	1	0

TABLE I (Continued)

Food		
	<u>Day</u>	<u>Boarding</u>
Bread, Loaves	5928	1132
Biscuits, Rolls (doz.)	5156	592
Cakes	143	69
Cinnamon Rolls (doz.)	162	0
Cookies (doz.)	2044	91
Dough Nuts (doz.)	593	16
Fruit Canned	58	97
Fruit Juice (qts.)	0	11
Jelly (qts.)	10	29
Muffins (doz.)	0	229
Pickles (qts.)	5	26
Pies	146	38
Veg. Canned (qts.)	32	2

Arts and Crafts

Bead Frames	34	4
Belts	10	0
Bits, Silver	6	0
Bracelets	15	4
Bridles, Silver	3	0
Drawings, Paintings	99	37
Leather Stamping Tools	0	1
Looms	7	3
Navajo Dolls	0	1
Pottery	3	0
Rings	20	17
Rugs	1	6
Skins Tanned	8	2
Silver Smith Tools	6	5
Spindles	25	24
Weaving	2	1

TABLE I (Continued)

General		
	<u>Day</u>	<u>Boarding</u>
Animals Butchered	40	0
Batteries Charged	58	51
Building Pointed	2	0
Cars Washed	458	17
Community Meetings	721	224
Corn Shelled (lbs.)	337	2
Dentist, No. Assisting	18	0
Dining Room, No. Helping	1411	69
Flour Meal Gr. (lbs.)	1158	754
Games Played	4775	2011
Games, No. Attending	585	2287
Garbage Pits	3	0
Home Economics Meetings	151	3
Horses Shod	2575	7
Kitchen, No. Helping	2119	0
Livestock, Watered	369174	336
Lodging Overnight	200	116
Meat Ground (lbs.)	110	0
Movies, Ed., No. Attending	3516	14218
P.T.A. Meetings	61	0
Paths Built	1	0
Roads Repaired	53	0
Root Cellars	2	0
Radio, No. Listening	2505	4177
School Board Meetings	11	0
School Rooms Scrubbed	7738	37
School Rooms Oiled	9	0
School Rooms Swept	4984	62
School Rooms Waxed	93	0
School Windows Washed	6235	56
School Walls Washed	43	62
Snow, No. Shovelling	20	0
Stone Walls Built	1	0
Tools Borrowed	22	0
Trees Set Out	1581	1
Trees Watered	20	0
Wagons Washed	57	0
Washroom, No. Using	2283	4709
Water, No. Pumping	4	0
Water Secured (bls.)	21286	3435
Wood Cut, No. Working	100	0
Wood Hauled, No. Working	19	0
Yards Cleaned	39	0
Yards Mowed	3	0

TABLE I (Continued)

Shop Repairing

	<u>Day</u>	<u>Boarding</u>
Barrels, Trunks	3	1
Basket Balls	11	0
Care, Trucks	152	114
Chains	43	69
Cultivators, Drills	0	2
Furniture, Pieces	47	110
Hay Racks	2	0
Harnesses, Saddles	296	31
Handles Replaced	409	129
Horse Shoes	0	11
Lassos	3	0
Mowing Machines	2	3
Pipes	2	0
Playground Equipment	2	0
Roasters, Cans	4	0
Scrapers, Plows	8	18
Sewing Machines	8	0
Shoes, Boots	6356	703
Shovels, Pitch Forks	0	7
Soldering Irons, Guns	3	2
Stoves, Sinks	1	2
Tables, Chairs	12	5
Tents	1	0
Tools Loaned	53	41
Tires	282	14
Tools Repaired	9	11
Tools, Knives, Sharpened	3453	891
Trailers, Sleds	5	5
Wagons	228	207
Watches, Locks	1	1
Windows, Gates	6	12

TABLE I (Continued)

Shop Production

	<u>Day</u>	<u>Boarding</u>
Axes, Pliers, Etc.	15	0
Auto Cranks, Clevises	0	8
Awls, Bits, Chisels	1	18
Baby Cribs, Cradles	132	16
Bars, Rings, Pins	6	9
Beds	1	0
Bookcases	0	3
Bridles, Spurs	6	1
Candle Holders	0	1
Chairs, Stools	300	14
Checker Boards	0	3
Chests, Boxes	26	61
Coffins	55	57
Christmas Tree Supports	0	1
Corn Grinders	0	4
Cupboards	13	15
Cultivators	0	5
Curtain Rods	0	4
Desks	18	21
Door Frames	10	2
Doors	8	11
Drills	0	2
Food Choppers	0	1
Handles	0	1
Harrows	0	1
Hoes	0	1
Horse Shoes	1	35
Ironing Boards	1	1
Knives	2	0
Music Stands, Traps	2	6
Picture Frames	15	23
Pinon Screens	0	1
Pinon Scales	2	0
Planters	0	3
Plows	0	21
Rabbit Cages	1	0
Rakes, Scrapers	1	2
Road Signs	18	0
Rolling Pins	0	1
Screens	0	1
Shovels	0	6
Stakes, Tent	3	0
Sleds	28	8

TABLE I (Continued)

Shop Production (Continued)

	<u>Day</u>	<u>Boarding</u>
Tables	7	1
Tanks, Tails	2	1
Toys	40	0
Trailer Hitches	0	2
Truck Tops	1	0
Tweezers, Whisker	0	1
Wagon Parts	252	89
Wash Boards	0	1
Waste Baskets	0	1
Wedges	0	2
Welding	0	57
Window Frames	53	2

Commodities Received

Beans (lbs.)	213	0
Beans, Green (lbs.)	21	0
Beef	296	0
Corn (doz.)	471	0
Clay (loads)	1	0
Hay (tons)	1	0
Manure (loads)	2	0
Melons, Musk (lbs.)	485	0
Melons, Water (lbs.)	2298	0
Mutton (lbs.)	1042	32
Peaches (lbs.)	95	0
Pumpkins (lbs.)	1653	0
Rabbits	13	0
Rock (loads)	5	0
Squash (lbs.)	417	0
Vegetables (lbs.)	12	0
Wood (cords)	69	29

variety of services compares favorably with the variety of things a Navajo does.

Table II below shows that Day School adult participation has nearly doubled in its first four years, and with it has come a greater increase in boarding school activities, although a much smaller actual number. The Boarding Schools are not able to serve the adult Navajo as well as the Day Schools for the simple reason that nearly all transportation is by wagon or horseback, a relatively slow means; and too, they serve a much larger area.

TABLE II

AGGREGATE ADULT PARTICIPATION BY YEARS

Year	Day	Boarding	Total
1935-1936	126,198	20,263	146,461
1936-1937	226,170	79,672	305,842
1937-1938	234,791	95,188	329,979
1938-1939	242,874	83,240	326,114
Totals	830,033	278,363	1,108,396

One of the Day School's problems is shown in Table III page 38. Here we see beginners from the ages of five to eighteen, and other classes as groups correspondingly

diverse. From this it is found that the

Mean age for beginners is 7 years,
Mean age for First Grade is 9 years,
Mean age for Second Grade is 11 years,
Mean age for Third Grade is 12 years,
Mean age for Fourth Grade is 13 years,
Mean age for Fifth Grade is 14 years.

Thus one can see that from the second grade on, each grade increase brings an age increase of one year. However, 85 per cent of the enrollment is below the third grade and only 15 per cent above the second. This then is the reason why the day school must have an adult education program if it is to make any impression on the lives of these people it serves.

Although there is a compulsory school attendance law governing the Navajos, there is at present, accommodation for only about 55 per cent of those of school age; this includes the facilities of the Government, the Mission, and the Public Schools on the Reservation. This then explains why the children are allowed to drop school at such low levels.

It is very difficult to secure the type of teacher the Day School needs.

Jones says:

In addition to teaching ability for beginners and adolescents, he needs three other gifts, namely; first, a sufficient grasp of the problem of land management, agriculture, and stock-raising to cooperate in the government program for Navajo economic development,

TABLE III

NAVAJO SERVICE DAY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT--AGE-GRADE TABLE
JANUARY 1, 1940

Ages	B	1	2	3	4	5	6	Un.	Total
5	63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	63
6	450	113	1	-	-	-	-	-	464
7	235	92	7	-	-	-	-	-	334
8	122	114	30	-	-	-	-	-	266
9	85	126	67	25	4	-	-	-	307
10	53	91	70	31	3	-	-	3	251
11	23	62	80	49	9	-	-	2	225
12	33	35	55	42	9	3	1	2	180
13	17	17	44	53	20	13	-	-	164
14	10	10	13	32	4	9	-	-	78
15	8	4	16	12	6	8	1	-	55
16	2	7	6	5	6	6	-	-	32
17	-	1	3	2	-	-	1	-	7
18	1	-	2	-	2	1	1	-	7
19	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	3
Total	1102	572	396	251	63	41	4	7	2436

as teachers are continually being called upon to explain reservation policies, and erosion control, and at least know what these things mean; second, an ability to develop a community program among adult Indians, and to work with Chapter organizations and members of the Tribal Council; and third, he should have some skill in the upkeep of buildings and transportation, and ability to supervise shop work and other activities of Indian assistants.²⁴

The teacher must be able to endure isolation, for she may be the only white person for miles. Her trading must be done at a rural Trading Post unless she travels fifty or more miles to a trading center. She will receive mail two or three times a week, and in general lead a very lonely life unless she is really imbued with the mission spirit of helpfulness to a people less fortunate than she.

Government Boarding Schools

The Government Boarding School until recently has served as the backbone of Navajo education; however, since the enlarged day school program has been built up, this has not been true. The Boarding School at first served as a beginning school; now, although they still have beginners, their purpose is largely to act as a vocational center where the children may be sent after

²⁴ Jones, Thomas Jesse, et al. The Navajo Indian Problem, p.60.

they have had some six years' work in the Day School. The younger children they now have are from areas as yet not served by Day Schools.

About two years ago, Indian school boards were chosen to give these people a feeling of more responsibility for the education of their children. In the Boarding School, this did not work so well as the children came from too large areas for the boards to have much influence.

The boarding schools in general are set up on a half-time academic and half-time vocational basis; the emphasis, however, has been on the vocational end, and the academic work has been built up largely to support this other half.

The Wingate Vocational High School has some fine shop equipment and well-trained instructors, but here, as in many cases, they have been too bound by tradition in the things they taught. Shoe repairing, for example, is taught although there is no shoe repair shop on the Reservation.

Dr. May, assistant director of Navajo Education, worked out a course of study in detail for the Shiprock Navajo Agricultural High School. The approach used was psychological, but the difficulty experienced when put into practice was the lack of uniformity in background of the teachers, and the unreadiness of the Navajo pupil

to accept the responsibility for a unit of work.

One of the most noticeable failures of the Government schools has been their inability to teach English. This becomes increasingly apparent if the student tries to do high school work of an academic nature. This is borne out by the statement of Jones²⁵: "Two recent series of tests indicate that the ability of Ninth and Tenth grade students to use and understand English corresponds in general to that of Fifth and Sixth grade students in a general school."

The Non-Reservation Boarding School

The non-reservation boarding school was an attempt to take Indians from their own surroundings and culture into a foreign culture to be educated. This policy did not seem to function to the advantage of the Indians. They were given desires incommensurate with their economic ability to achieve them. They were taught standard vocational subjects such as plumbing, electricity, auto mechanics, and blacksmithing, because other schools did the same. The school seemed to forget that it was giving the Indian only wage jobs while he came from situations often foreign to such jobs. If he did leave the

²⁵ Jones, Thomas Jesse, et al. The Navajo Indian Problem, p.63.

Reservation to get a job, he must be hired by white employers who would rather hire white laborers. Many returned to their reservation after school was completed and others soon tired of the struggle in the white world. Yes, many "returned to the blanket" because they were given an education foreign to their own culture without building on that culture.

An article from Indian Education says:

Marched to meals, marched to classes, drilled in spare time to keep them out of mischief, boys and girls were frequently housed on the same campus, but in no sense of the word "co-educated." Corporal punishment reminiscent of colonial school days was inflicted for even slight infractions of the rules. Thus did we undertake to "civilize" our wards--in an atmosphere which must have made the most primitive of Indian homes appear as a paradise in comparison.²⁶

Meriam²⁷ reports: "As late as 1926 found about two-fifths of all Indians which were in school, in the non reservation boarding schools with an almost equal number in the reservation boarding schools."

Mission Schools

Mission Schools on the Reservation care for the educational needs of about six-hundred pupils. Five

²⁶ Why the Boarding School Failed. Indian Education, No. 3, (October 15, 1936), p.6.

²⁷ Meriam, Lewis, et al. The Problem of Indian Administration, p.402.

different denominations are included in this work and for the most part they are giving standard public school work with religious education included. Two of the schools give high school work, and one is accredited by the State of Arizona.

Generally it is accepted that these schools give a better foundation in the fundamental skills; but though not so generally accepted, at least by the missionaries, they do not relate their education so well to the needs of the people.

The writer who has worked for the past four years in one of the mission schools was told by a member of the Phelps-Stokes Inquiry Group that the personality of the children was developed more in the mission schools, response was easier to get, and more freedom of expression in general was noticed.

This is probably not due to any curricula adjustment, but to the fact that a large per cent of the teachers are mission minded. In all fairness it must be said that some government workers are as much missionaries as those who are working for a mission board.

Public Schools

The public school does not care for the needs of very many Indian students. On the Navajo Reservation, the

public schools are started in areas where there are enough white children to warrant doing so. These are usually the children of government employees, traders, or mission workers.

In some cases Indian children are allowed to attend if the school is not filled. However, many white parents do not want the Indian children in the schools as they have a tendency to hold back the progress of the school in general; lack of ability to use English being the principal factor in this connection. Also the public school is a day school, and white parents object on the grounds that these children come from homes where disease may not be controlled as it should, and head and body lice are not uncommon.

Many feel that since the Federal Government is responsible for educating the Indian, the county should not accept part of the burden also. It is true that the government does pay forty-five cents per pupil per day if attending public school, and so some Navajos who come from homes where English is spoken are entered in the public schools.

CHAPTER III

FUNDAMENTAL CURRICULUM FOR THE NAVAJOS

Life is dynamic, change is certain; but many times during periods of more rapid change, life loses its grip on those things which tend to stabilize it. The Navajo Indian is at the crossroads; medical science is making inroads into his consciousness until the medicine man, himself, now often goes to the white man's hospital for medical attention. Still, many believe only in the powers of the medicine man, his songs, dances, sand paintings, and chants.

The writer has seen a horse fall with and roll over a boy. Although at a race where hundreds of people were present, the lad lay there unattended until he could rise with his own strength and walk back to the place where the crowd was at the starting point of the race; then the medicine man was the first person who could approach. During this time the people sat quite still on their horses hardly speaking, and even the father sat on his horse facing away from the boy. They were following a pattern which to them was quite definite and satisfactory, but in that crowd, the writer heard an English speaking, educated Navajo boy say: "Isn't that just like the

Navajos, that boy may be choking to death over there for lack of some one to take the dirt from his mouth, still they won't let anyone go near him."

This is typical of the conflicting thought and cultural patterns within the Navajos today. Many are losing the restrictions of the primitive culture that was theirs and as yet have not developed the compulsions of another culture. Every life must have some motivating force. Tradition and superstition have dominated the life of the Navajos in the past and some would encourage the keeping of these, saying, "They have served the Navajo in the past, let them continue to do so," but more and more these people are becoming conscious of the world around them. An evidence of this fact is seen in the following resolution passed on the evening of the second day of the Navajo Tribal Council meeting, June 3, 1940:

WHEREAS, the Navajo Tribal Council and the fifty-thousand people we represent, cannot fail to recognize the crisis now facing the world in the threat of foreign invasion and the destruction of the great liberties and benefits which we enjoy on our Reservation, and

WHEREAS, there exists no purer concentration of Americanism than among the first Americans, and

WHEREAS, it has become common practice to attempt national destruction through the sowing of seeds of treachery among minority groups such as ours, and

WHEREAS, we may expect such activity among our people,

THEREFORE, we hereby serve notice that any un-American movement among our people will be resented and dealt with severely, and

NOW, THEREFORE, we resolve that the Navajo Indians stand ready as they did in 1918, to aid and defend our Government and its institutions against all subversive and armed conflict and pledge our loyalty to the system which recognizes minority rights and a way of life that has placed us among the greatest people of our race.

This was passed by unanimous vote of the Navajo Tribal Council at Window Rock, Arizona.

This nation is a Christian nation, it was founded on Christian principles and today still refuses to believe in oppression of the ^wweak. Freedom, whether of the press, speech, thought, or choice of spouse, is consistent with the principles of life as laid down by Christ. It appears then that since we believe in Christian Democracy enough to fight for it, and the Navajos have endorsed this same principle, we should share it in a more understandable way. History has repeatedly shown that sharing has developed peoples, while force has never been successful in developing motivating forces that build a people; rather it destroys them.

The periphery of culture cannot be given without giving the center if it is to have meaning. Christianity then must be offered the Navajos as a motivating force to

take the place of the fears they are losing. This can best be done by precept and integration with the rest of the curriculum. The Navajo is not ready for, nor does he need doctrine; he needs to be helped to understand a loving God in all His various forms. Social science is most easily understood when studied from the standpoint of the motivating forces of the people studied. The finest of art and music owes its origin to the expression of religious idealism. Architecture was definitely stimulated by the building of fine cathedrals. The arches used and the designs of the stained glass windows are of geometric design. Literature often shows definitely the influence of religion. If the principles of Christian democratic living are not taught, it is not because there are not places to weave them into the fiber of the curriculum, it is because teachers either do not see the opportunity or do not wish to use them.

The School and Its Aims

The day school offers the best opportunity among the Navajos to successfully raise the cultural level of the whole group. While attending the day school the youth spends enough time at home to carry over into the life of it some of the benefits learned at school. Cleanliness is a notable example of how training received at

school can be carried home. The writer knows of a boy in day school who encouraged his father to build a better home for the family. Because of the interest stimulated in the school, the family now lives in a stone house much better than the hogan in which they formerly resided.

Beatty says:

We have learned that removing the child from his environment and exposing him during the period of his youth to a pattern of life differing widely from that of his home has failed utterly to lift the level of Indian existence, or to supply to our Indian tribes an adequate leadership in their struggle for adaptation. Gradually it has become apparent any real education or real adjustment of the American Indian to the life about him must take place in the life of the Indian Community. Indian children are now seen to possess that same right to live at home and participate in a school experience centering around the home that is assumed to be the birthright of every American youth.²⁸

The day school offers an excellent opportunity to build a school in terms of the needs of a specific group in a specific situation. The old "Three R's" must not be left out, but they should be taught in situations harmonious with the life of the community. Children can more easily learn to read from books containing short simple sentences about meaningful experiences to the

²⁸ Beatty, Willard W. Education for the Whole Community. Indians At Work, June 15, 1936, p.28.

reader, than with a book written for an entirely different situation. Reading is making an association between a word or group of words and an idea. This skill then would be much easier for the learner if he is already familiar with the idea and only makes the association with the written words. The Government is now trying a book so made for the Navajos. These fundamental skills must not be lost as they sometimes now are, and as such should be regarded. Tools are only valuable if they can be adapted to the need at hand.

Functional objectives of education for the Navajos must include: An understanding of the use and control of natural resources; ability to make a living in a socially acceptable manner; an understanding of the laws of health and sanitation, particularly as they apply to his situation; and ability to take part in the civic life about him as well as assist in developing a higher type.

As Meriam says:

It is historically a mistake to say, as the old Indian School Course of Study did, that from primitive times reading, writing and arithmetic have formed the foundation of education. They have been the 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 Indians to speak English, tho that 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 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 the fundamental objectives.²⁹

School facilities must be expanded on the Navajo Reservation to take care of the 45 per cent of the children of school age who are not at present in school. This could be done largely by the addition of more day schools. Using the existing day schools as centers, where teachers could live and from which supplies could be drawn, additional schools of the "little red school house" type could be built out from this center. In this case they would be "ride in" schools, so the problem of transportation would be lessened. It would be much easier to get the teacher to and from school than trying to bring the children to it. This would lessen the load of the boarding schools temporarily, as it would furnish elementary schooling for all through the channels of the day schools. The program then would no doubt develop a larger number of students for the levels of the Junior-Senior High Schools. This should be the field of endeavor for the boarding school, and in this way it would

²⁹ Meriam, Lewis, et al. The Problem of Indian Administration, p.373.

be able to develop a more functional curriculum since its scope would not be so great. This plan endeavors to educate the Navajo youth on his own reservation; therefore, the curriculum should not be so fixed or limited that it does not help the youth of the tribe to build for his people a new but better life on the foundations of those things in his old culture that time has proved to be of value. Democracy as a way of life must be the underlying philosophy on which this curriculum is built.

The Navajo and His Land

It cannot be too forcefully stated that the Navajo and his land are inseparable. Primitive people are more closely associated with their land than are the more highly developed peoples. Land is the principal natural resource of the Navajo. Water is next in importance, but as George A. Boyce said at the Navajo Reservation Principal's meeting in 1937, "Only God can make more water." However, the Navajo must be helped to control the water he has; first to aid in irrigation of land, and second to prevent the washing away of the top soil.

Jones says:

Three tenths of one percent of the total land area which was devoted to cultivated crops in 1936 brought in twenty-five percent of the tribe's total income that year, whereas

the ninety-nine and seven tenths percent devoted to grazing produced only twenty-nine percent of the total income.³⁰

This then justifies a rather large expenditure of money in the bringing under irrigation a larger area of land.

It should be understood that the Navajo learns slowly. Most instruction is given through an interpreter, and unless explanations are given carefully and slowly, he leaves with many confused ideas. Too, to his sorrow, he has learned that many times in the past, things done for him have left him poorer than before. Stock reduction may sound fine to a trained agriculturist but it looks like less income to the Navajo. Some years back he was encouraged to raise more angora goats and sell mohair, now the government says, "Sell off goats and save the forage for the sheep." The Navajo cannot see why it was wise to raise more only to dispose of all of them a few years later.

Last year the government ordered large numbers of horses rounded up to be sold off the Reservation. As a horse is equal to five sheep units, range load was being lowered rapidly. Many Navajos had a dozen or more horses when they seldom found use for more than two or three,

³⁰ Jones, Thomas Jesse, et al. The Navajo Indian Problem, p.13.

and the unnecessary animals only used up range that might have been grazing land for sheep or have been allowed to re-seed itself. However, to the Navajo it had another aspect, wealth was estimated in terms of numbers of horses, and so he felt worse to see his horses go than he did to see better sheep or goats, although they were more profitable to him.

Education is always a slow but an effective process. To the Navajo there are hard lessons to be learned, but he is trying to become the master of techniques which, to the best of his knowledge, never existed until a few years ago.

Vocational Education

The Navajo Education Office at Window Rock reports that ninety-five per cent of the students find themselves on the Reservation in less than five years after they leave school. This rather definitely limits the number of vocations to be taught. For the sake of the few who can make the necessary social adjustments, who have sufficient mental ability, and have learned enough technical skills to leave the reservation and take their place in the world beyond, the curriculum must be flexible enough to meet their needs. The greatest vocational need obviously is in the field of agriculture. Both

irrigation and dry farming should be taught as the Reservation includes both types. The school is the place to develop the true picture of soil values, crops, range control, improved stock through better bred sires, better herding procedures, shearing in ways which make the wool more marketable, and home gardens wherever possible.

Schools need the approach of learning by doing. No amount of theory pertaining to the best agricultural practices will avail unless it is supplemented by real life conditions as the Navajo must meet them when he leaves school. The writer saw one government school where some land had been set aside as a dry farming project. When the principal of this school was questioned, he rather apologized for the results because they did not compare favorably with results shown on an irrigated area. Nevertheless, this dry farming project had more elements of real value to the students because most of them come from areas where the only farming they will be able to do is of this type.

At another government school they are able to do what the Mexican Government has been doing at the La Huerta Regional School, Michoacan, Mexico: they teach agriculture, and when a student has completed his training he is given an area of land by the government where he can put this learning into practice. This was made

possible through the increasing contact with the student after he graduated and is the center for seed, improved stock, trees, and those things that make his life and that of his family of an increasingly higher type. The writer believes this school is functioning in a way that makes it a center from which the best agricultural results will appear, as well as in opening the door for other needs such as recreation, health, etc. A cooperative enterprise has developed in this area for the canning of fruits and vegetables which helps the economic as well as the health condition of these people.

Homemaking is the greatest need in functional training of Navajo girls. A few girls have entered nurses' training since one of the Missions on the Reservation has developed a Nurses' Training School. There is also a need for trained secretaries to work in the various government offices. This is being supplied by one of the Mission Schools which has a better-than-average group of students. A few girls leave the Reservation as domestic servants, but most of them will become the next generation of mothers and homemakers on the Reservation, and as such need real help. Tea room management, making fancy salads, advantages of cooking with gas or electricity will not meet the needs of these girls. Their homes will be one-roomed hogans or at best two-roomed stone houses. They need education that teaches: how to use cheap

materials to the best advantage, consumer buying, first aid, care of the pregnant mother, care of the baby, diet work in terms of those things which the Reservation allows both from an economic, and a climate and soil standpoint. In this way will the school serve the community for which it exists.

Academic Education

An academic education must be built on the foundation of some language so it seems best for the Navajo that this language be English as he has no written language of his own, and since he is surrounded by a culture which expresses itself in English. However, let it be clear at the beginning that traditional English is not the answer to the Navajos' problem. He needs enough English to give and receive orders which may be either spoken or written. Above this, the needs are of a cultural value and his individual capacity for culture governs the amount he should receive. Drill will be necessary in developing the early tools of speech and writing. But to expect the Navajo child to enjoy the same fairy tales as his white brother for his introduction to the realm of literature is folly. He doesn't. There is no lack of legends in the Navajo background suitable for such purposes. Many of their stories have morals as did

the fables of Aesop. Stories in which the animals talk are prevalent. There are stories of how the Spider Woman taught them to weave, stories of the Creation and a Navajo story of the Flood. These should be used in early reading so the child does not feel that he has passed the threshold from his culture into a realm which is new and strange to him. He loves these legends, so why not use this motive as a stimulus for the acquisition of the skill of reading? If we expect him to be able to continue his education beyond the school, we should not make him so conscious of the technicalities of grammar that he avoids all contact with it. It should become a tool which makes life freer because it opens new worlds for his mind to explore.

The larger the group of people one is able to take into his interests, the better is his mental health. The Navajo is no exception to the rule; he needs to know his place in this great world in which he lives. One of the most popular classes in Ganado Mission High School is Current History. People are the most interesting subject in the world if one really gets to know them. The best approach for the Navajo is to start with his own people; their economic situation; their relation by blood or culture to other groups; their lack of isolation because of radio, telephone, etc; their dependence on the rest of

the world to buy their products; as well as dependence on the world beyond to furnish the many food stuffs which they have come to accept as part of their everyday diet. As far as possible this body of knowledge should be fused or integrated, not separated as we usually do, into history, economics, sociology, civics, and geography. It will be hard enough for the Navajo youth, who lacks the early environment of a home in which the predominating world culture is used, to understand when integrated; but for him to study the geography of Spain, the history of Greece, the United States Constitution, and the Russian philosophy of communism, is beyond his power to assimilate into any body of usable knowledge. The criteria should be not how much knowledge, but how meaningful this knowledge can be made in terms of the background of the student.

Science is coming and must come to the aid of the Navajo people. Science can help in reclaiming the land which is being lost; it can help in the establishment of better health conditions; and it can help in explaining the Eternal Force which moves in immutable laws. It must not be taught in patterns which are traditional to the American high school. The soil is fundamental to the Navajo. Let science then begin with the soil and find in its body of knowledge those things which make the

Navajo a matter of the soil he so badly needs. Medicine is scarce while medicine men are plentiful. Science must find in itself then that knowledge which frees the Navajo from practices which injure, or at least which have no value, as well as giving him rules of health that are meaningful to him. Mothers must be better cared for and children kept cleaner in a country where water is scarce. Food must be kept away from the fly which can carry so much filth and so many germs. Science must make life better or it fails. True there are the few who may need much more than the group if they are to develop into leaders for the group, but these should not lose the applications of science to the life to be lived.

Mathematics must serve an increasing need of the Navajos. Barter is past. Today all trading posts on Indian land must trade in standard money, not "tin money" as they did in the past. As the economic situation of the Navajo becomes worse, he has an increased need for a more definite way to measure time, weight, distance, and value. Time has never been a factor to these people. They do not carry watches nor do they do any given thing at a specific time. If they make an appointment to meet, it is done by pointing the hand to the place where the sun will be rather than at any hour. Thus the time may

vary greatly due to the interpretation of the exact spot the sun was said to be.

The Navajo does not pay taxes, very seldom owns any insurance, does not own stocks or bonds, and pays no interest as such. This means that a functional view of mathematics must develop different approaches to the application of the subject. Number concepts he must get by repeated drill, with some application to the life about him. He knows pounds because he sells piñon nuts, wool, and sheep, but the uneducated have never developed a method of figuring except in their heads. The writer tried to get an explanation of how they did their mental arithmetic, but was unsuccessful since those who knew could not explain it.

Algebra and geometry still find many who want them because they are traditional subjects, but few there are who find much value in their content.

Leisure Time

To the world at large the problem of the profitable use of leisure time has become very significant, since we have developed a rather acute case of unemployment in this country. The general problem is one more of directing than initiating types of recreation

which give mental as well as physical health. Among the Navajos, however, the problem takes on a different character.

The "sing" or dance seems to be about the only form of recreation these people have. The difficulty with these is that they very often take people away from their tasks at a time which is inopportune, and for a duration which they can ill afford. It is true that the "sing" has a religious background, and usually is connected with sickness, but due to the lack of other types of entertainment for social occasions, many now seem to use it for social purposes.

Existing schools on the Reservation have in many cases put so much stress on athletics that the student sees it as a goal rather than as a means to the goal for a fuller, more complete life. Sports have been so completely directed by the one in charge that very little initiative is allowed, when, if it is to be successful, it must stimulate the individual to develop ways in which he can profitably spend his leisure time. As the day school becomes more a center of the community, perhaps more acceptable forms of recreation will appear.

Navajos like competition and use might be made of this characteristic in the development of profitable leisure time activities, by using the school as the center for display of works of arts or crafts.

Adult Education

Since the economic problem is particularly acute at this time, it would seem that adult education should be particularly centered about this problem. The government encountered certain difficulties in trying to explain their program of stock reduction, erosion control and controlled grazing to the Navajo adults: First, that a small group was necessary; second, that only a small part of the program must be covered at any one meeting, and third, that unless one got the people to ask questions, he had no criteria by which to evaluate the effectiveness of his approach.

The Navajo clings to what he has, but if one can convince him he has something better for him, he will change. In approaching him then, it seems that certain criteria must be followed, namely; The person who carries out the adult program must have the confidence of the Navajos as well as of the program leaders who sent him to sell the idea; he must

not try to hurry the program because these people do not react rapidly to such stimuli; he must work with groups small enough that he can ask them to explain back what he has said or done, and thereby know how much additional explanation is necessary; he must be patient, as that is the only way he will ever succeed in bringing about a change in these people; and lastly he must love these people enough to be willing and able to appreciate their side of the question.

Opportunities for adult education are many in addition to the field already mentioned: Others might include: cleanliness, sanitation, first aid, mother care, child care, diet, building practices, canning, recreation, farm mechanics, safety, cooperatives, arts and crafts, and some might even like to learn to write their own names rather than be compelled to use a thumb print, as is now the case with a majority of the adult Navajos.

Agricultural exhibits in school centers are a good visual stimulus for more varieties and better quality of agricultural products.

Health

The Navajo Indian medicine man spends years in

learning his trade. Often his cure consists only of sand paintings, sings or chants; he may rub mud on the sick person or do equally foolish things to our standard of thinking; but at times he does use herbs, and certain of these have been found by medical people to be used to the advantage of the patient. If we are to build on the best in the former culture, this then is the place to begin. Not all things that the medicine man did was wrong, nor did he do them only for the pay he received any more than do doctors today in our scheme of life.

Health is positive, not negative, so curing sick people is not the answer to the health problem. What the Navajos need is information which will show them why they should do certain things to prevent the spread of disease, improve their diet so as to give them stronger bodies; learn enough of first aid principles to care for accidents until a doctor can arrive (which may be several hours later), and learn some practical physiology.

Williams³¹ says: "About 25 per cent of the deaths among Navajos in Arizona are caused from tuberculosis

³¹ Williams, Eleanor B. Navajo Medicine Men Offer Ancient Blessings in Dedicating New Government Hospital, Indians at Work, July 1940, p.18.

and approximately 20 per cent from pneumonia." A large part of this 25 per cent mortality caused by tuberculosis could be avoided if they had proper diet and used proper methods in checking the spread of contagion. This, then, is the type of training they need; not naming all the bones or muscles, etc., but practical ways of avoiding disease, caring for those who are ill, and building up body strength to the place where disease cannot get a foothold. Those who would bring something better to the Navajo must always remember to bring it in humility if they are to be accepted, as they are dealing with a proud race. This may be illustrated by the fact that the writer who has twice given blood for a transfusion to a Navajo in distress, had his blood questioned very seriously by one girl who could see no reason for having to accept white blood into her veins. After some explanation as to types and matching, and being assured that white blood was no different from Indian blood, she accepted it and soon after had recovered sufficiently to leave the hospital. However, she never said she was thankful for the gift and probably to this day resents the fact, to her way of thinking, that she is no longer a full blood.

Arts and Crafts

The arts and crafts work in the past has supplemented the income of the worker so it has and will have marked effect on the product he makes. He, therefore, must make a fine product if he is to obtain a good price.

In the past each person had been his own critic as to what standard his work should reach, but in 1935 Congress established an Arts and Crafts Board to stimulate the work of the Indians in this field. Now things made by Indians are so marked, and such misleading advertising as "Indian Blanket" is not allowed unless it is definitely an Indian product.

Navajos are perhaps best known for their rugs and saddle blankets, although silver and turquoise jewelry is made and sold rather extensively today to tourists. The rug is a home product and the number brought into the trading post varies with the amount of rugs on hand at the wholesalers and the lack of groceries on hand at the hogan. Little can be done for the rug industry except by the trader, who by the price given for the article, can encourage use of better colors, tighter weaving and more pleasing design. However, no two rugs have the same design so it is hard to say what will be pleasing and what will not. In the field of silver work

it is easier to hold a standard. The number of silver-smiths is limited, and by encouraging those who do good work and discouraging those who do poor work, a more uniform quality can be attained.

Many of the schools are using drawing and painting as a means of expression with quite satisfactory results. It may lead to another field of art work which may have economic value to these people.

Higher Education

Up to the present time only a very few students have gone beyond the secondary level. This of course means that the elementary and secondary schools are primarily geared for the group who do not go on.

It is the belief of the writer that one school should be set aside on the secondary level which has a type of curriculum that will give the student a more adequate preparation for advanced work. This does not mean that this school need lose its hold on the reality of the problems of the community, but for example, it will teach chemistry with as much application to the soils as possible. In this school should be found a course which has, as its aim, the adjustment of an individual

of a minority group into the culture of a majority group. Mental health is hard to keep when the youth leaves the Reservation.

It will be the business of this school to determine the needs of each student in terms of the school of higher learning he is to attend, and the knowledge or skills he must have when he arrives there. It will be preparing the future leaders of the Navajo group, and as such, it must not allow these students to lose an appreciation of those things in their own culture which a critical evaluation has shown worth while.

The government, through loans which may be had by passing certain prescribed tests in reading and arithmetic, has encouraged and is encouraging these young people to further their education.

All schools would do well to remember that in the past, American education has tended too much toward the "White collar job" and labor has tended to be despised. This mistake should not be repeated in the education of the Navajos.

Guidance

The Navajo youth of today needs guidance as perhaps no other group needs it. He lives a life, which by virtue of its isolation, gives him little chance to establish

normal standards of conduct or accomplishment in any given field of endeavor. If he accepts the new culture, it is likely to be done on the basis of hero worship of one person or at best a very small group.

Many are torn between the conflicts of two cultures. They need someone who can sit down with them and help them clarify their own thinking into a unified philosophy of life. The person who gives guidance must face the facts as they exist, not as he would like them to be. He must recognize that as yet, Christian democracy as a guiding motive is unpopular to the extent that young folks who accept it and then return to their own community will be faced with coldness from their former friends. One should see that to them he has given up the belief of his fathers, and that is bad. The conditions of unemployment on the outside world must be known, and the fact that Indians are not generally accepted socially by the better class whites must be faced. If the Navajo youth considers going away from the Reservation to something other than an Indian school, he must be helped in facing the fact that he now is competing with a select group, and the school is adjusted to the speed and needs of this group rather than to himself. Matters of the heart are always trying, but the Indian youth who lives among white people must not forget that many who

would seem to make him feel one of them, draw the line at marriage; this barrier they will not allow him to cross and it may cause much bitterness unless faced squarely beforehand.

The journey from one culture to another abounds with many pitfalls, and fortunate are those who have real guidance service in charting their course between the two. If this guidance person be white, and it seems likely that he will be, then he must have worked many years among the Navajos and have learned to love and understand them if he is to be trusted with charting the course.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

There seems to be some conflict in the government program for the Navajo. On one hand we see science doing its best to save a soil already fast losing its quality, and education governed by the most progressive principles; while on the other hand we see these people encouraged to revive their interest in the customs of their forefathers. This seeming conflict has caused much agitation among certain groups of people, primarily those centered about the churches who have been doing mission work on the Reservation. Still others say the Indians are being kept as museum pieces rather than being allowed to develop into a less glamorous but more easily assimilated minority group.

It is not the writer's purpose to try to sit in judgment on either group, but it does seem that common agreement could rather easily be found if the Navajo became the true center of the picture and personalities were pushed into the background.

Jones³² says, in speaking of government administration, and the writer feels it is applicable to all who

³² Jones, Thomas Jesse, et al. The Navajo Indian Problem, p.112.

work on the Reservation: "Working with Indians rather than for them requires a profound change not only in policy and program but also in the personalities of the Administrative staff."

Certain things stand out in the experience of the writer as criteria on which to judge the effectiveness of personnel. First, help must be given by the hand that reaches out and not down. In other words, help can only be given by those who believe in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man; second, unless some value can be seen in the past culture of the Navajos by those who would help, the helper and the Navajo have no common point from which to start. The Navajo is proud of his race and culture and justly so; if through lack of vision no value is seen in it, either he refuses to be interested in the leader or he loses his pride and becomes a heartless follower.

The day school should be the community center. By use of the small group found in the day school or community surrounding it, one would be better able to develop Navajo participation in those things which will make his community a better place to live, and through participation, perhaps develop a better understanding and appreciation of his needs.

If the Reservation is to be made more habitable, if the Navajo people are to acquire those things from white culture that will make their lives more worth while, then it must be done through a process of education. Education works much slower than law, but education will help free these people from those things which bind them now, and give them that discrimination which will allow them to choose those things which will make them the free individuals a loving God intended them to be.

The fundamental changes in the schools and the curriculum should include: a greater number of day schools serving smaller but no less needy areas not now served at all; dropping the elementary work from the boarding schools while continuing them as junior-senior high schools of a vocational type; a secondary school of a more academic type to meet the needs of those few who can profit from its type of curriculum. The day school should also be a center of adult education.

In this curriculum, economics, mathematics, English, and science should not be taught as subjects, but must be the servants of the Navajo and supply those tools and facts which make his life better and existing conditions more meaningful. Economics must deal with erosion, overgrazing, and those problems in the economic life of the Navajo if it is to stay. Mathematics and English should

furnish the tools necessary for the understanding of the economic laws involved. Science should make its contribution in the form of facts that, first, have economic value and, secondly, cultural value. The curriculum fails unless the economic and cultural level of the Navajo is slowly raised to the place where he is able to take his place beside his white brother.

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