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Native Americans' Language Rights at Risk: No Child Left Behind Act and the Effect on the Navajo Language Programs

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Abstract

This article will discuss various ideas concerning the desire and need to assist minority languages to survive within linguistic societies that are both actively and passively destroying or killing minority languages under their control. I will discuss the general concept that minority languages do have a right to exist and that the world should conserve these languages and the worldview contained within them as promoted by Linguapax and other groups. I will focus on the Navajo language and the new challenge posed by President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act and other problems this language faces as well as the various programs that that the Navajo Nation hopes will save their language and keep their culture vital to their people.

抄 録

この論文は、マジョリティー社会の現状においてマイノリティーの語学がいつの間にか破壊され消えていくこと、それに対しマイノリティー言語社会の中のマイノリティ言語が生き残るために援助をしようとする‘願い’や‘必要’について様々な考えを検討してゆきます。マイノリティーの語学を存続し続けさせる権利があるということ、どのマイノリティー言語であっても哲学や世界観があり、マイノリティー言語をサポートするグループLinguapax（リングアパックス）や他のグループなどがあり、特に、ブッシュ大統領の“No Child Left Behind”の教育法とナバホ民族語二国語教育プログラムにフォーカスします。

One of the great ironies of the information age is that while the late twentieth century will have undoubtedly have recorded more data than any other period in history, it will also almost certainly lost more information than any previous era.

Alexander Stille, 2003. The Future of the past. How the information age threatens to destroy our cultural heritage

Those who know nothing of foreign languages know nothing of their own.
Goethe

One may ask why should a modern nation or the modern world, for that matter, concern itself with saving languages that are near extinction. Some cynical pragmatist might point out that over the course of human history thousands of languages have died out. Great languages like those of ancient Greece and Imperial Rome have died out, so why should we prevent or interfere with linguistic ‘evolu-

tion' or the survival of the fittest, or most useful of languages, if one wishes to use a 'Darwinian' approach to linguistic survival. I believe that the answer is simple. We must keep as many languages alive as we can in order to provide future generations with a variety of worldviews and philosophies to contemplate and evaluate. Of course, every language contains a unique view of the world or a philosophy based on deep cultural values and history, and I believe that we should keep as many of these viewpoints alive as possible because the exchange of views and ideas strengthens all cultures and enriches all our lives. 'Language genocide' cannot be condoned anymore than the physical genocide that is so abhorrent to all of us. Modern technology presents people with a multitude of media that can be seen as a double-edged sword. It is easy to see that the various media may be used as tools for the dominant language group of any country or geographic area to become even more dominate and, in effect, destroy all other languages in its sphere of influence or control. This may, in fact, be seen as a very passive form of destruction. Television and radio stations will, of course, cater to the majority language group as it speakers would be the main customers for advertisers and minority language programming may not be economically feasible in most areas. Also, minority language group members would have to learn the dominant language in order to be successful in the country. These passive forces, though destructive, may not be easily eliminated from any society. On the other hand, dedicated people can use these same media to design programs to preserve native or minority languages, and make these languages vital to their people once more. However, often governments dominated by one language group will institute laws and policies that effectively marginalize minority languages groups by making their own language the official language of a country and/or not promoting the learning of the minority languages. These restrictive policies are a blatant violation of the rights of minorities.

The United Nations, through UNESCO, has recognized the problem and has promulgated the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights in 1996. The Declaration outlines several rights as unalienable personal rights:

- The right to be recognized as a member of a language community
- The right to the use of one's own language both in private and in public
- The right to the use of one's own name
- The right to interrelate and associate with members of one's own language community of origin
- The right to maintain and develop one's own culture

The declaration continues by stating that members of all language groups also have certain other collective rights including:

- The right for their own language and culture to be taught
- The right of access to cultural services
- The right to an equitable presence of their language and culture in the communications media
- The right to receive attention in their own language from government bodies and in socio-economic relations

This declaration and its ideas inspired the 'Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous People's Right's in Education' which was drawn up at the World Indigenous People's Conference in 1999. The various indigenous people gathered at the conference expressed a deep concern that their rights were not

being protected by the governments of the various nations in which they lived. The representatives of the various indigenous people were concerned about the survival of their cultures and demanded that all governments:

- Protect the rights of Indigenous peoples to equal access to education systems
- Ensure that Indigenous parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children
- Promote the right of Indigenous peoples to enjoy their own cultures in community with other members of their group
- Provide conditions that are conducive to the use and maintenance of Indigenous languages

It is easy to see then that the 'Declaration of Linguistic Right' and the 'Coolangatta Statement' when taken together outline the rights and concerns of indigenous people and minority language groups around the world. I think that these two documents can and, indeed, should be used as yardsticks with which to measure any and all laws or policies of any and all nations that may hinder the rights listed in them. I think that all concerned citizens should look closely at the laws of their own country to insure that it is following the spirit and intent of these excellent ideas.

In order to promote the ideas enumerated in the Declaration of Linguistic Rights, the Linguapax Institute was organized in Barcelona. This organization has organized several symposiums in Europe, America and, more recently, in Asia to encourage minority language groups to maintain, revitalize or even resuscitate their native languages. Linguapax means, of course, 'language peace' or 'linguistic peace.' I believe that this name really represents the ideals that were detailed in the declaration extraordinarily well. I had the honor of meeting and talking to Dr. Filex Marti, the president of the Linguapax Institute, at the Asian Linguapax Symposium held in Tokyo, and he explained the concept that really the only way we can have peace in the world is through the mutual respect of our cultures. He further opined that the best way to respect and honor each other's cultures is through the peaceful exchange of our various languages and that Linguapax is trying to act as a forum that will promote the rights of minority groups to maintain their languages and cultures.

The concept of peace when it is applied to language may seem rather strange to some people. However, when one thinks of language as the driving force for the values, philosophy and the worldview contained in each and every culture then it is easy to take the next step to understand the notion as cultural peace. Unfortunately, our world is beset with what many are calling cultural wars. The United States led 'War on Terrorism' is often seen as a war on the religious culture of Islam, but perhaps language also plays a role. Certainly, very few Americans speak Arabic, Farsi or any of the other languages of central Asia, and this lack of language ability may be seen as an indication of a general lack of interest in these cultures and certainly may be the main cause of the lack of cultural understanding of the various Islamic nations by the policy makers of the United States and perhaps other western governments. It is true that in the not so distant past, many Islamic countries were indeed occupied by western/Christian countries. These countries then imposed their own languages and institutions assuming them to be superior to the inferior languages, cultures and customs of the occupied countries. The Christian religion followed the conquering nations spreading their religion or proselytizing under the protection and encouragement of the colonial governments. After the colonial powers

gave their colonies independence, the language of the colonial power was often used as an official language that helped to unify the various languages and/or cultural groups within the new country.

Scholars have pointed out that many of the recent major conflicts in the world have resulted from the marginalization of minority language groups within a country. For example, Dr. Fernand de Varennnes theorizes that the 'resurgence of aggressive nationalism, ethnocentrism, racism, xenophobia, and intolerance' may have been the root cause of the Tamil uprising in Sri Lanka as well as the revolt of the Albanians in the former Yugoslavia. Sri Lanka originally recognized both Sinhalese and English as official languages. This allowed the Tamil minority to function comfortably within the society. They were allowed to work in government and to access their government officials in English, if not their own Tamil language. In this way one might look at English as a unifying language that empowered the Tamil minority. However, in 1956 the Sri Lanka government made Sinhalese the only official language. This act, among others, marginalized the Tamil minority, which made up about 18% of the population at the time. The Tamils could no longer be hired by the government, unless they could speak Sinhalese, and they no longer could address their own government. As time went on they felt more alienated by government policies that also restricted the Tamil's entrance to universities, and, thus impeded their efforts to improve their lives and the lives of their families. The compounding effect of these acts alienated the Tamils political, economically and socially from the Sinhalese majority of Sri Lanka. This sense of alienation may be seen as the catalyst of the terrible civil war in that country (Dr. Fernand de Varennnes).

Likewise, the ethnic Albanians in Macedonia seemed content in the fledgling Balkan democracy. One Albanian political party was even a member of the governing coalition. When one closely analyzes the rhetoric, the ethnic Albanians seemed to be requesting two basically simple processes 'a census and changes in the constitution for equal rights.' To the uninformed, these requests seem perfectly innocuous. Certainly, there was nothing inherently evil enough to start a tragic war over. However, one must consider the number games that the government of Macedonia was playing. The government said that Albanians accounted for a mere 23 percent of the population and the Albanians claimed 30 or 40 percent. If the Albanians were correct in their estimate, then there would have been a large discrepancy in Albanian representation in government employment and in all levels of Macedonian society. In addition, the Macedonian government had, like Sri Lanka, made Macedonian the official language. This action alienated all the Albanian speakers from accessing their government and even affected legal proceeding because Macedonian was the only language allowed in court (de Varennnes, p. 11).

These examples demonstrate persuasively how the language policies of a given country can alienate sub-cultures by restricting the use of their native languages. Restrictions on minority languages are often just the first step by the dominant culture to emasculate or marginalize the minority language or culture group. The majority culture often doesn't even recognize the blatant cultural-centric or racist attitudes they are promoting, nor are they aware of the danger that is inherent in alienating large sections of the national population. Unfortunately, in the process of fulfilling its 'Manifest Destiny' the United States has also victimized the various Native American cultures that it has taken dominion over. The dominant Anglo culture has generally perceived English language and culture as the only way to 'humanize' and unify the country. This was clearly expressed by the statement contained in the Peace

Commission of 1868 'through sameness of language is produced sameness of sentiment, and thought; customs and habits are molded assimilated.' The commission further exposed its prejudice by stating that Native American's 'barbarous dialects should be blotted out and the English language substituted.' This blatant disregard of the Native American culture denied the great help that Native Americans were to the early English settlers in showing them how to plant corn, potatoes and generally how to survive in the New World. The Anglo-Americans had come to the conclusion that 'any Indian custom was, per se, objectionable, whereas the customs of whites were the way of civilization.' This strong ethnic-centric belief became the basic concept that guided American policy on Indian education. The Bureau of Indian Affairs set up schools, the main aim of which was to 'kill the Indian...and save the man' (Crawford, *Endangered Native American Languages*, p.7). These draconian policies were not stopped till the 1930's when more enlighten ethnic policies were introduced.

More recently, the United States enacted The Native American Language Acts of 1990 and 1992. These two documents recognize the rights of Native Americans to keep their languages and cultures alive and vital to their people. The passage of these laws encouraged Native Americans to develop programs to meet these ends. Focusing on the Navajo Language programs, I have previously discussed the challenges that the 'English Only' or 'Official English' movement might have on Native American Language sustainability (Duval, 2005). However, the enactment in 2002 of the No Child Left Behind educational initiative of President George W. Bush has created new challenges to Native American language programs throughout the United States and to the Navajo Language programs. Although the situation between the government and the various Native American groups does not seem to be in the same class as those of Sri Lanka or Macedonia as far as the possibility of violence or open rebellion goes, qualitatively it is the same process of ethnic suppression and the denial of their right to pass their culture and language on to their children that are detailed in the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights.

On the surface, 'No Child' appears to be an earnest attempt by the government to improve education across the United States by introducing yearly, standardized testing of all elementary school students on reading and math. The test results are then used to grade schools. Schools that do not meet the government's mandated goal of 70% passing for all students will be sanctioned and be penalized by a reduction in federal and state funds. There are several problems with the standardized testing that have caused much criticism of the law. The president's own brother, Florida Governor Jeb Bush, has stated that although goals are necessary there should be flexibility as 'perfection is not going to happen..' because '..we are all imperfect under God's watchful eye, and it is impossible to achieve it' (Sam Dillion, *New York Times*, Sept. 28, 2006). Granted, this is a gentle criticism, but there seems to be more than a minor gap between the brothers. This appears to be caused by several differences between Florida's A-Plus education testing program and the program of NCLB. Jeb's signature education law grades schools from A-F while NCLB grades each school pass-fail. It has been reported that hundreds of Florida schools have failed the federal test and have received A's on Florida's test. How can such large differences be explained? Are the test results of NCLB fairly evaluated or not? Another difference is that the Florida system allows individual students to be tracked and will record their individual improvement which allows the state to reward schools that improve the scores of their lowest per-

forming students as well as all the other students. The federal law only punishes the 'bad schools,' those that do not achieve their target test results of 70%. NCLB contains no incentives for schools to improve the test results of poorly performing students or to improve the results of their best students. One researcher points out that 'schools get no credit for moving a student from a 15% to a 69%, or from a 70% to a 95%,' but schools that 'nudge a student from 69% to 71%' will. From this point of view, it seems that the NCLB may actually act as a deterrent for across-the-board improvement. If schools have to meet the 70% mark in order to keep funds, then they will try to focus on getting the greatest number of students to the 70% mark and may give up on the poorest performing students as well as those students who are above the 70% passing mark. If this were to happen, then the law would really be encouraging mediocrity in education, rather than excellence. (Jennifer Booher-Jennings)

However, the biggest weakness of the NCLB is the effect it may have on the various bilingual programs of all minorities like Native Americans. By focusing on English reading, NCLB may limit the time that the Native Americans can use for courses that focus on their language and culture. Many educators believe the law to be hopelessly flawed and refer to it as 'All Children Left Behind' or 'No Child Left Bilingual.' The overwhelming emphasis on reading English, though well intentioned, seems to have forced schools to do reduce or do away with many bilingual programs in order to focus on the reading proficiency test mandated by NCLB. Most bilingual programs deal with languages of immigrants and these programs are the ones most affected by the law NCLB and other Anglo-centric policies. Many people say bilingual education is dead in the United States (see Crawford, Obituary Bilingual Education). However, the Native American bilingual programs are protected by federal and state law and should be functioning better than other bilingual education programs for Spanish and other language programs that focus on immigrants. What is the status of the Navajo programs and how are they being affected by NCLB?

In order to understand the problem, I think a review of basic demographic data may be useful. The Navajo Nation or Dine Bikeyah is the biggest reservation in the United States. It occupies about 27,000 square miles and covers parts of three states. This makes the Nation bigger than 10 of the 50 states with a population of about 174,000. Both the size of the land area and its population would seem to give the people an excellent chance to keep their language and culture alive. However, even in this ideal situation there seems to be a continuing decrease in the number of Navajo who use Navajo at home. Looking at the census material from 1980-2005 one can see that there has been a drastic drop of people using Navajo at home or anywhere else. The 1980 census reported that of the 109,054 Navajo Nation members residing on the Navajo Reservation and Trust Lands only 7.2% spoke English only, the 1990 census showed that the number had doubled to 15.0% and the 2000 census revealed that the number of English only speakers had increased to 24.5. Even more revealing is the numbers for children 5-17. The 1980 census showed 5,103 of 43,121 or 8.45% to be using English only while the 1990 census showed that over 28.39% or 12,207 of 42,994 children were monolingual in English. Certainly, these statistics indicate that the Navajo language is a threatened language and that strong action must be made to save it. Although NCLB is too new a program to have any impact on either the English or Navajo language abilities of the Navajo, I theorized that it would indeed present another obstacle for the various Navajo language and cultural programs (Crawford, Endangered Native American Language/ US Census).

In order to see what impact NCLB actually had on the Navajo programs, I traveled to the Navajo or Dine Bekeyah in August of 2006 and conducted interviews with the newly installed director of the Navajo Head Start program, the Superintendent of Apache County Schools, as well as several educators working on the Navajo Nation and others. Dr. Becente, the director of Navajo Head Start, and former president of Dine College, informed me that the program had been suspended in the spring because of numerous infractions of the rules pertaining to staff quality and such. He informed me that there had been some cases where staff members did not meet federal or state guidelines as far as educational levels or training requirements. I asked him if it were fair to hold the Navajo to the same strict standards as other state districts when the Navajo were trying to promote their language and culture through contact with many people who spoke the Navajo language and could relate stories and other cultural ideas to young children. I also thought the isolation of the Nation should be considered and that standards might be flexible shown for promising young people willing to make the sacrifice and work in the area, even though they may not have all of the prescribed qualifications. Dr. Becente strongly expressed his opinion that the Navajo could rise to the challenge and that to lower the standards just for Navajo would be self-defeating. Yet, he did believe that traditional Navajo storytellers as well as other Navajo cultural instructors would fall outside of the educational degree standards set for full-time or even part-time teachers and staff. He also opined that the new rules gave the Navajo the freedom to create flexible programs that would allow the Navajo language and culture to be taught in the Head Start schools as well as other programs in the higher level schools. He expressed his belief that the NCLB rules could be 'tweaked' to enable the Navajo to control the schools in their Head Start program and allow them to continue to develop Navajo language and cultural programs for their children as well as to encourage young Navajos to continue their education and achieve the proper degrees or licenses. One of the main objectives of Navajo Head Start has been as to give Navajo youngsters a firm foundation in Navajo language and culture that would provide them a better sense of who they were and a better chance to become a fully Navajo-English bilingual person by the end of their high school education. However, this goal could and should be accomplished by following quality staff guidelines, Dr. Becente argued.

Dr. Pauline Begay the Superintendent of Apache County Schools would seem to agree with Dr. Becente. Dr. Begay is the former director of Head Start and she was elected two years ago to the position of Superintendent of Apache County Schools. Apache County lies mostly on the Navajo Nation, and although it serves mostly Navajo people the school district serves more than just Navajo. The recent demographic information for the county schools reveals that 11,275 students or 79% of the total enrollment are Native Americans 16% white and 4% Hispanic. Of course, not all of the Native Americans would be Navajo, but most would be. Also, the county schools must meet all the federal and states rules of quality and certification of teachers and staff. Presently, the county employs a total of 1023 teachers, 925 are fully certified and 98 hold emergency certification. Of the total, 639 teachers are rated as Highly Qualified. It seems then that Apache County Schools does have a well qualified staff of teachers and 22 of 34 schools meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals set for them by the state. In order to keep up and improve standards, Dr. Begay has instituted programs that are designed to encourage teachers and other staff members to improve their qualifications so that all the schools can

continue to meet federal and state guidelines. In addition, since there are many limited English proficient (LEP) students, teachers are required to have some bilingual teaching training. This does not mean that each teacher is bilingual in Navajo, but may be able to understand the problems of LEP's and are thus better able to teach the Navajo or other minority LEP's. In fact Arizona's rural schools have the second highest (11.8%) rate of English Language Learners in the United States and in Apache County most of these students would be Navajo. In order to meet this need, the professional development programs focuses on Structured English Immersion (SEI) as well as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The program also includes courses that improve math and science skills. Basically, the program focuses on all of the skills necessary for the teachers to keep improving their skills and improving their professional qualifications. (Apache County Schools)

Overall, only about half (50.9%) of rural Arizona's high school students graduate in four years so I expected the completion rate to be very low for Apache County schools. Surprisingly enough, the graduation rates were rather good considering the vastness of the district and the difficulties students might have in commuting to the various high schools from their homes. Granted, the statistics for Apache County did not make it clear if these were four-year completion rates or not I think that they are valuable to contrast. The graduation statistics for St. Johns High School was 98% and Window Rock (the capital of the Navajo Nation) 97%, Round Valley 88%, Valley High 96% and Chinle High was 95%. Unfortunately, two rather remotely located high schools, Red Mesa High School and Ganado High School, provide some evidence for my original theory as the former had only a 66% graduation rate and the latter 71%. Given the location of both schools, one must assume that the distances needed to travel to and from school may have been a factor. In fact, the Ganado school district had a total of 786,168 approved transportation mileage for a total eligible student body of 2,199 or 357 miles per student for 179 days in the 2004/2005 academic year. Likewise, the Red Mesa District had 356,568 approved transportation mileage for 838 eligible students or 425.4 miles per student for the same period. Anyone who has driven on the Nation knows the beauty of it, but also how difficult it is to travel anywhere. A ninety-minuet commute to work is considered normal. Even Dr. Begay has to travel about that to get from her home in Window Rock to the School Board office in St. Johns. Imagine a student who misses a school bus, and his family had no car to get him, or her to school. It would seem natural to give up on going to school and return home. If this were to happen often, then the student would fall far behind his classmates and he would be tempted to give up on school all together. Also, in the remote areas of the Navajo Nation, there could be strong pressure to help with the sheep herding or other work around the home, or pressure to find a job to help family finances. Both of these factors might help explain the dropout rate for these schools. (Apache County Schools)

Apache County must participate in the standardized testing system that is a part of NCLB and which are used to evaluate students, and, unfortunately, schools. The results of the AIMS test for math, reading and writing, shows some weaknesses. Math seems to be the weakest of the skills with the highest number of Falls Far Behind (FFB) over all. Surprisingly reading was strong with 34% meeting and 49% approaching the required goal for 12th grade students and writing stood at 26% and 63% respectively. Unfortunately, the scores would indicate that much work is to be done in order to enhance the students' chances for finding a good job after high school or increasing the number of students continuing

on to college. (Apache County Schools)

Conclusion

When I started my research I thought that NCLB would be a serious threat to bilingual education and to the various Native American languages. I still feel that the law is seriously flawed and that its emphasis on English will have a serious negative impact on the Navajo language and all other Native American languages in the United States in the long term as will other Anglo-American cultural support programs like the English Only or Official English movements. However, the law seems to allow some flexibility and encourages states to achieve certain goals that may improve the teacher training and over all classroom teaching. I would like to see some changes to the law that would allow individual tracking of student test results and a system that would reward schools for increasing all students' scores and not just reaching a designated goal. Certainly, Native Americans and other minorities should not be forced to become monolingual. There must be a conscious effort by the government to create bilingual, bi-cultural people. Another problem that has to be corrected is financing of the program. NCLB did stipulate that no state would be forced to use its own funds to meet the requirements of NCLB. Unfortunately, congress passed the law, but not the associated bills that would have financed it. This has made me think about my thesis and has led me to the conclusion that the Navajo language and the other Native American languages face more serious threats than NCLB.

The real challenges for the survival of Navajo language and the other Native American languages seem to be finances and the determination of the peoples themselves to keep their languages alive by using them in all parts of their society like the Navajo goal of working toward the "acceptance of the Navajo language in all areas of contemporary Navajo life and the prohibition of it in none." The financial problems are serious. The Navajo Nation is one of the poorest regions of the country with 42% unemployment and over 56% of the people living under the poverty level and a per capita income of only \$6,217. This compares to 13.9% poverty rate for all of Arizona and a per capita income of \$20,275. Nationally the statistics are 12.4% and \$21,587 respectively. These figures reveal the tremendous disparity between the Navajo and the rest of the United States. In addition, only 31.9% of houses on the Navajo Nation have complete plumbing, 60% lack phone service and many homes still do not have electricity. My question is how can the Navajo educate their children in their own culture and in the skills of math and English at the same time? Certainly, a standardized testing program doesn't fit this area of the country. The Native American Language Acts of 1990 and 1992 gives all Native Americans the right to protect their cultures and languages and these rights should be reinforced by more financial aid to help Nations like the Navajo to implement good, sound programs that will allow their young people to regain their heritage and the pride of knowing one's self and how he or she fits into the fabric of American culture. (Navajo Nation Washington Office home page, US Census)

Unfortunately, 'No Child Left Behind' doesn't seem to accept the vast disparity between the wealthy, mostly Anglo-American, way of life and the poverty that is found on the Navajo Nation and on other Native American lands. The cultural values and assumptions that may be incased in the test seem to be more suitable for rich Anglo-Americans, rather than the poor and the Native Americans. The emphasis on English reading and writing may really force the Navajo and other Native Americans to

focus their limited resources on English at the detriment of their own languages. Certainly, NCLB doesn't consider the regional character of the examinees. It doesn't consider the poverty of the Navajo or the drive-by shootings of ghetto areas of the big cities, regardless of its so called built in flexibilities. Certainly, implementing a system of tracking individual students' improvement, like the Florida law, would create a more valuable tool for educators for increasing the quality of education for all Americans. Likewise, increase educational funds from the federal government would help put all American students on a more equal footing.

Although I believe that NCLB and the poverty of the Navajo and other Native Americans are serious, crippling obstacles to Native Language survival, I think that the real salvation of the language is still in the hands of the Navajo or Dine and other Native Americans. They must find ways to make their languages more vital to their peoples and make them much more visible or audible on their reservations or nations. When I was in Arizona I found many you people at the hotels who seemed to be very proficient in both English and Navajo. They were very willing to teach me one or two words of Navajo and did so with ease. Others, however, were not able to smoothly respond to my questions with Navajo words. Also, the standard greetings of the day were usually in English, only occasionally would a clerk or waitress greet me, or other customers in Navajo or Zuni or Hopi (all of these nations are nearby). I was impressed by two young men who worked for the Navajo Park System and who stated that they were bilingual. They demonstrated to me that indeed they understood Navajo well enough to teach me the words I asked them about and were fluent enough in English to laugh at my cynical declaration that the United States was a country 'of the monolingual, by the monolingual, and for the monolingual.' Perhaps they laughed because the joke was on the white man and they may not have liked a similar joke about Navajo or Navajo culture, but their laughter seemed to be genuinely felt, and that indicated to me that they understood that I had lifted the phrase from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and understood the joke. Unfortunately, few Anglo-Americans would be able to understand Navajo customs or beliefs enough to understand and enjoy a similar joke about Navajo history or life.

In addition, I learned that two Navajo pop groups, Tribe II Entertainment and Mystic and Shade, are able to rap completely in Navajo, but other groups mix Navajo with English. I find this a shockingly inadequate presence in pop culture for the Navajo language. In my previous research, I had discovered that Dr. Pauline Begay, Superintendent of Apache County, is also Paula Begay the award winning singer/song writer of songs based on Navajo culture and legends aimed at young children. She is still writing songs and is now preparing another collection. It does seem that many people are working with the language and are trying to keep it an active means of communication that people will be proud to use. The limited use in entertainment and as a means of self-expression shows signs of both encouragement and discouragement. Certainly, Dr. Begay is actively pressing for the inclusion of Navajo language and Navajo culture programs in her school as is Dr. Becente. However, I believe that much more must be done. I did not hear much Navajo on the Radio or on the television. I think the Navajo should try to encourage more singers/song writers through awards and contests and develop their own radio station that would use only Navajo. This might be against the Navajo Nation's principle to have Navajo and English mutually accepted in all situations, but I think it would encourage the young people to use their language and help build their self-esteem (Navajo Language Goals).

In the final analysis, I must agree with Dr. Richard Littlebear that the Navajo as well as all Native Americans must get 'beyond the self-victimization stage and quit pointing fingers at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the mission schools, the media, and the public schools' as the destroyers of their languages. He implores fellow Native Americans that the 'responsibility of saving our languages is ours and ours alone; we are the pivotal generation because we are the last generation of speakers who can joke, converse about highly technical topics, articulate deep, psychic pain, and also discuss appropriate healing strategies without once resorting to the English language.' Yes, Native Americans must save their own languages, using their own inner strengths, courage and cultural resources. The United States Government must follow the spirit of the Native American Language Acts and supply more funds to assist the Navajo and other Native American nations to save their languages and cultures so that future generations will be enriched by the beauty of thought, and world vision of the Navajo and other Native Americans (Richard Littlebear).

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