

# New Directions in United States Native Education

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*The author describes how American Indian people in the United States have been assuming control of their schools over the last two decades. He gives special attention to recent initiatives, including the Native American Languages Act, the United States Secretary of Education's Indian Nations at Risk Task Force, and the White House Conference on Indian Education.*

It is over 20 years since President Richard Nixon enunciated the current policy of American Indian and Alaska Native (Native)<sup>1</sup> self-determination in the United States. In so doing, he was recognizing Native aspirations for self-government that led to the founding of Rough Rock Demonstration School in 1966, the first Native controlled school in modern times, and Navajo Community College (NCC) in 1969, the first tribal college. In a special message to Congress on Indian affairs a year after NCC's founding, President Nixon wrote:

The story of the Indian in America is something more than the record of the white man's frequent aggression, broken agreements, intermittent remorse and prolonged failure. It is a record also of endurance, of survival, of adaptation and creativity in the face of overwhelming obstacles. It is a record of enormous contributions to this country: to its art and culture, to its strength and spirit, to its sense of history and its sense of purpose.

It is long past time that the Indian policies of the Federal government began to recognize and build upon the capacities and insights of the Indian people. Both as a matter of justice and as a matter of enlightened social policy, we must begin to act on the basis of what the Indians themselves have long been telling us. The time has come to break decisively with the past and to create the conditions for a new era in which the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions. (Nixon, 1971, p. 565)

This policy was operationalized in regard to education with the passage of the Indian Education Act in 1972 and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act in 1975. In the face of subsequent changes in administration, budget cuts, and doubts about the place of minorities in the United States, this policy of self-determination has survived. United States Indian reservations have shared the neglect that her inner cities have received, but tribes have maintained an uphill struggle to take control of their own education. Despite seriously inadequate funding, by 1991 there were 22 tribally controlled community colleges and 74 schools operated by Indian tribes and tribal organizations under grants or contracts with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Office of Indian Education Programs, 1991). These colleges and schools have not completely turned around Native education, but they have certainly moved in the direction of Indianizing it.

There is also no question that the problems of Native education in the United States described in the 1969 Senate subcommittee report *Indian Education: A National Tragedy, a National Challenge* (Special Subcommittee on Indian Education) that

helped lead to President Nixon's self-determination pronouncement have not been solved by that change in policy. The 1991 *Audit Report* of the United States Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General showed students in Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools achieving on average far below non-Native students and "generally not receiving quality educations" (p. 11). Bureauwide average percentiles ranged from a grade 3 and 9 low of the 24th percentile to a grade 12 high of the 32nd percentile. Students in only two out of 153 schools had average scores at or above the 50th percentile (p. 11).

However, there are promising signs for the future. Demographically, after four centuries of precipitous population decline, the United States Native population increase that started at the turn of the century is accelerating. Since 1970, the US Census reports a doubling of the United States American Indian and Alaska Native population (Reyhner, 1992b). Three specific events of the 1990s indicate that the policy of self-determination is here to stay and is moving forward: The Native American Languages Act, the US Secretary of Education's Indian Nations at Risk Task Force, and the President's White House Conference on Indian Education. This article reviews each of these events and discusses the promise they hold for Native education in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

### *Native American Languages Act*

On October 30, 1990 President Bush signed the Native American Languages Act, Title I of Public Law 101-477. Congress found in this Act that "the status of the cultures and languages of Native Americans is unique and the United States has the responsibility to act together with Native Americans to ensure the survival of these unique cultures and languages" (102, 1). Congress made it the policy of the United States to "preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages" (104, 01). "The right of Indian tribes and other Native American governing bodies to use the Native American languages as a medium of instruction in all schools funded by the Secretary of the Interior" is recognized (104, 5). Furthermore, the Act declares that "the right of Native Americans to express themselves through the use of Native American languages shall not be restricted in any public proceeding, including publicly supported education programs" (105).

The Native American Languages Act has three important implications. First, it is a continuation of the policy of Native self-determination that has been in effect over the last 20 years. Second, it is a reversal of the historical policy of the United States government to suppress Native languages in BIA and other schools. And third, it is a reaction to the attempt to make English the official language of the United States. The Act represents the grass roots support of Native people for their heritage and is a real departure from the old BIA attitude that "tradition is the enemy of progress" that led to students being punished for speaking Native languages. The Act is a tribute to Native people's determined resistance to the forces of cultural assimilation and their answer to renewed calls for assimilation from the conservative English-only movement that wants a constitutional amendment to make English the official language of the United States (Crawford, 1990).

The Native American Languages Act is an outgrowth of Native desires that are expressed eloquently in documents such as the 1985 education policies of the US's largest reservation-based tribe. Then Tribal Chairman Peterson Zah introduced these policies declaring, "We believe that an excellent education can produce

achievement in the basic academic skills and skills required by modern technology and still educate young Navajo citizens in their language, history, government and culture" (Navajo Division of Education, 1985, p. vii).

These policies call for local control, parental involvement, and Navajo language instruction. They state,

The Navajo language is an essential element of the life, culture and identity of the Navajo people. The Navajo Nation recognizes the importance of preserving and perpetuating that language to the survival of the Nation. Instruction in the Navajo language shall be made available for all grade levels in all schools serving the Navajo Nation. (p. 9)

Internationally, researchers are finding that bilingualism is an asset rather than a handicap (Baker, 1988; Cummins, 1989). It is not necessary to forget a home language to learn a second "school" language and be academically successful in that second language. It takes time, around six years on average, to become fully—that is academically—competent in a second language, but through proper instruction such as has been carried out at Rock Point Community School on the Navajo Nation students can learn English and the academic subjects—math, science, and so forth—and still learn to read and write Navajo (Collier, 1989; Cummins, 1989; Reyhner, 1990).

### *Indian Nations at Risk Task Force*

A second new Native education initiative has been the Indian Nations at Risk (INAR) Task Force that was chartered by former Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos in 1990 and issued its final report in 1991. The Task Force gathered testimony at seven regional public hearings and at the annual conference of the National Indian Education Association, made 30 school site visits, and commissioned 21 papers from national experts on American Indian/Alaska Native education on subjects such as current conditions, funding, dropout prevention, curriculum, and so forth.<sup>3</sup>

In the Final Report's transmittal letter, the Task Force's co-chairs, former Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell and former Alaska Commissioner of Education William G. Demmert, Jr., wrote:

The Task Force believes that a well-educated American Indian and Alaska Native citizenry and a renewal of the language and culture base of the American Native community will strengthen self-determination and economic well-being and will allow the Native community to contribute to building a stronger nation—an America that can compete with other nations and contribute to the world's economies and cultures. (Indian Nations at Risk Task Force, 1991, p. iv)

The 12 members and two co-chairs of the Task Force included one school superintendent, two representatives from state education agencies, three representatives of Native organizations including a former president of the National Indian Education Association, two representatives from Indian colleges, and four tribal leaders including three present or former tribal chairpersons. Only two Task Force members were non-Indians, including the Task Force co-chair and former US Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell.

Based on their work and President Bush's six National Education Goals, the Task Force established 10 goals for Native education (see Figure 1). The added goals include maintaining Native languages and cultures (goal 2), high-quality

**GOAL 1: Readiness for School**

By the year 2000 all Native children will have access to early childhood education programs that provide the language, social, physical, spiritual, and cultural foundations they need to succeed in school and to reach their full potential as adults.

**GOAL 2: Maintain Native Languages and Cultures**

By the year 2000 all schools will offer Native students the opportunity to maintain and develop their tribal languages and will create a multicultural environment that enhances the many cultures represented in the school.

**GOAL 3: Literacy**

By the year 2000 all Native children in school will be literate in the language skills appropriate for their individual levels of development. They will be competent in their English oral, reading, listening, and writing skills.

**GOAL 4: Student Academic Achievement**

By the year 2000 every Native student will demonstrate mastery of English, mathematics, science, history, geography, and other challenging academic skills necessary for an educated citizenry.

**GOAL 5: High School Graduation**

By the year 2000 all Native students capable of completing high school will graduate. They will demonstrate civic, social, creative, and critical thinking skills necessary for ethical, moral, and responsible citizenship and important in modern tribal, national, and world societies.

**GOAL 6: High-Quality Native and Non-Native School Personnel**

By the year 2000 the numbers of Native educators will double, and the colleges and universities that train the nation's teachers will develop a curriculum that prepares teachers to work effectively with a variety of cultures, including the native cultures, that are served by schools.

**GOAL 7: Safe and Alcohol-Free and Drug-Free Schools**

By the year 2000 every school responsible for educating Native students will be free of alcohol and drugs and will provide safe facilities and an environment conducive to learning.

**GOAL 8: Adult Education and Lifelong Learning**

By the year 2000 every Native adult will have the opportunity to be literate and to obtain the necessary academic, vocational, and technical skills and knowledge needed to gain meaningful employment and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of tribal and national citizenship.

**GOAL 9: Restructuring Schools**

By the year 2000 schools serving Native children will be restructured to effectively meet the academic, cultural, spiritual, and social needs of students for developing strong, healthy, self-sufficient communities.

**GOAL 10: Parental, Community, and Tribal Partnerships**

By the year 2000 every school responsible for educating Native students will provide opportunities for Native parents and tribal leaders to help plan and evaluate the governance, operation, and performance of their educational programs.

*Figure 1. Indian Nations at Risk Task Force's National Goals for American Indians and Alaska Natives.*

Native and non-Native school personnel (goal 6), restructuring schools (goal 9), and parental, community, and tribal partnerships (goal 10).

The Task Force co-chairs identified four reasons why Indian Nations are at risk:

1. Schools have failed to educate large numbers of Indian students and adults ... [as indicated by] high dropout rates and negative attitudes toward school;
2. Schools have discouraged the used of Native languages ... [with the result that] the language and culture base of the American Native are rapidly eroding;
3. The diminished lands and natural resources of the American Native are constantly under siege; and
4. Indian self-determination and governance rights are challenged by the changing policies of the administration, Congress, and the justice system. (Indian Nations at Risk Task Force, 1991, p. iv)

The Task Force reported that during the 1989-1990 school year 39,791 Native students (10% of the total) were attending 166 BIA funded schools, 9,743 (3%) were attending private schools, and 333, 494 (87%) were attending public schools. Testimony gathered at the Task Force hearings indicates that many of these Native students attend schools with "an unfriendly school climate that fails to promote appropriate academic, social, cultural, and spiritual development among many Native students." Schools also had a Eurocentric curriculum, low teacher expectations, "a lack of Native educators as role models," and "overt and subtle racism." These factors contributed to Native students having the highest high school dropout rate (36%) of any minority group in the United States (Indian Nations at Risk Task Force, 1991, p. 7-8).

On the brighter side, the Task Force found that "schools that respect and support a student's language and culture are significantly more successful in educating those students" (p. 16). In the process of gathering information,

The Task Force learned that there is a direct relationship between students' understanding of their culture and role in society and their ability to function comfortably in society and to achieve academic success. When students' relationships with the larger society are strained, their chances for academic success appear to diminish....

Often schools have failed to make clear to students the connection between what they learn in school and what they must know to live comfortably and contribute to society. (p. 20)

The Task Force recommended "establishing the promotion of students' tribal language and culture as a responsibility of the school" and "training of Native teachers to increase the number of Indian educators and other professionals" (p. 22). Furthermore, they recommended that school officials and educators "integrate the contemporary, historical, and cultural perspectives of American Indians" and "give education a multicultural focus to eliminate racism and promote understanding among all races" (p. 24).

State governments were encouraged to "allocate specific funding for schools serving Native children to develop and use linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate curricula" (p. 26), and the federal government was asked to "seek legislation to authorize the establishment of a national research and school improvement center for Native education" (p. 29). In addition, colleges and universities needed to "encourage scholarly work on curricula and textbook development that incorporates Native perspectives" (p. 31). To solve the problems that Native people face, the Task Force particularly recommended

support for new early childhood education and parent training programs, support for teacher education and other professional training for larger numbers of American Indian students and adults, support for Indian community colleges, and the development of new and exemplary education projects designed to carry out school improvement recommendations to meet the unique cultural and academic needs of Native students. (p. v)

In their appendix, the Task Force included descriptions of exemplary tribal colleges, state initiatives, and bilingual schools.

All in all, the INAR Task Force's Final Report gives strong support for the need for linguistically and culturally appropriate education for American Indian and Alaska Native students and echoes the Native American Languages Act in calling for the maintenance of Native languages and cultures *in schools* plus calling for high-quality Native and non-native school personnel.

From the anthropological point of view, we have seen a trend of viewing schools as subcultures and doing ethnographic research in classrooms. In Native education this research has highlighted the cultural conflict that goes on in classrooms where the teacher comes from a different culture than the students. Untrained teachers, untrained in the sense of not being sensitized to cultural differences, often misinterpret and misunderstand the actions of their students. This ranges from the simple misinterpreting of some Native students not wanting to look their teacher in the eye to misunderstanding how subtle differences in some Native students' spoken and written English reflect elements of a tribal language they may no longer speak.

The December 1987 theme issue of the journal *Anthropology and Education* (Jacob & Jordan, 1987) gives a good overview of the various research and theoretical perspectives on why many minority students do not do well in school. Teachers of Native students need to learn about Native childrearing practices, including how they discipline children, kinship terminology, value systems, and so forth to understand better and work with their students and to reduce the cultural conflict that goes on in our classrooms. Educators need to stop asking students to choose between their homes and school. Forcing this choice produces resistance, dropouts, and family breakdown.

For too long Native education has been viewed as a one-way street, with Natives learning from the white society. At the worst this was forced assimilation and at best it was whites arrogantly asking, "How can we help you?" In fact there is a long history, largely ignored, of European and other immigrants learning from American Indians and Alaska Natives. Recent books such as Weatherford's *Indian Givers* (1988) and *Native Roots* (1991) outline many of these contributions to our economy and our political system. Once in a while these gifts are exaggerated, but what is far worse is when they are totally ignored.

The past failures of Native education plus the current problems brings up the question of what type of special training teachers of Native students need. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has recently required colleges wanting accreditation to make explicitly the "knowledge base" they expect students to learn as they learn to become teachers. In regard to the special knowledge required to teach the increasing number of children from ethnic minorities in the United States, universities and colleges usually require little more than a three-credit multicultural education course. When Eastern Montana College recently went through this accreditation process, I started thinking of what knowledge base beyond what is in the standard textbooks that teachers in Native schools



should know to be the “high-quality” teachers the INAR Task Force calls for. This is a concern I have had since I started teaching on the Navajo Reservation in 1971 with no special training in Native education, and one I became even more involved in when I came to Eastern Montana College and started teaching Indian education classes. I have already mentioned one area, knowledge of cultural differences and differences in learning styles. The *Journal of American Indian Education* devoted a special issue to various articles on Native learning styles (Swisher, 1989). All teachers of Native children need to be familiar with the research on cultural differences between home and school and Native learning styles.

Teachers also need to be familiar with Native history — the important events and important figures — not just wars, chiefs, and athletes. They need to know about the Cherokee Trail of Tears, the Navajo Long Walk, both Wounded Knees, and other historic events. They need to know about people such as the 18th-century Mohegan school teacher and Native rights activist Samson Occom who raised the money in England to start Dartmouth College, Seneca Civil War Brigadier General Ely Parker who was the first Indian Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and Sioux author and medical doctor Charles Eastman who co-founded the Society of American Indians (Reyhner & Eder, 1989). They need to know about the national studies of Native education, including the Meriam Report (1928), Havighurst’s National Study of Indian Education (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1983), the Kennedy Report (Special Subcommittee on Indian Education, 1969), the Report on Indian education of the American Indian Policy Review Commission (Task Force Five, 1976), and, of course, the report of the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force (1991) with the just released 21 commissioned papers ranging from current conditions in Native Communities to working with gifted and talented Native students.

The Indian Nations at Risk commissioned papers focused on a wide range of factors affecting Native student success. A few of the more important factors are discussed here. Reading has always been a key issue in educational success and an area where Native students on average are not successful. In the past teachers have tried with limited success basal reading programs designed for mainstream America and teacher-proof prescriptive programs such as DISTAR, which presumed that children had little or no prior knowledge.

Today the whole language movement seems to be sweeping the country. There are both opportunities and dangers in the whole language movement. The opportunities are to include reading material from the students’ tribal and Native background and to focus on comprehension and student interest. Thematic units can be built around topics such as the Pueblo Revolt and the Navajo Long Walk that holistically integrate various subjects taught in schools such as reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and even subjects such as physical education and music. These units are used to get students to listen, speak, read, write, and think (McCarty & Schaffer, 1992).

The dangers of whole language are those of the old progressive education movement that teachers will allow students to drift wherever their interests take them with little attempt to make sure they master basic skills they will need later on, even if those basic skills are needed only to score higher on tests that have much school importance and little out-of-school, real-world, importance.

Chuska Boarding School, a BIA school selected by the National Council of Teachers of English as a Center for Excellence in the Teaching of English Language Arts for 1989-1991, has been using the whole language approach for 10 years (King,

1990). When I visited the school in 1991, I found the whole language approach had not affected student test scores for better or worse. But students were much more eager to read than what I am used to based on my 20 years experience in schools. Scott (1908), an educational psychologist, writes that too often in schools we do an adequate job of teaching kids to read, but as a result of that process they have learned to hate reading and for the rest of their lives avoid reading whenever possible. Little has changed since 1908. Too often in our preoccupation with test scores we forget those affective factors that are of equal importance to cognitive skills and knowledge.

We want to create lifelong learners, and if whole language helps do this without hurting student test scores, then it is a much superior approach to the traditional approaches that show equal gains or short-term gains that are not sustained after the students finish the program—as long-term studies have shown to be the case with DISTAR—and I might add with Madeline Hunter's more general approach to direct teaching (Mandeville & Rivers, 1991).

Another area looked at in the INAR commissioned papers was the high Native student dropout rate (Reyhner, 1992a). The common assumptions that Native students drop out mainly because they are failing academically or having trouble with drugs and alcohol is not borne out by the research. Two studies done with Navajo students, the Platero (1986) and Deyhle (1989) studies, found that most frequent reason given by students for dropping out of school is that they were bored. They get tired of being told to read the textbook, which is probably written a couple of grade levels above their reading ability, and being told to do the questions at the end of the chapter. They perceive teachers who are more interested in the subject matter they teach than their students as uncaring.

A Canadian researcher, Cummins (1989), found that most teaching in America follows the transmission approach where teachers give knowledge to students through lectures and textbooks. This sounds like an example of generosity, but the result is that students are passive and have little or no say in what they are learning. Passive learners tend to be bored learners. Cummins puts forward an alternative approach that he calls experiential/interactive. As Cantieni and Tremblay (1979) state, "Young people learn best from their own and not other people's experiences" (p. 248). Students should be allowed to be more active: This means more lab work in the sciences and things like the Foxfire approach in English and social studies where students go out and interview their elders about traditions, politics, careers, and other subjects of interest to them. Students go on to "publish" their work in school newspapers, "books," and in other ways that make their work more important than just a means of getting a grade (Rigg, 1985; Wigginton, 1992).

The second part of experiential/interactive refers to making the process of teaching one of dialogue between teachers and students. Through dialogue we can improve students' language skills, we can understand better where they are coming from culturally and socially, and we can be better aware of whether they are interested or bored with what we are teaching—and we can attempt to adjust our teaching accordingly. This has been called an "explorer curriculum" (McCarty & Schaffer, 1992; Freeman & Freeman, 1988). This explorer metaphor makes the teacher a guide and students active participants shaping the direction of their learning. It does not mean that anything goes: guides provide direction and structure to the students' learning experiences. Explorers should not be bored. Experi-



ential/interactive teaching and the explorer curriculum will involve more cost as teachers need to get the materials they need for hands-on teaching and the class sizes they need to be able to interact with their students, but these preventive costs are much lower than the social costs incurred by students after they drop out of school and often clog the criminal and welfare systems.

Overall in the INAR Task Force hearings held across the country in 1990 and 1991, parents, tribal leaders, and educators stressed the need for a cultural revival in Native communities to fight problems of drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, and dysfunctional families. Testimony was repeatedly given on the need for more Native community involvement in Native education. Too often parents are just asked to be "cake bakers and cops" to help with school fund raising and to get their kids to school on time. Until Native communities feel a sense ownership in their schools, Native education will continue to be a failed, colonial enterprise. In addition, the INAR hearings brought out again and again the fact that racism is still alive and well in the United States and is hurting Native children. Another recurrent theme was the need for increased funding of Native education programs.

### *White House Conference on Indian Education*

The third, and most recent, promising event is the White House Conference on Indian Education that took place in Washington, DC in January 1992. The White House Conference was authorized by Public Law 100-297 to "explore the feasibility of establishing an independent Board of Indian Education that would assume responsibility for all existing federal programs relating to the education of Indians" and "to develop recommendations for the improvement of educational programs relevant to the needs of Indians." The President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the president pro tempore of the Senate each selected one third of the 234 conference delegates from all over the United States to discuss ways to improve Native education. One fourth of the delegates needed to be currently active educators on Indian reservations; one fourth were required to be educators selected from urban areas with large concentrations of Indians; one fourth were required to be federal and tribal government officials; and at least one fourth were required to be Indians. In fact, the vast majority of the conference delegates were Indian.

In the months before the conference, state preconferences were held across the nation in states with large Native populations discussing issues such as should there be a national board of Indian education, should there be a national Indian university, and what should be the national goals of Indian education? Much of the discussion at these preconferences echoed the concerns expressed at the INAR hearings. The New Mexico preconference delegates reported that

when the idea of the White House Conference was first presented to us, there was much negativity and frustration expressed because it was thought of as another federal project that would collect the information, publish a report and place it on a shelf in Washington. (Report for the White House Conference on Indian Education, 1991, p. ii)

The New Mexico report states:

In reference to the quality and training of teachers, conference participants felt that some teachers are currently employed in the public schools primarily on the basis of their certification, with little consideration given to other important factors that directly affect the education of Indian children. Improved training and selection of teachers for public schools

serving predominantly Indian populations was identified as a continuing need. In addition, the curriculum content found in most public schools was characterized as having been developed for mainstream America, without regard for cultural differences. Participants stressed the importance of enhancing the basic curriculum through the inclusion of local culture, history and language and that Native American parents and tribal leaders assist in the development of these curricula. (p. 7)

The Washington State preconference concluded that a national board of Indian education would have little power and just add more bureaucracy to inhibit tribal self-government. They concluded that Indian education should have a "holistic approach focusing on all segments of Native communities and all aspects of being human (emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual)" (Special Report, 1991, p. 10).

At the Montana State preconference on September 9 and 10, 1991, similar issues were discussed. The Montana delegates called for flexibility to meet the diverse needs of tribal people and called for the training of more Indian teachers, counselors, and administrators. They also felt a national board of Indian education would hurt local control and expand bureaucracy and "white tape." However, Kansas's preconference report called for "a national certification procedure" for Indian teachers (Kansas White House Conference on Indian Education Final Report, 1991, n.p.). Montana called for an emphasis on schools "to promote holistic education with the total community as their constituents" (p. 10). The Montana group declared that education "is highly suspect among many Indian people. They sense the dichotomy between being educated, and being taught that to be Indian is not all right" (Meeting the Challenge, p. 4). The need for better funding of Native education was a common theme across the nation.

Building on the work of the state preconferences, the White House Conference delegates adopted 113 resolutions covering a variety of topics ranging from the governance of Indian education to safe, alcohol/drug free schools, building on the work of both the Effective Schools Movement and the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force.

The BIA adopted the Effective Schools research as a way to improve Bureau schools in 1987 and issued a final draft report on BIA education subtitled "Excellence in Indian Education through the Effective Schools Process" (Office of Indian Education Programs, 1988). The Effective Schools initiative has two parts: The effective schools correlates and the effective schools process. The effective schools research was done in mostly inner-city schools and identified the characteristics of those schools that were more successful in educating minority students. The problem involved in using the effective schools correlates to improve Native education is that American Indians and Alaska Natives are culturally different from inner-city populations and have different problems. For example, the effective schools correlates do not deal with the major issue of language, including bilingual education and teaching English as a second language (Reyhner, 1991). Effective schools research with Native schools has shown that hands-on and self-paced instruction works well. Other researchers have pointed to the need for multisensory instruction (e.g., Kleinfeld & McDiarmid, 1983).

The second part of the Effective Schools initiative is the process by which school improvement takes place (e.g., Holm, 1989). The process focuses on school-by-school reform that addresses local issues and needs rather than reform by central office directive. School staff and community members first need to decide what

they want their school to accomplish and express their thoughts in a school mission statement. Then they need to target a few areas in the school that they see as most in need of improvement and through a group participative/team process address those needs. This process seems to me compatible with the consensus and cooperative approaches to decision making that are part of the traditional culture of many tribes.

The work of the INAR Task Force shows how local Native communities can take the work of the Effective Schools researchers and others and make it fit their needs. The INAR Task Force took the six national goals for education released by President Bush as part of America 2000 (1991) and shaped them into 10 national goals for Native education. These helped set the format for the White House Conference on Indian Education. At that conference Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander accepted and supported the INAR goals. These goals reflected a multi-cultural, English-Plus approach to Native education.

### *Where is US Native Education Heading?*

The White House Conference on Indian Education did not support a National Board of Indian Education, partly out of fear of centralized control of what are very diverse tribes and schools. The jury is still out on a National Indian University; tribal colleges fear losing already scarce resources to support such an institution. But at the same time, tribal colleges are moving to become more than just community colleges. Sinte Gleska College became Sinte Gleska University in 1992. In South Dakota, Sinte Gleska and Oglala Lakota College already have four-year teacher preparation programs, and Sinte Gleska had already graduated 43 certified teachers. The previous year Sinte Gleska graduated nine students with master's degrees in education (Bordeaux, 1991). Both Navajo Community College in Arizona and Haskell Indian Junior College in Kansas are in the advanced stages of developing teacher education programs, and I am confident that these will reflect a bicultural view of education. As tribal colleges start turning out teachers, there will be less of the educational malpractice that has characterized Native education in the past.

Unlike white college graduates, Native college graduates have had unsuccessful K-12 school experiences. A recent Montana study shows that their high school teachers did not encourage them to go to college, most had low grade-point averages, and they heard little or nothing positive about Natives in their classrooms. Yet they went on to receive associate of arts degrees, bachelor's degrees, and even a master's degree. Tribal colleges and organizations such as the American Indian Science and Engineering Society are going into high schools and demonstrating to students that American Indians can be successful in our technological society—and of course keep their culture in the process (Davis, 1992).

Tribal colleges today are serving students who would not have had a chance to go on to college in the past. Not only are they teaching students, they are in the vanguard of improving the quality of life on their reservations. A two-year study of tribal colleges by the Carnegie Foundation concluded, "the idea of Indian-controlled colleges offers great hope to the Native American community and the nation as a whole" (Boyer, 1989, p. 87).

Additional hope lies in the activities of the National Indian Education Association, which now holds alcohol-free conferences. More interest in Indian education is creating new academic interest in the field, revitalizing journals and organiza-

tions started in the 1960s and 1970s and starting new ones. Anyone reading the *Journal of Navajo Education*, the *Journal of American Indian Education*, the *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, as well as the many allied publications of related organizations such as the National Association for Bilingual Education and TESOL (the English as a second language teachers organization) at the national level and groups like GRIN (the Greater [Navajo] Reservation Interdisciplinary Network) at the local level can see the revitalization of interest in Native and minority education. All teachers of Native students, whether tribal college graduates or not, need to keep informed on new research and practices in Native education through school-based inservice training, reading professional literature, and attending professional conferences.

There are no overnight solutions to the problems of Native education that prompted the passage of the Native American Languages Act, the appointment of an Indian Nations at Risk Task Force, and the calling of a White House Conference on Indian Education. But if we can all sustain our efforts to put well-trained teachers into Native schools, to restructure those schools to provide warm, supportive environments for Native students, and to transform Native communities into drug and alcohol free environments with employment for all, if we can just sustain our efforts to do all that, we will make a difference: we will improve the quality of life for ourselves and our students. As the founders of Rough Rock Demonstration School declared, educational improvement is a community job (McCarty, 1989). It is only through a revitalization of Native communities that progress will be made. This involves a community rejection of drugs and alcohol as demonstrated at Alkali Lake in Canada, a community concern for quality education, and a community concern for the welfare of all.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The US Secretary of Education's Indian Nations at Risk Task Force decided to use the terminology *American Indian* and *Alaska Native* to refer the first time to the indigenous or Aboriginal people of the United States with the short form of *Native* thereafter. I will follow the same policy except in quotes, in names, and where that terminology would appear awkward in association with quotes.

<sup>2</sup>This article is an expanded version of a speech presented to the New Mexico Federation of Teachers' First Annual Native American Education Conference in Gallup, New Mexico, on April 25, 1992. Parts have also appeared in the author's regular column on American Indian bilingual education in the newsletter of the National Association for Bilingual Education.

<sup>3</sup>The Task Force's Final Report, transcripts of the INAR hearings, and the 21 Indian Nations at Risk Task Force commissioned papers are available from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural and Small Schools, Appalachia Education Laboratory, 1031 Quarrier Street, Charleston, WV 25325, USA. A summary of the commissioned papers titled *Indian Nations at Risk: Listening to the People* is available from the same source.

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