

Introduction

This book is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Evangeline Parsons Yazzie, Tó'ahedlíinii (Water Flows Together Clan), born for Ma'ii Deeshgiizhinii (Coyote Pass/ Jemez), and originally from Hard Rock in the Navajo Nation. Dr. Yazzie had a long history with the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposiums (SILS) that began at Northern Arizona University (NAU) and was a major contributor to their success. She participated in the first two SILS held at NAU in 1994 and 1995 and co-chaired the 4th SILS, “Sharing Effective Language Renewal Practices” with Jon Reyhner in 1997 at NAU, and co-chaired the 5th SILS, on “Strategies for Language Renewal and Revitalization” with Dr. Robert N. St. Clair in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1998. She also co-edited *Revitalizing Indigenous Languages*, published by NAU in 1999. She co-chaired with Louise Lockard the 15th SILS held at NAU in 2008. In addition, she contributed chapters on missionaries and American Indian languages (Yazzie, 2003) and honoring our Elders (Yazzie & St. Clair, 2003) for SILS monographs, and on using historic photographs to teach about Navajo history and culture (Yazzie, 2013) for an American Indian / Indigenous Teacher Education monograph, all published by NAU. She was also co-author of a chapter entitled “Prospects for the Navajo Language” (Yazzie & Reyhner, 2009).

Dr. Yazzie's 1995 NAU doctoral dissertation was titled *A Study of Reasons for Navajo Language Attrition as Perceived by Navajo Speaking Parents*. She found from her doctoral research that “Elder Navajos want to pass on their knowledge and wisdom to the younger generation. Originally, this was the older people's responsibility. Today the younger generation does not know the language and is unable to accept the words of wisdom” and concluded that “The use of the native tongue is like therapy, specific native words express love and caring. Knowing the language presents one with a strong self-identity, a culture with which to identify, and a sense of wellness” (p. 20). She also published two articles in the *Journal of Navajo Education* (Yazzie, 1995, 1996) based on her doctoral research.

In 1998 Dr. Yazzie took a lead in bringing the original copy of the 1868 treaty between the Navajos and the United States for display at NAU. She taught Navajo language at Northern Arizona University for 24 years after obtaining her Master of Arts degree in Bilingual Multicultural Education. As an author, Yazzie is esteemed for writing books for teachers of the Navajo language and for children and adults, including *Dzání Yázhí Naazbaa': Little Woman Warrior Who Came Home* (2005), which was named an International Reading Association's Children's Choices Book and a Notable Children's Social Studies Trade Book and received an Independent Publisher Book Award in the area of Non-fiction. It also won a Storytelling World Award. Dr. Yazzie's Navajo language textbook, *Diné Bizaad Bínáhooh'aah: Rediscovering the Navajo Language* (2008), was adopted by the New Mexico State Department of Education in 2008, the first time a state ever adopted an American Indian language textbook. A Diné language teacher for the Farmington Municipal Schools, Mildred Bitsui, M.Ed., writes how Yazzie's

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book is “an exceptional, comprehensive, go-to resource in my Navajo Language and Culture classes. I have and will continue to sing the praises of Dr. Parsons Yazzie’s textbook, giving it the highest of recommendations to anyone who seeks a thorough and foundational Navajo Language resource” (personal communication, Jan. 8, 2024).

After her retirement in 2014 Dr. Yazzie became a full-time writer of novels, short stories, children’s stories, and Navajo language curriculum and materials. She wrote four novels telling the story of a Navajo family and its struggles during the Navajo Long Walk era. The first of the series, *Her Land, Her Love*, was honored in 2016 by the American Indian Library Association as an Honor book in the young adult category.

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer offered condolences to the loved ones of Navajo scholar and writer Dr. Yazzie, stating:

‘We send prayers of gratitude and encouragement for the family as we grieve the loss of one of the great matriarchs of our generation,’ Nez said. ‘She dedicated her life to the education of countless young people in a time when learning the Diné language and culture was critical. We hope the family finds comfort knowing her legacy will live on through the books she’s written, the lives she’s influenced, and the identity young Diné students find in learning the language. She will be dearly missed, and may her memory live on in our hearts.

As we understand, Evangeline was a teacher to all, and it is easy to see that it came from a heart of love for her people. Her trust was in God, and her testimony of faith helped her go above and beyond all the challenge,’ Lizer said. ‘As we remember her extraordinary life, we pray that her light continues to shine as we witness the extent of her service to the Navajo People. (*Navajo-Hopi Observer*, May 31, 2022)

The chapters collected in this volume reflect Dr. Yazzie’s passion for her Diné language and improving the education of Indigenous and other children. The first section of this book focuses on efforts at Indigenous language revitalization to counter the effects of colonization in the past and now from globalization, modern technology, mass media, and the Internet. All of these can be killers of local Indigenous languages, resulting in fewer and fewer children learning to speak them, even though Indigenous communities and youth often express a desired to learn them. In chapter one the editors of this volume describe what in the United States of America and elsewhere governments and Indigenous organizations are doing to counter the challenges Indigenous language revitalization efforts face and what is being done to help revitalize Indigenous languages and cultures, especially with the establishment of Indigenous language immersion schools and the preparation of teachers to work in them to reverse the tide of Indigenous language loss. They also show ways social media is being used to promote Indigenous language use and how revitalizing Indigenous languages

and cultures promotes students' mental and physical health, as well as promoting their academic success.

In chapter two Christina Buffalo, Marie Saddleback, and Roxanne Bless, teachers with the Young Indigenous Women's Circle of Leadership (YIWCL) at the University of Alberta, describe how they help their students to welcome and navigate their *nehiyawewin ekwa nehiyawiwîn kiskinohamâkosiwîn* (Cree language and cultural learning) so that they may grow up to be healthy, balanced adults and skilled leaders and Knowledge Keepers for future generations, including providing culturally-based youth experiences. They find Indigenous learners of their heritage languages interpret language acquisition approaches personally, making it imperative to consider the varied states of identity-building in learners.

In the third chapter Louise Benally and Anna Redsand describe the Diné Language Teachers Association's Diné language revitalization pilot project, using the Mentor-Apprentice Program (MAP) approach for adult and young adult Diné that utilized a natural but structured approach to learning. In chapter four Scott Saft describes the University of Hawai'i at Hilo's linguistics program that reverses the historically unequal power dynamic between the field of linguistics and language activism to promote the work of language revitalization and provides outreach to other Indigenous and minority language groups throughout the world. Of special interest is his description of their PhD program that helps prepare linguists to work with language activists. Dominik Kadlec, Inge Genee, and Antti Arppe in chapter five give an example of how computing technologies can be used to develop resources for endangered and under-resourced languages. They present work being done at Iniskim University of Lethbridge supporting the development of tools and resources for Niitsi'powahsin (Blackfoot language).

The second section of this book focuses on promoting culturally appropriate education. Chapter Six showcases "Steward Observing and Advocating Relational Responsiveness" (SOARR). Christine Lemley, Gerald Wood, Hine Waitere, Darrell Marks, and Ishmael Munene describe a community-university initiative created to promote data literacy at a high school with a large Indigenous, mostly Navajo student body. They sought to address the mismatch between massive data collection and the absence of using data to frame decision-making affecting the education of Indigenous and other students. SOARR is designed to promote data literacy among teachers, counselors, and administrators. This data enables acquisition of capacity and expertise to engage in data analysis that is context conscious and responsive to evidence.

In chapter seven Jeffrey Hovermill, Ora Marek-Martínez, and Cole Joslyn showcases some recent initiatives focused on increasing Native American representation, interest, and achievement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) that are currently being made, including strategies for braiding Indigenous knowledge with Western science. In the final chapter Villegas Rodríguez, Ma. de los Ángeles describes Universidades Interculturales located in Indigenous communities in Mexico. She describes how in the twenty-first century Indigenous movements are promoting university level intercultural education and analyzes whether the goal of promoting Indigenous languages and

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cultures in these institutions is being adequately promoted as students prioritize the study of academic areas other than Indigenous languages and culture that they see as more likely to lead to employment.

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