

History of Indian Education: New Mexico 1934-1974

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Historical Overview

- The Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1934 was passed on April 16, 1934, to subsidize education, medical attention, and other services provided by States or Territories to Indians living within their borders.
- In New Mexico, the Johnson O'Malley Act had little impact on enrollment of Native Americans in public schools until after World War II.
- It's important to note, that Native Americans were not granted the right to vote until 1948 as a result of *Trujillo v. Garley*.

- In 1951, the state began receiving increased federal funding to provide some support for public schools with Native American students enrolled. However, according to Mondragon and Stapleton, school authorities at the state deliberately avoided receiving funds from legislation like JOM.
- Termination Period
 - House Concurrent Resolution 108 (August 1, 1953): Abolished federal supervision over tribes (Flathead of Montana, Klamath of Oregon, Menominee of Wisconsin, Potawatomi of Kansas and Nebraska)
- The program of relocation of Native Americans in Urban Areas began in 1954. It started off as an experimental program to relocate “employable” Navajos to major urban areas after WWII and was soon expanded to include all Native Americans. The premise of the Relocation Program was to assimilate Native Americans to mainstream society. Thousands of Native Americans were moved away from the reservations and aboriginal homelands to seek employment in Denver, Los Angeles, Chicago and San Francisco.

- In 1958, **Public Law 81-874** administered through the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, was amended to include educational assistance to Native American children. This Act authorized contracts for the subsidized education of eligible American Indian and Alaska Native students. It funded varied programming for culture, language, academics and dropout prevention.
- In 1965, the **Elementary and Secondary Education Act** (ESEA) was amended to assist not only areas affected by military personnel but also those with high poverty rates and other hardships such as rapid growth
- By 1966, 61% of Native American students were attending public schools in NM. The remaining 39% attended BIA schools (32%) and others in mission schools. In that same year 2,300 Native American students between the ages of 6 and 18 were not enrolled in school.

- In 1969, the **Report on Indian Education** was submitted (R. Kennedy): “We have concluded that our national policies for educating American Indians are a failure of major proportions. They have not offered Indian children – either in years past or today – an educational opportunity anywhere near equal to that offered the great bulk of American children....It is sufficient to restate our basic finding: that our Nation’s policies and programs for educating American Indians are a national tragedy.”
- In 1972, the **Indian Education Act** was passed to explicitly include Native American students. Public Law 81-874 was amended to financially assist local educational agencies for the education of Indian children.
- In 1975, the **Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act** was passed. **Part A** addresses the education of Indians in public schools.

- In 1975, the **Indian Education Division** was created at the state level. There was no funding from the NM State Legislature because they believed that the division could function within the State Department of Education's (now called NMPED) existing resources.
 - According to Sanchez and Blum Martinez (2019), “despite the establishment of the IED office, however, public education services, educational practices, and student outcomes among New Mexico's Native students would not fare much better...than the school systems of the preceding decades” (p. 335).
- In 2002, 33,000+ Native American students attended public schools.
- In 2003, the **New Mexico Indian Education Act** was passed.

Impact on NM

- Language: Until recently, the integrity of Native languages was not acknowledged in official curriculum, instruction, assessment and policy.
- Culture: Native American students, faculty and staff found it challenging to participate in ceremonies and other cultural activities.
 - Unexcused absences or conditions for missing class (THS Language Arts teacher)
 - Use of personal leave to participate by adults

Marginalization and micro racial aggressions

- Martinez (2010, 2011) Little or no presence of Indigenous perspectives in the core curriculum
- Martinez (2010) Student activities were Eurocentric
 - HHS Multicultural Day
- Deyhle (1995) Documented how the whites in and near the Diné community acquired and maintained economic and political power over the Diné. Deyhle maintained that the racial tensions not only ran deep in the history of race relations of this region, but it also infiltrated the schools.

- **The Farmington Report: Cultures in Conflict (1975)** prepared by the NM Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. In this report, John Redhouse testified: We didn't see the murders as the act of three crazy kids. [referring to Chokecherry murder of 3 Navajo men in 1974]. We saw it as part of a whole racist picture. For years it has been almost a sport, a sort of sick, perverted tradition among Anglo youth of Farmington High School, to go into the Indian section of town and physically assault and rob elderly and sometimes intoxicated Navajo men and women of whatever possessions they had, for no apparent reason, other than that they were Indians. (p. 31)
- **The Farmington Report: Civil Rights for Native Americans 30 Years Later 2004** (submitted by the NM Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights). Hoskie Benally testified: (The Navajo Community) has been in a long struggle with Central School District for about a year and half now trying to make sure that our Navajo youth get the entitlement of their rights to bilingual education and cultural instruction. But we have been experiencing just the opposite in the school district. The whole thing began about a year and a half ago when the school board president made remarks and tried to blame and scapegoat bilingual education as the reason for low reading scores in the school district. (p. 40).

- **Leonard Tsoie, former NM State Legislator:** We have to understand that Native children and non-Native children or non-Indian children cannot be treated the same. It's just a necessary thing that we have to employ more dollars within Native districts because of the cultural and the language differences and also because of the ruralness and because of the transportation concerns and many other things. Yet arguments are made that we cannot discriminate between non-Indians and Indians and so we give the same dollar for both. But in the implementation of those policies, Native children are discriminated against because there are less dollars to implement the programs (necessary) to help them achieve.
- **Harry Descheenie, chairperson of the Central Consolidated Schools IEC** testified: There are very few Navajo teachers in the middle and high schools. And, again, as I said before, the majority of the Indian teachers are primarily at the elementary school levels. The Navajo language teachers in the local public school systems are largely Navajo women. These Navajo language teachers are not supported in the school systems and are subjected to abuse in many forms, including that they're the ones who are required to pursue course work over and above that required of regular subject area teachers. The education assistants, who are primarily Navajo women, are now being told that they must become highly qualified according to the No Child Left Behind requirements in a very short time frame and they are also the ones, as mentioned this morning, who receive very low pay. (p. 42)

UNM Native faculty response

- Establishment of the Institute for American Indian Education
- Loss of RPSP
- What is needed to sustain our work?
 - Permanent funding from UNM and the College of Education and Human Sciences to support key administrative/leadership positions such as an Associate Dean of Indigenous Education or Executive Director to carry out the work of IAIE.
 - Support from UNM and COEHS to serve the educational needs and aspirations of the 23 sovereign Native Nations across the state and urban Native communities.
 - Funding from UNM and COEHS for a director or program coordinator of the Native American Teacher Residency Program
 - Commitment from UNM and COEHS to learn about the history of Indigenous Peoples of New Mexico and to fully understand the significance of sovereignty and its implementation in government-to-government relations.