

Introduction: Recent Best Contributions from the NIEA Conference Research Strand

Timothy Begaye
Guest Editor

One of the more anticipated outcomes of the partnership between National Indian Education Association (NIEA) and the *Journal of American Indian Education (JAIE)* is the introduction, presentation, and dissemination of high quality, useful research concerning the education of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. This edition of the *JAIE* focuses on research that was presented as part of the research strands of the Alaska 2006 and Hawai'i 2007 conferences. The papers associated with them were chosen for the relevancy of their topics and were peer reviewed by *JAIE* reviewers. As guest editor, it is my pleasure to have been involved in the process of publishing these articles as an NIEA board member, coordinator of the conference research strand and now as guest editor of this NIEA-presented research issue of *JAIE*.

All three of the research articles published in this volume deal in varying degrees with a basic question of how Native culture and identity interacts with the policies, practices, and “cultures” of institutions of education in the U.S. The research presented here spans the three major indigenous groupings in the United States—Native Alaskan, American Indian and Native Hawaiian—and revolve around issues that share historical antecedents, as well as represent the tensions created by the need and desire of Native people to become educated and must negotiate their opportunities within institutional and policy frameworks that often tend to repress or inhibit diverse expressions of culture, language, and world view.

The findings of the first article, “*It was bad or it was good:*” *Alaska Natives in Past Boarding Schools* by Diane Hirshberg were presented at the 2006 NIEA convention in Anchorage. She provides an historical backdrop for educational practices that still affect Native peoples throughout the U.S., noting that “In the 1950s and 1960s, non-Native educators worked within paradigms that assumed non-majority cultures to be deficient.” Her work is a probing ethnographic analysis of the boarding school and urban boarding home experience of Alaska Natives from the late 1940s through the early 1980s as described in their own words. This work underscores the influence of early educational experience on later paths in life, both positive and negative. It augments, with a greater Alaska Native perspective, the critical work of Brenda Child and David Adams who have written about the boarding school experience. While abuse of

children is documented in the personal narratives presented in this article, there were many former students who found the experience of boarding schools and homes to be a positive influence in their lives. However, some former students remain to this day ambivalent and conflicted, at times reporting being emotionally scarred by their experience. Hirshberg facilitates insights into both sides of this experience and discusses the lasting effects of the schools on individuals and the impact of the boarding school system and boarding home program on families and communities.

Native Hawaiian education is enjoying a renaissance in the charter school movement in Hawai'i. Hawaiian-focused charter schools have been founded and are guided by the Native Hawaiian community and enroll predominantly Native Hawaiian students. Shawn Malia Kana'iaupuni, in the second article, *He pūko'a kani 'āina: Mapping student growth in Hawaiian-focused charter schools*, traces the differences these schools have made specific to academic achievement. In a critical and probing analysis, she notes that No Child Left Behind imposes absolute standards of proficiency levels rates, rendering invisible the substantial, value-added gains in charter school academic performance results when compared to Native student performance in Hawaiian public schools.

While Hawaiian-focused charter schools are culture-based and serve students considered to be most at risk of educational failure in Hawai'i, the policy context of NCLB does not favorably consider or regard the inherent contributions of these schools over public schools—mainly those of community control and empowerment, language, culture and value-added academic achievement. Even with these elements in place, the author asks "...why then are Hawaiian-focused charter schools struggling to meet their NCLB reporting requirements? The answer lies in the statistics NCLB uses to determine compliance: proficiency levels and proficiency rates."

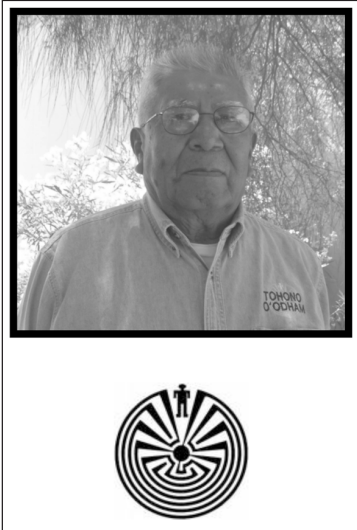
The final article, *A Model of American Indian School Administrators: Completing the Circle of Knowledge in Native Schools*, co-authored by Dana E. Christman, Raphael M. Guillory, Anthony R. Fairbanks, and María Luisa González, was originally presented as part of the research strand at the 2006 NIEA convention in Anchorage. The study is focused on a program approach known as Model of American Indian School Administrators (MAISA). The work of these researchers focuses on a critical juncture in the professional development of Native educators, determining how the background and expectations of participants resonate within the framework of a culturally relevant school administrator preparation program with an American Indian/Alaska Native focus set within the institutional framework of a mainstream higher education institution. It examines this resonance through the lens of cultural imperialism, ultimately demonstrating the meditative influence, and thus replicative potential, of culturally responsive educational programming for Native pre-service educators in higher education. The study does caution that vigilance must be exercised in the development and implementation of such programs as universities do continue to mirror the larger society. As they conclude that programs like MAISA are

greatly needed, the authors indicate a final caution, “We believe that cultural imperialism is found in many areas of our society; one of the major effects of globalization has been such cultural imperialism.”

By disseminating these research results, both NIEA and *JAIE* hope that Native educators and supporters of Native education will profit from the insights shared by the researchers whose work is being published here. We also hope that we are also helping to “pass the torch” to the growing numbers of emerging Native education researchers and academics who will be working to secure a better future for all Native peoples via the education forms, practices and systems that affect our Native learners in tremendous ways. Finally, we hope that those teachers, instructors, and professors who work with Native students on a day-to-day basis will find value and insight in these articles in terms of better teaching and enhanced outcomes for all American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians who aspire to greater educational achievement and the opportunities associated with it.

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Danny Lopez



It is with deep sadness that we share the news of the passing on October 22, 2008 of Tohono O'odham elder, educator, storyteller, singer, and keeper of the *O'odham Himdag*, Danny Lopez. Over the years, Danny taught Tohono O'odham language and culture to an entire generation of Tohono O'odham youth as a teacher at the community's primary and middle schools, and most recently as an instructor at Tohono O'odham Community College.



Erratum

Editor's correction: In the last edition of the *JAIE* we congratulated William Demmert Jr. on his retirement as a faculty member at Western Washington University. We were in error with a few facts regarding the First Convocation of Indian Scholars and the origin of NIEA. The date for the conception of the idea of NIEA as a membership association was at Princeton University at the 1st Convocation of American Indian Scholars in March, 1970. NIEA was incorporated soon after on August 20, 1970 in Minneapolis. The dates reported as being in 1969 were in error insofar as the first national Indian education conference was held in Minneapolis in the fall in 1969 prior to the First Convocation of Indian Scholars where the idea of forming a membership association focused on the education of American Indians was discussed. The first conference of the National Indian Education Association was held in the fall of 1970.

David Beaulieu
Editor