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## AN ANALYSIS OF P-20 EDUCATION AT SAN ILDEFONSO PUEBLO IN NORTHERN NEW MEXICO, UNITED STATES

Martin Edward Strones  
*Murray State University*

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AN ANALYSIS OF P-20 EDUCATION AT SAN ILDEFONSO PUEBLO IN NORTHERN  
NEW MEXICO, UNITED STATES

by

Martin Edward Strones

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The College of Education and Human Services

Department of Educational Studies, Leadership, and Counseling

at Murray State University

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

P-20 & Community Leadership

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Under the supervision of Associate Professor Randal H. Wilson

Murray, KY

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## **Abstract**

This research study provides an inquiry by conducting a qualitative analysis of the conditions and issues associated with students at the San Ildefonso Pueblo in Northern New Mexico. For decades the education of San Ildefonso and Native Americans who live in the State of New Mexico has been ignored. This has been just the way it was, that is, until Wilhelmina Yazzie, a Native American, saw her son struggling in an unsatisfactory school system and decided to take action. This case was originally filed in McKinley County, New Mexico, in 2014, the home to largely Native American students for the Navajo Nation, Hopi, and Zuni tribes. This case moved through the New Mexico court system and eventually was combined with a similar effort called the Martinez Hispanic case. The action taken by Yazzie and the victory against the State of New Mexico stand to eventually change the education system to provide what is mandated in the State Constitution. However, it has been five years since the court decision, and little has been accomplished to correct the existing system. This research consisted of field interviews at all levels of action, starting with San Ildefonso Pueblo community members and ending with New Mexico State-level efforts to explain the current situation.

## Table of Contents

Title Page .....	i
Acknowledgments.....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Overview .....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	4
Research Questions .....	5
The Significance of the Study .....	6
Conceptual Framework Guiding the Research .....	9
Definitions, Unique Terms, Symbols, and Abbreviations .....	9
Summary .....	11
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	12
Overview .....	12
Factual Introduction .....	14
American Indian Ancestry .....	16
New Mexico Education Statistics .....	17
San Ildefonso Pueblo Education Department .....	19

Native American Students in Numbers.....	20
Scholarship Opportunities.....	22
The Situation Impacting Native American Education in New Mexico .....	25
Yazzie and Martinez vs. the State of New Mexico.....	28
Establishing District and Charter School Equity Councils .....	34
Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Framework .....	35
Summary .....	40
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY .....	42
Overview .....	42
Research Design.....	42
Author Context.....	43
The Purpose of the Study .....	43
Research Questions.....	44
The Importance of the Research .....	44
IRB Approval.....	46
Interview Research Plan .....	46
Research Ethics, Validity, and Reliability .....	48
Data Analysis Actions.....	49

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS .....	54
The Scope of Pueblo Students .....	55
The San Ildefonso Education Department .....	56
The Research Questions.....	58
The Setting and Participation.....	59
Interview P-1 .....	59
Interview P-2.....	60
Interview P-3.....	62
Interview P-4.....	63
Interview P-5.....	64
Interview P-6.....	66
Interview P-7.....	66
Interview P-8.....	67
Interview P-9.....	69
Interview P-10.....	70
Interview P-11 .....	71
Interview L-1 .....	72
Interview F-1 .....	75

Interview T-1 .....	76
Interview New Mexico Public Education Department .....	78
Interview Espanola HS .....	78
Interview Pojaoque HS .....	79
Interview Santa Fe Indian School .....	79
Interview New Mexico Legislature .....	79
Interview Findings, Themes, and Summary .....	80
Research Question 1 .....	80
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-1 .....	80
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-2 .....	81
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-3 .....	81
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-4 .....	82
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-5 .....	83
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-6 .....	84
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-7 .....	84
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-8 .....	85
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-9 .....	86
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-10 .....	86



Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-11 .....	87
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview L-1 .....	88
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview F-1 .....	90
Research Question 1: Discussion Interview T-1 .....	90
Research Question 2 .....	91
Research Question 2: Discussion P-1 .....	92
Research Question 2: Discussion P-2 .....	92
Research Question 2: Discussion P-3 .....	93
Research Question 2: Discussion P-4 .....	93
Research Question 2: Discussion P-5 .....	93
Research Question 2: Discussion P-6 .....	94
Research Question 2: Discussion P-7 .....	94
Research Question 2: Discussion P-8 .....	95
Research Question 2: Discussion P-9 .....	95
Research Question 2: Discussion P-10 .....	96
Research Question 2: Discussion P-11 .....	96
Research Question 2: Discussion L-1 .....	97
Research Question 2: Discussion F-1 .....	97

Research Question 2: Discussion T-1 .....	98
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS and DISCUSSIONS .....	99
Introduction.....	99
The Research Questions.....	100
New Mexico Update .....	100
Discussion of Findings for Research Question 1 .....	107
Discussion of Findings for Research Question 2 .....	110
Limitations of the Study.....	115
Implications for San Ildefonso Pueblo.....	116
P-20 Implications Discussion .....	116
Opportunities for Future Research.....	117
Recommendations and Conclusion Discussion .....	118
REFERENCES .....	120
Appendix A - Murray State University IRB Approval Letter .....	134

## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

The unbelievable tragic treatment of Native peoples by the United States qualifies as a significant and continuing blemish on the history of the United States that seems to have no solution and has received little to no attention (Faircloth, 2021). This struggle persists with clear historical evidence of discrimination and atrocities. Native American Indian history and welfare are usually ignored by media, textbooks or national conversation. The legacy of the treatment of Native peoples and the continual absence of attention to, and knowledge of, the situation faced by Native peoples creates a problem of vast inequalities existing today (Faircloth, 2021). No racial group in America has ever faced this level of documented mistreatment and subsequent inaction to rectify it. In America we celebrate the arrival of Columbus and the progress in creating the United States. However, that progress resulted at the expense of Native Americans, and that history has been filled with suffering, massacre, disease, and devastation never acknowledged in national discourse (Berger, 1991).

Most individuals in America today are unaware that centuries before any European ever set foot on North American soil, many parts of the continent had cities with thousands of Native inhabitants living in substantial houses, worshipping in numerous temples, and meeting in gathering places with ornate and broad public plazas. Many miles of roads had been created connecting these cities. Although the roads were unique to Native travel, these roads served the needs of Natives. Culturally, there were artists, musicians, councils, builders, hunters, healers, leaders, and architects with similar skill talents as in the European world but suited to Native needs (Barnhart, 2018).

The impact on American Indians with the arrival of the Europeans has many aspects, but few were as devastating as disease. Europeans had suffered dramatically from frequent epidemics of disease. Although many deaths had occurred, these years of waves of disease had produced resistance to reinfection in the survivors. American Indians possessed no immunity to European ailments. The arrival of the Europeans in the New World, devastated Native populations, who had no immunity (Berger, 1991).

Today, 565 federally identified and registered tribes exist in 35 states of the United States. The United States Census Bureau reports a Native American national population of approximately four and a half million, or about one and one-half percent of the country's population (Center for Native American Youth, n.d.).

Since the first recorded interaction between Native tribes and European arrivals, history has demonstrated the following stages: that of welcoming, opposition, defeats, near extinction, and acceptance (Parks, 2022). The United States agreed to over 370 treaties with Native tribes between 1778 and 1871 (Partnership with Native Americans, 2022). One occurred in 1794 when the United States signed a treaty establishing federal funding for Native education in exchange for tribal land (American Indian College Fund, 2021). The United States passed the Indian Civilization Act of 1819 that established laws and implemented actions supporting Indian boarding schools (Lynch, 2016). The focus of this act was to culturally assimilate Native children who were removed from a typical tribal environment and relocated away from family and tribal homes (Hanson, n.d.; Reyhner, 1989).

In 1860, the first federal school was established (American Indian College Fund, 2011). The school aimed to suppress Native appearance, language, culture, traditions. The treatment of Natives was often abusive and, in many documented cases, deadly. Many deaths were

unexplained and often never recorded. Especially noteworthy was an 1879 situation where Captain Richard Pratt was noted to have said it was necessary to “kill the Indian in him, and save the man” by removing Native children from the reservation and making these children “civilized” through education (American Indian College Fund, 2011). Pratt required:

- Students to wear standard uniforms with no evidence of tribal identification;
- Males had to have long hair cut;
- Students were given new non-Native names;
- Traditional Native foods were banned;
- Conversion to Christianity was essential;
- Students were prohibited from speaking a Native language (Reyhner & Eder, 2017).

This situation, of course, does not exist at present. However, the resulting trauma still remains in Native American communities today (Presidential Actions, (2021). The general focus of Indian Boarding schools was to train American Indian students as laborers with the level of training for menial vocations (Haskell, n.d.). As a result, most American Indian youth do not have generations of professionals within their families to emulate (Brief History of American Indian Education, n.d.). This generational cycle has significantly impacted the motivation of many current Native youths (Zape-tah-hol-ah et al., 2018).

Throughout early history, the education of American Indians continued to be directed at changing the culture of American Indians (Freng et al, 2006). The first realization of change came in 1969 with the Kennedy Report, which identified that the policy of Indian education had remained assimilationist and had created an unsatisfactory impact on the education of Indian

children. Education had become a battleground, where Indian society attempted to protect Indian culture and identity and, in the process, education failed (Dejong, 1993).

In 1968, the author, a Captain in the United States Air Force, was assigned to Albuquerque, New Mexico returning from a combat role in the Republic of Vietnam. The specific assignment was Director of Security at Manzano Base, a special weapons facility on Kirtland Air Force Base. An additional duty was to be the United States Air Force Academy Admissions Officer for Northern New Mexico. This experience began an exposure to the unique cultural experience of understanding this specific region. What followed was becoming the Chairman of New Mexico's United States Senators Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman's military academy selection committee, assignment for five years to a senior leadership position at Los Alamos National Laboratory, the appointment for 20 years to the Board of Directors at the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation, an adjunct assignment for five years as a Board of Director member for the Northern New Mexico American Red Cross, and one adjunct term as Director of the, Northern New Mexico United Way. All of these activities and assignments enhanced the author's knowledge of the educational, employment, governmental, cultural, bureaucratic, and political understanding of Northern New Mexico.

### **Purpose of the Study**

There is a complicated current situation with education in New Mexico because of the actions related to a successful court decision by Yazzie, a Native American, and Martinez, a Hispanic, against the state of New Mexico. The aim of this dissertation is to identify factors impacting P-20 education for students of the San Ildefonso Pueblo in Northern New Mexico. The ultimate purpose of this study is to describe the past and current situation associated with students at the Pueblo. The study described some aspects of the past, but focuses on the current

education situation. To facilitate this, discussions were held with parents and students at the San Ildefonso Pueblo. The education of Native American students was also discussed with school administrators at each high school attended by San Ildefonso Pueblo students. Additionally, conversations are planned with the Pueblo school district, Pueblo leadership, and the New Mexico Public Education Department. The state of New Mexico's Public Education Department's recent actions are also necessary to include. Additionally, a detailed description of the Education Department of the San Ildefonso Pueblo assisted to determine the workload, activities, and interface with the New Mexico Department of Public Education. Any impact in or with, the existing organization of the Eight Northern Pueblos of New Mexico was also investigated (Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council, n.d.).

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What critical factors impact the education of San Ildefonso Pueblo students?
  - a. How has the Native American culture impacted the education of San Ildefonso students?
  - b. How has the *Yazzie vs. the State of New Mexico* court ruling impacted the education of San Ildefonso Pueblo students?
2. What factors would improve the education of San Ildefonso students?
  - a. What resources does the San Ildefonso Pueblo Education Department need to improve the education of its students?
  - b. What staffing does the San Ildefonso Pueblo Education Department need to improve the education of its students?

### **The Significance of the Study**

As addressed in the Yazzie vs. the State of New Mexico lawsuit, the New Mexico Legislature and the New Mexico Public Education Department has ignored the New Mexico State Constitution (Article XII, Section 1) which states, ‘A uniform system of free public schools sufficient for the education of, and open to, all the children of school age in the state shall be established and maintained’ (Evans, 2019). The suit was filed in 2014, and the eight-week trial began in June 2017. The defendants were the State of New Mexico, the New Mexico Public Education Department, and the New Mexico Secretary of Education. The Yazzie suit was consolidated with a similar suit, Martinez vs. the State of New Mexico, filed for similar reasons and at a similar time (Evans, 2019). The trial included significant evidence from 23 New Mexico school districts, educational state-wide data, similar national data, and subject-matter-expert local and national witnesses. The data presented years of unsuccessful educational support.

Judge Singleton decided the case in August 2018 by ruling that the state had not complied with either state or federal laws in the education of Native American, Hispanic, or English Language Learner students. Further, the state has not complied with the New Mexico Indian Education Act, the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act, and the Hispanic Education Act creating an inadequate education profile for New Mexican Native American and Hispanic students (New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty, 2018). The judge added that the state had violated its constitution by failing to provide an education sufficiently preparing students for college and careers. The judge also added that the past excuse of insufficient funding by the legislative branch was not a viable excuse. Lastly, the judge ruled that the Public Education Department had essentially failed to address required oversight responsibilities to validate that



students were receiving the programs and services needed to be successful (New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty, 2018).

The state was given until April 15, 2019, to provide resources and funding for students uniform and sufficient education that would comply with the state constitution. However, as usual, the state's actions failed to comply fully. As a start on August 17, 2018, the New Mexico Legislative Study Committee issued the first action by the state that summarized, in eight pages, Judge Singleton's ruling entitled *Yazzie and Martinez vs. State of New Mexico*: July 20, 2018 Decision and Order covering details, remedy, injunctive relief, the definition of adequacy, the burden of proof, Article XII, Section 1 Educational Clause Claim, Article II, Section 18 Equal Protection Clause and Due Process Clause Claims (New Mexico Legislation Education Study Committee, 2018).

This initial action was followed by several other actions to address the verdict. On October 9, 2018, a comprehensive working document called the *Yazzie Proposed Remedy Platform* was issued. This 22-page assessment identified the functional elements to be addressed, the judge's findings, the Legislative Education Committee and Legislative Finance Committee analysis, the short-term actions, and the long-term plan (New Mexico Legislature, 2018).

On October 22, 2019, the New Mexico Public Education Department Deputy Director of Identity, Equity, and Transformation, Kara Bobroff, issued a four-page memo addressing the court's findings in the *Yazzie* case. The memo was like a pep talk about how enthusiastic the department was to endorse the court's findings. The memo stressed several keys that had been amazingly discovered to cause success in a multicultural education system; the goals to achieve success were outlined as follows:

- The establishment of what are called equity councils for each district and school;
- Assessing readiness by completion of a Yazzie readiness assessment;
- Establishing a culturally and linguistically responsive network for every school;
- Completing, submitting, and implementing 90-day plans through the New Mexico Data, Accountability, Sustainability, and High Achievement tool focused on economically disadvantaged students, Native American students, English learners, and students with disabilities (Bobroff, 2019).

What is impressive but typical in New Mexican politics is that the state initially passed the Indian Education Act in 2003 to provide New Mexican Native American students with a successful pathway to a successful, equitable, and culturally acceptable education in the state's public school system. The law also established an Indian Education Division within the New Mexico Public Education Department. At the same time, to further address Native education issues, an Indian Education Advisory Council was established to link all situations impacting Native education matters, including the state, school districts, and tribal governments, with regards to curricula, matters of teaching, and support services (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2021).

The act was also updated in 2019, following the final decision in the Yazzie court case. In 2021, the New Mexico Legislative Finance committee did a progress report by the program evaluation unit. In a comprehensive 66-page report, the bottom line emphasized general failure. Native Americans perform significantly below other students on state and national achievement measures. There are some areas of improvement; for example, the number of New Mexico Native American students statewide who graduated increased from 58% in 2009 to 69% in 2019;

however, the graduation rate is still unacceptable (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2021).

### **Conceptual Framework Guiding the Research**

The current educational issue seems to indicate that no knowledgeable central authority with executive power, position, and clout exists to lead and manage the action for documented and sustained progress. The current situation with Native American education must support a comprehensive, honest, and detailed evaluation that can be sustained, which is the purpose of this research. The purpose of this study, and the ultimate goal is to clearly describe the current situation at different levels. This endeavor asks the students and parents to discuss what is missing and needed to achieve a viable and meaningful education continuing next to the administration and leadership of the San Ildefonso Pueblo and balancing this information with comprehensive details and feedback from levels of the instructional and management of the attended schools and school district. Finally, a discussion with the New Mexico Public Education Department and one or more New Mexico legislatures provided comprehensive data to summarize the fundamental deficiencies, critical paths, and actions for practical solutions to the deficiencies, clearly and achievable stated.

### **Definitions, Unique Terms, Symbols, and Abbreviations**

The guiding principle used in this research is not to use terms, symbols, or abbreviations that require decoding. The research sought to use clear, understandable terms and language that benefits honest, accountable analysis. The author's career as an auditor, leader, and evaluator has always contributed to clear conclusions often associated with national security issues, and that approach was continued in this research. Documented facts from accountable and balanced sources should reveal an honest reporting of the actual situation and necessary solutions.

However, defining three terms used extensively in this research effort is helpful.

**Pueblo** is defined as a communal structure involving dwelling and defensive purposes associated with American Indians in the southwestern United States, primarily in New Mexico and Arizona (Pueblo, n.d.). This living concept has existed since prehistoric times. The building is built of stone and/or adobe and is usually multi-storied and terraced, usually placed at, or near, or involving cliff walls. Most had the unique feature of being entered through the roof using some form of a ladder (American Indian, n.d.)

**American Indian** which, in a simple form, are people who belong to or come from one of the numerous tribes of native peoples of America who are original inhabitants of the continental United States (Jarvis, 2017). More specific discussions of the determination of status as a validated American Indian are discussed during this research.

**San Ildefonso Pueblo** is a member of an organization, Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council, whose mission is to provide quality programs to support and meet the needs of Pueblo families and communities through prevention, education, health, and support to continue to grow and expand in the delivery of all services (Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council, n.d.). In considering this research study, the author first met with Gilbert Vigil, the Executive Director of the Council, in March 2021. The initial meeting was followed in May 2021 by an in-person appearance at the monthly council meeting to discuss the research study and to gain the council's support.

Two additional clarifications, the words tribe, Native, and American Indian can, in this research, be used interchangeably. Also, there is frequent use of the term, the New Mexico

Public Education Department, which is the senior organization headed by the New Mexico Secretary of Education reporting directly to the New Mexico governor.

### **Summary**

In summary, this research addresses a national concern and long-standing deficiency involving the education of Native American students in the state of New Mexico with a focus on a specific district and location, the students of the San Ildefonso Pueblo in northern New Mexico. The research addresses a long-standing issue of an ignored situation, the constitutional requirements of the state of New Mexico to provide adequate education to residents of the state. This effort has been highlighted by the findings of the Yazzie and Martinez vs. the State of New Mexico decision. This action has directed a situation that could, if adequately enforced, end years of ignoring the real needs of the students of San Ildefonso Pueblo and other Native New Mexican children.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

In the history of the United States, one of the most grievous events that blemishes that timeline is the treatment in all aspects of the American Native peoples who had long successfully inhabited and functioned in the territory that is today the United States. Activities in support of Native Americans are seldom mentioned in the intense and continual discussions today by other marginalized groups demanding equality, despite significant efforts to address the demands. A similar debate about equity or past actions against Native Americans is rarely a subject in these discussions.

When Europeans arrived in what is today the United States, they entered a new territory where Native American tribes had successfully learned to live effectively, but with significantly different beliefs and cultures. The tribes effectively communicated by speaking over 300 languages (Reyhner & Eder, 2017). A documented description of the population decline of Native Americans from several million in the year 1492 to just over 200,000 at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is described as the “American Indian Holocaust” (Thornton, 1987). The drastic reduction in the Native population can be traced to several causes, among which were new diseases, previously mentioned, where Native peoples had no natural protective immunity; the arrival of guns producing significantly more one-sided deadly warfare and confrontations; and constant pressure for additional lands, resources, furs, and precious metals by the Europeans; the continuous growth of the immigrant population; the starvation of Native people impacted by the reduction of bison and other game killed; and Native relocation due to land expansion (Reyhner & Eder, 2017).

When addressing schooling or education, Native culture focused on survival skills, child-raising, culture, and ways that enabled successful living for thousands of years. In the Native American world, there was no need for the type of schools or training familiar to the European settlers. This Native model of the necessary learning of essential life skills and close family and tribe culture successfully supported the lives of Native culture. However, all of this was counter to European culture and tradition. The new arrivals had no interest in trying to understand the tradition or culture of Native peoples. The immediate response from the new arrivals was that the Native population was unenlightened and must be changed to civilized ways; thereby, forcing Native people to adopt the European way of life, including education (Partnership with Native Americans, 2022). What they misunderstood was that the Native peoples already functioned effectively, and had done so for thousands of years. None of this mattered to the Europeans, who considered the Native Americans savages and uncultured (Alvord & Pelt, 2000; Dejong, 1993).

The general idea projected in training efforts by the Europeans was to force Native people to shed all aspects of cultural identity, language, and spiritual traditions (Griswold, 2021). During Navajo instruction, students were disciplined for using any Navajo words. The European instructors announced that students must abandon the Navajo language, and any Native culture, and adopt European ways to be successful. Navajo students were told the Native culture and ways of life were inferior and that Natives would never be as good as White people (Alvord & Pelt, 2000). Attempts to quickly disconnect Native students from their culture often led to failure on all sides. The transition often resulted in cultural confusion, disintegration, and purpose. Returning home, Native American students were unprepared to deal with returning to tribal life and also failed to move into the White world successfully. Generations of Native Americans were taught to be ashamed of the Indian culture as part of life. The absence of Native culture

leaves a void that, if present, would have provided structure in showing how to live and keep strong (Alvord & Pelt, 2000).

One of the most shameful actions of the United States government happened in 1830, when President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, leading to the forceful removal of the Cherokee Nation, which occupied areas of the American South, including the states of Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama, and relocation to what today is Oklahoma. Between 3,000 and 4,000 Native Americans died on the way in what was called the “Trail of Tears” (Diamond, 2019). This is an atrocity never faced by any other racial group in America. In another example from 1837, 14,500 Creek Indians were forced to leave Native lands and walk west during relocation, often in chains; approximately 3,200 died (Frank, n.d.).

As of 2014, serious deficiencies continue to exist within Native American society:

- A majority of American Indian and Alaska Native children live in poverty (Executive Office of the President, 2014).
- The American Indian and Alaskan Native high school graduation rate is 67%, the lowest of any racial or ethnic demographic group across all school groups. The Bureau of Indian Education schools have the lowest graduation rate of 53%; whereas the national average graduation rate is 80% (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014; Bureau of Indian Education, n.d.).
- The suicide rate for Native youth in the 15- to 24-year-old age group is 2.5 times the national rate (Executive Office of the President, 2014).

### **Factual Introduction**

This research aims to identify factors impacting P-20 education at San Ildefonso Pueblo (Pueblo) in Northern New Mexico, United States of America. The Pueblo is located north of



Santa Fe, New Mexico, the state's capital. Portions of the Pueblo have been occupied since 1300AD (Partnership with Native Americans, n.d.). Before 1300AD, the Pueblo was located in Mesa Verde in Southern Colorado. The Pueblo's official language is Tewa, which has active actions to preserve the language, teaching it to Pueblo children and using it in most Pueblo business (Tano/Tewea Indian Language, n.d.). The traditional name of the San Ildefonso Pueblo is Po-who-Gen-Owingeh, which means "Where the water cuts through" (San Ildefonso, n.d.). With the Rio Grande River flowing through the Pueblo, growing corn and beans has always been a long practice.

The first outside contact with the tribe was in 1591 with Caspar Castano, a Spaniard. Around 1610, the Spanish, under Fray Andres Bautista attacked the Pueblo and were initially defeated; however, they eventually won and required the Pueblo to pay tribute and convert to Catholicism (National Park Service, 2016). After several years, this tribute tax became an issue, and the Pueblo people resisted, resulting in the Pueblo Rebellion of 1680 (National Park Service, 2016). After several back-and-forth actions, in 1694, the Spanish attacked the Pueblo and were defeated; however, the Pueblo eventually surrendered. The Pueblo resistance against the Spaniards continued, and in 1821 Mexico took control of the area. In 1848 the United States assumed control under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In 1858 the United States Congress created a grant of 17,292 acres of land to the Pueblo (National Park Service, 2016). The occupation by the Spanish and the lingering effects almost wiped out the tribe due to disease and other issues; in 1918, the population was less than 100 (Partnership with Native Americans, n.d.). Today, the Pueblo is home to about 1,700 residents, including 192 households and 714 recognized members, and is a self-governing federally recognized tribe.

### **American Indian Ancestry**

Establishing Native American ancestry or certification as a member of a federally recognized tribe requires a series of steps and accreditation:

- Establishing a direct line of ancestry, which includes a biological parent, grandparent, or great-grandparent of another lineal ancestor who is an American Indian from a United States federally recognized tribe;
- The specific tribe, identified ancestor, must be a tribe-certified member;
- Documentation must be provided using vital statistical records or other certifications required by the specific tribe (U.S. Department of the Interior, n.d.).

The Bureau of Indian Affairs does not maintain a national registry, database, or listing of certified American Indians. Once approved and enrolled by a tribe, the Bureau of Indian Affairs will issue a certificate showing the degree of Indian blood (CDIB) and the tribal affiliation (U.S. Department of Interior, Indian Affairs, n.d.). Tribal enrollment is intended to preserve the history, character, traditions, and benefits of each tribe (United States Department of Justice, (n.d.). Tribal registration or official membership criteria varies and is described in the tribe governing documents. The details of the enrollment process and requirements for San Ildefonso Pueblo are contained in Title 22.1, Chapter 22.1, Part 22.1.1 (Pueblo de San Ildefonso Law Library, 2012). The requirements for enrollment as a member of the San Ildefonso tribe:

- The person applying must have an immediate family member already enrolled with San Ildefonso Pueblo;
- Either parent must be enrolled with the San Ildefonso Pueblo and have been issued a Tribal Census number;

- The applicant requesting enrollment must have  $\frac{1}{4}$  degree minimum of Indian blood;
- Dual enrollment, an applicant already enrolled in another tribe is not eligible for membership in San Ildefonso Pueblo;
- After enrollment, the new member has a five-year probationary status. Admission to tribal membership is subject to the reservation of the Pueblo's right to revoke the admission, with or without cause, at any time during five years from the date of enrollment (W. Christian, Tribal Services Director, personal communication, September 15, 2022).

### **New Mexico Education Statistics**

New Mexico is a poor state in many ways, reflected in the quality of education (Ochoa & Alexander, 2018). Most evaluations list New Mexico as possessing the worst performance record in K-12 education, 50 out of 50 (World Population Review, 2022). According to New Mexico's capital newspaper, the high school graduation rate is the worst in the nation, with a four-year adjusted rate for the state's high school students of 68.5% in the 2013-2014 academic year (Nott, 2016). Another source for accurate statistics, New Mexico Voices for Children, has reported the moving rate of high school graduation each year for all New Mexican students to graduate in four years by cohort. The number represents all students: males, females, Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian, American Indians, Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, and Migrant (Tso, 2021). These total numbers vary from 63.0% in 2011 to 75.0 in 2019 and 76.9% in 2020 (Kids Count data center, 2021; Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, n.d.).

The high school students from San Ildefonso Pueblo attend or have attended four different high schools. Pueblo students attend Santa Fe Indian School (SFIS), where the

graduation rate for 2019 is reported as 85%. The performance data does not support this success rate. The documented math test scores for the school students are only 6%, and the reading/language arts test scores are 28% (Public School Review, 2022). The New Mexico state average math test scores are 21%, and the reading/language state test scores are 33%. The SFIS is owned and operated by 19 New Mexico Pueblos and serves 700 Native American students in grades seven to 12. The school was established in 1890 to educate Native American children in the Southwest; however, the school has a checkered past when operated by the federal government (White & Buchanan, 2022).

Students from the Pueblo also attend Pojoaque Valley high school, which has 673 students and is rated in the bottom 50% of New Mexico high schools, with a graduation rate reported at 71%. The school has a math proficiency of 4% and a reading/language proficiency of 30% (Public School Review, 2022). (New Mexico state rate for math is 21% and reading/language is 33%).

A small number of students from the Pueblo also attended Espanola Valley, which has over 900 students, with a graduation rate of 63%. The school has a math proficiency of 2% and a reading/language proficiency of 23% (Public School Review, 2022). (New Mexico's average math proficiency is 21%; reading and language are 33%).

The final high school used by students from the Pueblo is Los Alamos high school, one of New Mexico's best high schools, primarily because of the Los Alamos National Laboratory and the scientists who live there. Los Alamos is one of the wealthiest and most educated counties in the United States. Los Alamos is the sixth most affluent county in the United States (Clark, 2018). The highly educated residents of Los Alamos County demanded a superior education system. For many years, the federal government quietly provided significant additional funding

to Los Alamos schools, ensuring an exceptional educational system was available for Los Alamos National Laboratory scientists, workers, and county residents. In 1997, the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation was established by New Mexico US Senators Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman with a significant financial grant to eliminate the visibility of a yearly government appropriation (Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation, n.d.). The graduation rate for Los Alamos high school is 91%, with a math proficiency of 29% and a reading/language proficiency of 65%, and it educates 846 students (Public School Review, 2022).

### **San Ildefonso Pueblo Education Department**

The Pueblo has an ambitious education department headed by Rick Juliani, the director, Bernice Martinez, education manager, and Aaliyah Gonzales, librarian and tutor. The posted mission of the Department of Education is to assist the community by providing learning experiences for all members aligned with tradition, culture, and language (Juliani, 2021). The Department offers workshops and focused training in the Pueblo language of Tewa to adults, youth in Head Start, the Pueblo Day school, and as part of the Summer Youth program. The Pueblo has a comprehensive after-school program providing tutoring and school homework assistance, reading instruction, cultural storytelling, and recreational activities, and serves about 25 children on a four-day-a-week schedule. During the summer, a Summer Youth program provides Tewa and English language instruction, sports activities, and day trips, serving 60 youths four days a week (R. Juliani, personal conversation, July 3, 2022). An Early Childhood Education program administered by Pueblo assists infants and toddlers with special needs, including parents. The Pueblo Department of Education program includes networking with local schools to keep each student on a success track, with available tutoring or work/study as required (R. Juliani, personal conversation, July 21, 2022).

A San Ildefonso Pueblo computer lab is linked with local schools, allowing Pueblo students to complete any necessary coursework. Internet services are available for all community members. The Education Department manages the Tribal Scholarship Fund and the Pueblo library. The Department also provides intergenerational learning opportunities for youth and adults to receive sufficient skills to earn adequate wages and stable employment. These programs involve expanding Pueblo resources, preserving traditions, the Tewa language, and the Pueblo culture (R. Juliani, personal conversation, July 21, 2022).

### **Native American Students in Numbers**

In New Mexico Native American population, individuals ages 0-19 generally comprises 11% of the state population (Indigenous Wisdom Curriculum Project, n.d.). The total numbers vary from 63,845 or 11% in 2011 to 62,254 or 11.2% in 2015 to 59,016 or 10.8% in 2019 (New Mexico Voices for Children, 2019). On a national level, the state of education for Native American students has remained distressing. Generally, Native students perform two or three grade levels below White students in reading and math (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2008). Approximately 650,000 American Indian and Alaska Native students are in the United States K-12 system, representing slightly over 1% of public school students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008). Regarding Native American students, 90% attend public schools, and 8% attend schools administered by the Bureau of Indian Education (National Congress of American Indians, n.d.).

The facts clearly show the challenge faced by Native American students, who are 237% more likely to drop out of school and 207% more apt to be expelled from school than White students (National School Board Association, 2020). Comparing college graduation, only seven of every 100 American Indian/Alaska Native kindergartners will graduate (National Indian

Education Association, 2020). A critical factor in this failure to succeed is that these Native students are unprepared to learn when they walk into the classroom for the first time (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2008).

Following research and discussion with education policy experts and other groups with interests in this area, the National Caucus of Native American State Legislatures arrived at six policy recommendations to benefit Native American education:

- The goal is to ensure access for Native students to a curriculum that prepares them for the challenges of a new economy and college, allowing them to participate in the workforce;
- Directly address problems associated with decreased achievement occurring before they enter school. Therefore, they arrive at school in a ready-to-learn status;
- Provide exceptional teaching staff for Native students;
- The influence and voice of Native peoples and their participation in the planning and operation of schools will assist in making schools and learning more culturally relevant places for Native students;
- Focus on student achievement by sharing best practices and the result of associated research on Native American achievements of success;
- Provide, track, and evaluate the adequate distribution of resources supporting Native students (National Conference of State Legislators, 2008). Referencing the National Caucus of Native American State Legislatures -NCNASL-the Caucus (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2021).

The National Caucus of Native American State Legislatures is comprised of 89 members from 21 states and was established to bring attention to state-tribal issues across the United States. The Caucus, part of the National Conference of State Legislatures, was formed to:

- Provide awareness of the many Native American cultures;
- Benefit discussions among Native American legislatures;
- Benefit communication, understanding, and cooperation on Native issues; and
- Provide training opportunities, research, and educational services (National Conferences of State Legislatures, 2021).

### **Scholarship Opportunities**

For Native American students who graduate from a New Mexico high school, scholarship programs exist to assist them in achieving a college degree. Founded in 1969, Native Forward in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is the oldest and largest provider of scholarships for Native American students. The organization has assisted over 20,000 students from over 500 tribes in all 50 states, providing funding and support for undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees. Native Forward has awarded scholarships worth \$350 million and currently awards approximately \$25 million annually (Native Forward, n.d.). One of Native Forward's new programs is to fund a unique program with \$2 million to develop Native American certified public accountants (CPAs) to create a cadre of CPAs with special skills to understand the accounting aspects and financial details related to Native American needs and issues. This group aims to understand Internal Revenue requirements and law, sovereignty and Indian treaty rights, related nation-to-nation relationships, and how tax codes apply to tribal nations (Vaisvilas, 2022).

Another provider of scholarships to Native students attending Native American institutions is the American Indian College Fund in Denver. In 2020-21 the organization distributed 3,681 scholarships worth \$10.1 million. The fund supported 58% of first-generation



scholars from 2019 to 2021 in support of over 200 tribes. This support is only meant for students attending 35 accredited tribal colleges and universities (American Indian College Fund, 2021).

Considering the status of American Indian students, only 19% of Native American students aged 18 to 24 are enrolled in college, compared to 41% of the overall population in the United States (Vaisvialis, 2022). In another alarming statistic, undergraduate enrollment among Native Americans aged 18 to 24 decreased from 128,600 in 2016-2017 to 120,200 in 2018 - 2019. Between 2000 and 2017, the percentage of Native Americans aged 25 to 29 who had attained at least an associate or bachelor's degree dropped (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2020). Facts concerning Native American students are often excluded from postsecondary data and research due to the small sample size (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2020).

Continuing with scholarship opportunities, the San Ildefonso Pueblo has a scholarship fund identified in Part 13.1.2 of the Pueblo de San Ildefonso Law Library. Section 13.1.2.010 Findings and 13.1.2.020 determines that Pueblo has a \$1,000,000 Pueblo de San Ildefonso Scholarship Endowment Fund. The interest from this fund is used for scholarships (Pueblo de San Ildefonso Law Library Title 13 Education, 2012).

Another active source of scholarships is the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation (LANLF) which, since 1999, has increased access to higher education by issuing over 2,000 scholarships worth over 10 million dollars. The scholarship decision is based on performance, need, and application process. The Los Alamos Employees' Scholarship Fund Advisory Committee evaluates each application and makes all final decisions. The application process is open to all students who reside in Northern New Mexico, that includes San Ildefonso Pueblo. All

scholarship recipients are also offered summer intern jobs at Los Alamos National Laboratory as an incentive to graduate (Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation, n.d.).

Probably the most significant benefit to any New Mexico high school graduate is the New Mexico Legislative Lottery Scholarship (NMLLS), which will now pay 100% of tuition up to the cost of an undergraduate degree for students who meet the following criteria:

- The student must be a resident of New Mexico;
- The student is required to have graduated from a public or accredited private New Mexico high school, completed all requirements as a home-schooled student registered with the New Mexico Public Education Department, or received a high school equivalency credential recognized by the state of New Mexico all while maintaining residency in New Mexico;
- The student must enroll full-time at a post-secondary educational institution in New Mexico within sixteen months of graduation or receiving an equivalency credential and maintain full-time enrollment. First-time enrollment is required within the sixteen months following graduation and must be at a New Mexico post-secondary educational institution. If the student enrolls full-time at an out-of-state institution or in-state none state institution, the student forfeits eligibility;
- The student must enroll and earn 15 credit hours per semester at a four-year New Mexico public university;
- The student must enroll and earn 12 credit hours per semester at a two-year New Mexico public community college;
- Any scholarship student must maintain a 2.5 or greater cumulative grade point average each semester of enrollment; and

- Students with disabilities may qualify for reduced credit hour requirements and additional semesters of enrollment (New Mexico Higher Education Department, n.d.).

One catch to the NMLLS is that it starts paying the tuition in the second semester. Most New Mexico institutions, in response, do not charge students who have registered and are eligible for the NMLLS for the first semester if they maintain eligibility. Although registration for the NMLLS happens in the first semester by applying through the post-secondary financial aid advisor, the initial scholarship begins, as mentioned, in the second semester. After that, the NMLLS is renewed per semester as long as eligibility is maintained. The student must remain consecutively enrolled each fall and spring to maintain eligibility for NMLLS. The scholarship can be renewed at the same four-year institution until the student has received seven semesters of scholarship awards or until the student graduates with a bachelor's degree, whichever is sooner. Community college students are eligible for three semesters of scholarship awards (New Mexico Higher Education Department, n.d.).

### **The Situation Impacting Native American Education in New Mexico**

Examples have been given concerning the difficulty in most New Mexico public schools attended by Native American students in achieving an excellent high school education. This situation has continued for many years, as shown by high school graduation rates and achievement scores. At times, efforts have surfaced to address improving achievement in high schools; however, there is little evidence that these efforts have been successful. However, as previously mentioned, the New Mexico Constitution (Article XII, Section 1) states: "A uniform system of free public schools sufficient for the education of, and open to, all the children of school age in the state shall be established and maintained." However, any educated person who does a quick review of the results of most high school programs will determine that the current

and past system has not worked effectively. In evaluating the New Mexico students, Native Americans account for 10.6%, English language learners account for 14.4%, students with disabilities account for 14.8%, and students who live in low-income situations account for 71% (Evans, 2019). New Mexico is a poor state with often vast distances between schools and residences. Much state revenue comes from energy sources and United States government operations.

The state has continually failed to provide adequate resources to the state-operated schools. The annual state school budget in the past has been based solely on the previous year's budget. There has not been a comprehensive analysis of providing students with the services and programs to ready students for college or successful work skills. Therefore, the state funding mechanism does not adequately address the cost of educating New Mexico, children (Evans, 2019).

Following the difficult years when the country's preference for Native American education was boarding schools, Pueblo leaders worked hard to find a solution to benefit the Pueblo youth. The focus of this effort finally resulted in some visible evidence of the beginnings of a push to address issues of Native education by adopting an Indian policy (Native American Budget & Policy Institute, 2018). As mentioned, in 2003, the state passed the New Mexico Indian Education Act. The legislation had many good-sounding words that spoke to improvement. The act did provide a clear beginning by adding a senior state position, the Assistant Secretary of Education, a Public Education Division of the Indian Education Division; further, the act created an Indian Education Council, thereby involving 16 tribal representatives with the intention that this group would advise the Public Education Department on what would

be beneficial Native American educational policies (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2021). Among the critical factors in the act were the following:

- A focus on creating and using culturally appropriate learning environments and instructional materials;
- An effort to maintain and use Native languages;
- A pledge to provide effective educational systems for Native students;
- Establishment of a partnership with the state Public Education Department and Tribal Leadership;
- Development of relationships between the Bureau of Indian Education (part of the Public Education Department) and the tribes and others (this is undefined);
- A focus was added to add urban American Indian community participation;
- A proposal to have the act inclusive of all interested stakeholders, the Public Education Department, tribes, and other interested parties; and
- The act mandated tribal approval of all culturally relevant curricula (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2021).

After two years of implementation, the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee evaluated the impact and found the act, as expected, to be vague, overly ambitious, and extremely difficult, if not impossible, to implement. Also, despite some positive headway, as usual, resources that have been the issue for years in New Mexico again fell short of allowing the intention of a significant improvement in Native education. Although several of the recommendations were said to be executed, the key to real action, attention, and potential solution to issues of Indian education was the filing of a major suit against the state by two

defendants, Yazzie, a Native American mother, and Martinez, of Hispanic decent (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2021).

### **Yazzie and Martinez vs. the State of New Mexico**

This case was a wake-up call for the New Mexican government filed in the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial Court in Santa Fe, the state's capital. This research primarily concentrated on the American Indian aspect of Yazzie's case. The case involved five family plaintiffs in six school districts. As previously mentioned, the defendants were the state of New Mexico, the New Mexico Public Education Department, and the New Mexico Secretary of Education. The legal claim was straightforward; the state violated the state constitution, also previously mentioned. The trial began in June 2017, lasted eight weeks, and was heard by Judge Singleton. Since Yazzie and Martinez covered the same issues, Yazzie and Martinez were consolidated. The case heard evidence from 23 different focus school districts, considered New Mexico's statewide detailed and national data, and heard testimony from local and national expert witnesses (Evans, 2019).

The trial and the judge's decision significantly impacted education in New Mexico, including San Ildefonso Pueblo. The judge found that the state's public education inputs, oversight, and results did not meet the state's constitutional obligation to provide an adequate education. After hearing the evidence and testimony, the judge found student achievement and attainment clearly "dismal" and directly attributed these poor educational results to inadequate state oversight and academic inputs (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2021).

The court clearly stated that the Public Education Department had not adequately implemented the New Mexico Indian Education Act, the Hispanic Education Act, or the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act. The court added that New Mexico teachers have exceedingly low pay, which impedes recruiting and retaining quality teachers. Another factor

was the lack of sufficient funds to train teachers adequately. Another part of the judge's decision was that the funding provided was insufficient to provide what the state's constitution had mandated, a constitutionally sufficient education. Finally, the court ruled that the Public Education Department failed to provide accountability, ensuring funds are spent to provide at-risk students with necessary programs and services (Evans, 2019).

Judge Singleton, the presiding judge in the Yazzie lawsuit, created a situation that had never before clearly stated and defined the rights of Native American youth in New Mexico (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2019). Those connected with education in New Mexico already knew that the proper education of Native American students had been ignored. Still, a state court case was directing actions to correct the problem. The Yazzie decision answers one question: Does the state provide Native American students with a constitutionally sufficient educational program that prepares them for a successful college or career? The answer to the court's decision is no (Native American Budget and Policy Institute, 2018).

During testimony during the trial, significant deficiencies in the Public Education Department demonstrated, in part, why pueblo education, in general, had not improved and was not providing successful outcomes for students. For example, the Director of Bilingual Multicultural Education did not know which schools provided programs for English Language Learner (ELL) students. There was no attempt by the Public Education Department to track Native American ELL students or progress, nor were there programs to follow or evaluate ELL teachers' training. However, the most troublesome point was that the Public Education Division had not even provided each district with a framework for how to implement a multicultural education (Native American Budget and Policy Institute, 2018).

The court decided on July 20, 2018, and finalized the decision in August 2018. The court filed the final judgment showing the plaintiffs won the case with no appeals (Yazzie & Martinez) (New Mexico Education Department Timeline, 2020). The decision directed the state to take immediate steps by April 15, 2019, to ensure New Mexico schools had the necessary resources to provide all students with a sound primary education, preparing them for college and the current workforce (Evans, 2019). Once again, as in the past, this was an open generalized statement with little specific detail (Gudgel, 2018).

During the 2019 state legislative session, the New Mexico Legislature passed a significant increase in the public education budget by \$446 million to a total of \$3.2 billion. In October 2019, the New Mexico Public Education Department released a memo outlining a four-point plan to fulfill the court's decision (New Mexico Public Education Department Timeline, 2020). On March 13, 2020, the state moved to dismiss the lawsuit and findings, claiming all requirements to be addressed have been satisfied. However, on June 30, 2020, Judge Matthew Wilson denied the state's motion to dismiss. The judge said no evidence existed to demonstrate that the state substantially satisfied the original court findings regarding all at-risk students. The judge added that the original court decision required a comprehensive educational reform demonstrating substantial improvement that shows these students are ready for college or other careers (Lyman, 2020). Actions of the state indicated they had upped the funding and issued a memo, so the issues for findings in the case needed to go away. The judge did deny one critical proposed motion that would have required the Public Education Department to devise a detailed plan for resolving all of the issues of the original court case. This motion would have directed explicit action and planning in resolving if real progress was achieved. The court accepted the Department's efforts in publishing a series of memos outlining the proposed steps. One motion



was approved, which the state vehemently opposed, allowing additional discovery and facilitating tracking of the Public Education Department's activities (Lyman, 2020).

In addressing the New Mexico Public Education Department memo, the politics are always interesting. Following the judge's decision in the Yazzie & Martinez case, New Mexico governor Michelle Lujan Grisham indicated the state would not appeal the ruling of the court; however, in March 2020, the state filed a legal action to dismiss the lawsuit, claiming all requirements had been satisfied. This happened while simple examination of the basic facts would instantly suggest that little progress had been made. The only detailed plan of action was issued by the Public Education Department, dated October 22, 2019, not issued by the New Mexico Secretary-Designate of Education but by the Department Deputy Secretary of Identity, Equity, and Transformation (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2020). The four-page letter's stated purpose is to address the required changes resulting from the lawsuit. A summary of those findings is presented along with a statement that the Department agrees with the findings of the case. The initial information given was that the New Mexico Legislature found that success in a multicultural education system is one that:

- Attracts and retains quality and diverse teachers to teach New Mexico's multicultural student population;
- Holds teachers, students, schools, districts, and state accountable;
- Integrates the cultural strengths of its diverse student population into the curriculum with high expectations for all students;
- Recognizes the cultural diversity in the state presents unique challenges for policymakers, administrators, teachers, and students;

- Provides students with a rigorous and relevant high school curriculum that prepares them to succeed in college and the workplace; and
- Elevates the importance of public education in the state by clarifying the governance structure at different levels (Bobroff, 2019).

The bottom line is that if the state of New Mexico and the Legislature agreed with these six keys to success in education, why have none been included in the past as principal direction functions to improve education?

The memo urges cooperation of all aspects and parties associated with education goals, including the Public Education Department, educational districts, charter schools, higher education institutions, Tribes, families, and other educational stakeholders. The overall strategy addresses a four-part plan focusing on root-cause analysis, equity-focused leadership, continuous improvement, and culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and pedagogy. To achieve the stated goals, the memo indicates districts and charter schools initially must:

- Establish equity councils at each district and charter school;
- Complete a Martinez and Yazzie readiness assessment to support schools;
- Implement a culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) framework for each school; and
- Submit and implement a 90-day plan using the New Mexico Data Accountability, Sustainability, and High Achievement tool (NMDASH) with a specific focus on economically disadvantaged students, Native American students, English learners, and students with disabilities (Bobroff, 2019).

A second memorandum was issued on November 22, 2019, to the school districts and charter school leaders with specific guidance on the equity councils and Yazzie and Martinez consolidated efforts (Bobroff, 2019). This memorandum added information, primarily on the equity councils specifically for leadership. The first subject detailed the makeup of the equity councils, including the number of members, membership requirements, term details, and the selection process. A special notation was included for districts or charter schools serving a significant population of Native American students that required at least one member from each tribe, pueblo, or Nation to be included in the equity council (Bobroff, 2019). The memo contained five goals to be accomplished by each equity council:

- By February 3, 2020, the completion of the Martinez/Yazzie Readiness Assessment;
- By April 1, 2020, with the Readiness Assessment complete, create a district or charter-level Equity Plan to align school transformation with the Department's goal to address the court's decision. A template is to be provided in early January 2020;
- By June 30, 2020, each district and charter school is to create and implement a CLR for all schools based on the previously issued memo issued October 19, 2019;
- By July 15, 2020, each district or charter school is to complete a detailed report, forwarded to the Public Education Department, describing the district or charter school's system for establishing and tracking all funding and the uses of that funding to improve the outcomes/results of at-risk students, Native American students, students with disabilities, students who are English learners, and economically disadvantaged students;
- The memo indicated the option for requesting guidance and assistance on measures necessary to align any action with the Department's goals in the Martinez/Yazzie case. This would include implementation and compliance with the New Mexico Indian

Education, Hispanic Education, and the Bilingual Multicultural Education Acts, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the federal Office for Civil Rights requirements for addressing English learners (Bobroff, 2019).

The memo also included information concerning four webinars planned to assist with each task and requirement. The webinars were scheduled for November and December 2019.

### **Establishing District and Charter School Equity Councils**

A significant part of the state's effort to address the Yazzie ruling is establishing equity councils in each school district and at each charter school. The Public Education Department has created a massive focus on addressing the findings in the Yazzie case (Steinhaus, 2021). The Department committed to working with each district and charter school to create a superintendent's/executive director's equity council staffed with district and charter community personnel. The critical tool the equity council will use has been developed based on the direction, and the findings of the Yazzie/Martinez decision and is called the Martinez/Yazzie Readiness Assessment. The 13-page assessment addresses 84 specific items of interest. A maximum of 15 members will be selected for each council. Half of the council members must represent community organizations that represent student groups in the court's ruling, which include: Native Americans, students with disabilities, English learners, and the economically disadvantaged. At a minimum, two students and two family members must be on the council (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2022). The Education Department required all Lead Educational Agencies to complete the Martinez/Yazzie Readiness Assessment by June 15, 2020 (a changed date) (Stewart et al., 2020).

Some progress was happening in the New Mexico Equity Councils 2022 Brief; in the 189 New Mexico districts and charter schools, all districts and charter schools identified an equity

council lead. However, only 45% have a superintendent or charter school leader serving as the equity council leader. Further, the goal was not met to complete the Martinez/Yazzie Readiness Assessment by June 15, 2020. As of June 2022, only 52.9% have been completed, which puts the entire program at risk of failure (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2022).

### **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Framework**

The second action item in the October 22, 2019 memo is directed at resolving issues identified in the Yazzie suit and involves addressing the students' identity, culture, and language in every aspect of the education process (Bobroff, 2019). The action was to be completed by June 30, 2020. The move partially depends on the equity council's work and the results of the completed Martinez/Yazzie Readiness Assessment. The task of developing a plan to implement a culturally and linguistically responsive framework focused on preparing students for college, careers, and life by supporting the student's identity and holistic development that includes social, emotional, and physical wellness and comprehensive academic standards is a significant effort, especially with little or no guidance. The memo adds that the action to create the framework should include a series of engagements with students, families, tribes, and key community leaders in several group conversations concerning the specifics of making the required framework, which is focused on successful student outcomes that ensure academic achievement and success (Bobroff, 2019).

During a conversation with Rick Julani, Director of Education at San Ildefonso Pueblo, on 29 July 2022, it was verified that the pueblo had not been involved in any effort to assist in any work associated with the equity council, nor had there been any knowledge or involvement in any effort to establish a culturally or linguistically responsive framework (R. Julani, personal conversation, July 29, 2022). Another point made was the changes that took place among the

leadership positions of the Public Education Department. New Mexico Governor Michelle Grisham has had three public education secretaries since becoming governor in 2019. The first, Karen Trujillo was fired after six months on the job. The second Ryan Stewart served about two years of little progress before he stepped down. During Stewart's tenure, the Martinez/Yazzie Discussion Draft and 2022 Strategic Plan were issued (New Mexico Education Department, 2020). At the same time Stewart departed, two of the three Department's deputy secretaries also left for other jobs. The specific reason for these simultaneous changes remains clouded. The changes have made the current secretary Kurt Steinhaus the lead person. Steinhaus is the retired Los Alamos Public schools superintendent and the former deputy public education secretary under a former New Mexico governor (McKay, 2022).

The recent departure of Ryan Steward and the two deputy secretaries has resulted in a significant change in the approach to a solution to New Mexico's education challenges. Two essential products have surfaced with researched and well-thought solutions to educational issues in New Mexico. Both products have been released that could impact Yazzie/Martinez solutions. The first is an independent 2020 study designed to assemble a comprehensive approach to improving the education of Native American students in New Mexico. The 54-page report by Rudiger (2020) was produced by the Tribal Education Alliance, with support from the Leadership Institute at Santa Fe Indian School, the University of New Mexico Native American Budget and Policy Institute, and the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty. The information is broken down into three solutions to resolving Native American education issues in New Mexico:

- There must be a shared responsibility, and significantly increased tribal control over the schooling of Native children;

- There must be community-based education created by and centered within tribal communities;
- There must be a balanced, culturally and linguistically relevant education, focused on revitalization and sustaining the strengths of native children and their communities (Rudiger, 2020).

Under the first of the three proposed solutions, a critical effort must be made to build the performance capacity of tribal education departments by investing in Native education professionals to develop college and career preparation programs. In addition, the funding for tribal education departments must be recurring and directly connected to the school's at-risk factor. Finally, formal accountability and governance must link tribes and districts with Native technical assistance centers to support schools and tribal education departments (Rudiger, 2020).

The necessary aspects of the second proposal include support and investment in tribal libraries that directly support tribal community education centers in providing technology access, extended learning options, and career support. Investment and tribal control involving early childhood education programs are essential to educational solutions. The structure must be added for tribal community-based networks to provide integrated student support, including social and health services (Rudiger, 2020).

The third proposed solution addresses institutional racism, curriculum, and native educators. Effective programs must be developed to address racism and create discipline models that end unjustified expulsion and discipline of Native children. An essential part of any solution includes tribal-led curriculum centers and direct involvement to include programs addressing Native language factors into the school funding formula under full tribal authority over Native language and culture programs. Finally, investment is essential to develop and maintain Native

teachers, educational leaders, and staff, along with teachers and academic staff training in the Indian Education Act and anti-racism concepts (Rudiger, 2020).

In May 2020, under new leadership, the new team at the Public Education Department finalized the most comprehensive improvement plan to date. The project was released for comment in a discussion draft mode with a subtitle, decisions about Martinez/Yazzie v. State of New Mexico. For the first time, the plan clearly describes the issues to be overcome, definitions, and facts in 55 pages (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2022). In an objective approach, New Mexico Governor Michelle Grisham created a great deal of goodwill by addressing the new process by meeting with Native American governors and presidents from 22 tribes on June 2, 2022, at the 2022 Tribal Leadership Summit. The Governor spoke enthusiastically on the state's new approach to education report plan, which represents the draft action plan (Griswold, 2022). The new proposed plan replaced a previously theoretical program full of unfocused words and ideas that could never work toward a solution. This fact is evident in individuals' understanding of the culture of New Mexico. The newly proposed method is written to involve the real world by commenting, discussing, and building what is offered. The proposed plan contains 55 pages of details (Bannerman, 2022). The plan's vision focuses on four long-term goals for students engaged in a culturally and linguistically responsive educational system designed to meet the student's academic, social, and emotional needs (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2022). The plan's goals include:

- Assuring unrelated issues like race, language, economic status, and family situations do not cause a lower rate of performance in educational efforts and career prospects;
- The objective is to increase academic proficiency in math, science, and languages, so students graduate prepared for college, successful careers, and civic engagement;



- The goal is to eliminate achievement gaps among New Mexico students, especially Native Americans, Hispanics, African Americans, students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged; and
- Assuring respect, honor, and preserving students' historical languages and cultures through implementing culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and learning for all students (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2022).

The Discussion Draft Action Plan is organized into six chapters. Following an introduction and vision, the plan details six areas or outcome targets for specific populations: educators; at-risk students-economically disadvantaged; at-risk students-Native American students; at-risk students-English learners; and at-risk students with disabilities. Each group has a comprehensive data snapshot, funding details, non-monetary support listing, planning for the future, and targets for improvement. The next section of the plan addresses wide-ranging strategies, including:

- Early childhood education and care;
- Extended learning programs;
- Researched-based reading programs;
- Career and college readiness;
- Technology;
- Counselors, social workers, and other non-instructional staff (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2022).

Each strategy is addressed in a similar manner with a data snapshot, funding, non-monetary supports, planning for the future, and targets for improvement. The fifth section of the plan specifically identifies who does what in a call to action. Specifics identified are the

governor, the state legislature, the Public Education Department, other state agencies, the New Mexico school districts, state-chartered charter schools, all schools, parents and families, students, and community partners. The final section asks for comments/inputs to be submitted by Friday, June 12, 2022, by 5:00 P.M. (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2022). With cooperation from the education community, this plan and incorporating aspects of the Pathways to Education Sovereignty: Taking a Stand for Native Children can solve the long-lasting tragedy of poor education for many at-risk children in New Mexico (Rudiger, 2020).

In 2022, an independent group called Think New Mexico issued a third comprehensive plan. The group of New Mexican citizens formed the organization in 1999 as a results-oriented think tank with a mission to improve the quality of life for all New Mexicans, especially those lacking influence, access, and a strong voice in the political process. The group does not accept any government funding. The report titled “A Roadmap for Rethinking Public Education in New Mexico,” has taken years to be researched, studied, discussed, and issued in 2022. The 56-page report contains 10 detailed and essential points with 30 legislative recommendations directed to improve the education situation in New Mexico. The report considers the ruling from Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit highlighting deficiencies in New Mexican education. A review of this plan reveals it should be an essential consideration in current efforts to improve education in New Mexico (Nathan, F., & Fisher, K., G., (2022).

### **Summary**

With the issuance of the Discussion Draft Action Plan participation concept, the state appears to have finally found a suitable method to make real progress in the education of New Mexico’s Native American population. This, with consideration of the two other plans, can provide a quality discussion base for achievable improvements. The next important step is to

determine the number of doable suggestions with achievable and trackable improvements that can be implemented and eliminate the long-standing deficiencies in Native education with specific attention on San Ildefonso Pueblo students. A request is pending to receive the specific San Ildefonso response to the plan.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

### **Overview**

The goal of this chapter is to identify the research methodology that was used for this study, present the related experience of the author, restate the purpose of the study, identify the population and participants of the research, restate the research questions, outline the approach to address the described issues, IRB approval, methods to validate and assure ethics and honesty, and the proposed system used to analyze data collected.

### **Research Design**

A qualitative research technique was used for this research project. This technique is most suited to understanding the meaning of the identified situation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this study the author's skill and experience is the primary factor in all data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The main issue of this research was a complex subject that has existed for decades. The research required multiple validity analyses to understand the necessary findings or potential solutions clearly. The research used multiple levels of inquiry to understand the scope of the problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The initial belief was that individual interviews and discussions were the best way to extract the real reasons for the current and past situation that exists with the challenges Native American students have experienced with achieving quality education in the state of New Mexico and associated explicitly with San Ildefonso Pueblo, the subject of this research. Open-ended questions and discussion were the best opportunity to identify the reasons for the deficient efforts.

Annual statistical reports have shown and continue to show clear deficiencies in most achievements for K-12 Native American students, specifically students of San Ildefonso Pueblo. The state of New Mexico ignored these clear facts until the recent legal challenge by Yazzie vs.

the State of New Mexico. There have been continual bureaucratic attempts to ignore this educational deficiency until the recent finding that the State of New Mexico violated the state constitution in not providing an acceptable education for Native Americans. A multiple-level approach of discussions was determined to discover the best information and causal details. This population included students, parents, Pueblo educators and leadership, school administrators, the New Mexico Public Education Department, and New Mexico Legislatures. Using open-ended questions, this study sought to interview several groups of individuals who have an interest in, and influence on, the education of Native American Ildefonso Pueblo students.

### **Author Context**

The author has 27 years of direct experience in New Mexico. As described in Chapter I, these leadership positions and connections exist with all levels of New Mexican society as an employer, leader, advisor, board member, consultant, and evaluator in providing an unusual insight into the current social, professional, and cultural activities existing in the state. In addition, numerous years in leadership and auditing positions at the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Industrial Program Policy Advisory Committee have given the author a keen ability to evaluate complex problems and arrive at clear and achievable results. The author recognized the potential for researcher bias and took the necessary steps to seek to mitigate this possibility.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

This dissertation's study and research aim was to identify factors impacting P-20 education for students of the San Ildefonso Pueblo in Northern New Mexico. The documented experience of Native Americans, including San Ildefonso Pueblo students, shows clear evidence of an unsatisfactory education experience that violates the New Mexico constitution. This fact in

2017 resulted in a finding in New Mexico state court that the state had violated the state constitution requiring a uniform system of free public schools sufficient for the education of, and open to, all the children of school age in the state be established and maintained (Evans, 2019). The court's decision was not initially appealed. The state has made several attempts to address the court's findings, but no satisfactory solution currently exists.

### **Research Questions**

The following were the research questions used for this study:

1. What critical factors impact the education of San Ildefonso Pueblo students?
  - a. How has the Native American culture impacted the education of San Ildefonso Pueblo students?
  - b. How has the Yazzie vs. the State of New Mexico court ruling impacted the education of San Ildefonso Pueblo students?
2. What factors would improve the education of San Ildefonso Pueblo students?
  - a. What resources does the San Ildefonso Education Department need to improve the education of its students?
  - b. What staffing does the San Ildefonso Pueblo Education Department need to improve the education of its students?

### **The Importance of the Research**

Improving the education of New Mexico Native Americans has been a necessary action for many years. Statistics showing the deficiency in this education have been apparent for years, but no actual defined actions have led to progress toward a solution. New Mexico has always been relatively poor, and there has been a clear link between poverty and low literacy for decades. Failure to address the issues of poverty and literacy has disproportionately impacted

Native American students, English-Learners students, and students who come from low-income families or are disabled. According to the New Mexico Public Education Department, these groups represent 70% of New Mexico K-12 students (Nathanson, 2022).

Another essential factor that demonstrates the importance of the research includes the following among high school graduates identified in the Yazzie lawsuit, initially attending college in 2020, 25.2% required remedial courses in English, math, or both. In 2019, remedial courses in the same areas were at 30.8%; in 2018, 35% of new students required remedial math and English (Nathanson, 2022). The latest draft plan proposed by the New Mexico Public Education Department described earlier proposes increasing high school graduation rates by 15% and math and English rates by 50%, all significant tasks with a target date of 2025. Another factor to consider is a large number of vacant classroom teachers and support positions; according to New Mexico State University's Southwest Outreach Academic Research Evaluation & Policy Center, that number is 1,727 (Nathanson, 2022).

Although the latest plan to resolve Yazzie appears to be an improved action, based on past performance, the proposed task for Native Americans students to improve in math and reading by 50% is challenging, especially considering where New Mexican schools are starting from today. Now, just one in five New Mexico students is proficient in math, and one in three is proficient in reading. Although the draft plan, as mentioned, is the best start to date, the plan outlines ideas and goals, but nowhere are there comprehensive directions or strategies on how districts, schools, teachers, or students will reach these goals (Albuquerque Journal Editorial Board, 2022). With broad input, the belief is that this research could assist in identifying a possible way forward.

Another crucial complicating factor in tracking progress is that the current New Mexico governor canceled the state's method of standardized testing when first elected, which required the New Mexico State Public Education Department to remove student achievement from teacher evaluations. Further, the state legislature removed all A-F school grades. This makes it difficult to determine how individual schools meet the student's needs. The governor nor the Public Education Department has released any information on the results of revised testing accomplished in 2021. What is the current situation? There is a current plan with ideas and goals, with no clear idea of how to reach the goals. The time clock continues with little progress but no significant achievements in improving Native American education (Albuquerque Journal Editorial Board, 2022).

### **IRB Approval**

Before beginning data collection the author prepared the application to submit to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The faculty member chairing this dissertation filed the application to the IRB for review. Approval IRB # 23-140 was issued for the study, and data collection began March 27, 2023.

### **Interview Research Plan**

The author believes the precise answers to the current educational deficiencies with education achievement at San Ildefonso Pueblo students could only be understood with a seven-level process of inquiries and interviews. Each interview began with a detailed introduction of the author, a genuine thank you for the time and involvement, the purpose of the research, and all IRB requirements. The initial group consisted of Pueblo students and parents. The Pueblo granted arrangements and approvals to conduct a student and parent interview using the Pueblo library. According to recommendations from the Pueblo Director of Education, the author sought



to achieve the most reliable attendance by offering a cash incentive for attending. In the past, researchers have offered rewards for participating in studies, so potential subjects may expect compensation. The author offered a \$200.00 cash incentive for a family to participate in the interview, with a reservation limit of eight families. The plan was to pre-schedule six to eight individual family discussion sessions. Each family meeting was time specific and conducted in the Pueblo library. The discussions were recorded, with the permission of the families. The Pueblo provided refreshments. The expected time for the meeting was determined to be one hour or less to cover the level of inquiry.

The next level of interviews was to be with the Native American coordinator at the school district. The subsequent level of interviews occurred with the Native American coordinators and school administrators at the four high schools San Ildefonso Pueblo students currently attend or have attended. The fifth level of interviews would be with the Native American coordinator and possibly the director at the New Mexico Public Education Department in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The sixth level of interviews was to be scheduled with members of the state legislature. Additional interviews were with the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation and Think New Mexico, a results-oriented think tank. The final level was with the San Ildefonso Pueblo director of education and two staff members, all individually, and the Pueblo governor or operations manager.

All interviews were conducted in person. Each person attending an interview was given and required to sign, an informed consent form. Participants were informed that the interview would be recorded. The interview questions were approved by the IRB. The exact process was used in the parent and student group setting, but numerous people spoke. To protect privacy, no individual names were used in reporting the results. The coding system used a number identifier.

All questions used were open-ended, allowing the participant to expand or extend in describing the situation in detail. There was no enforced time limit imposed for the interviews. Since some interviewees could have used English as a second language, care was used to ensure that the questions and answers are clearly understood.

### **Research Ethics, Validity, and Reliability**

Ethical and honest research reporting was the goal of this study. The author has a reputation as a fair, ethical, and successful auditor and objective evaluator, which was maintained in all aspects of this research. The author has spent more than 27 years in various tasks and positions in New Mexico, dealing with all levels of society. The author has had and continues to hold a top-secret government clearance.

The interpretation of this research involved several different actions, such as summarizing the results of all field interviews, comparing the data to information in the literature search, reflecting the discovered outcomes based on the author's New Mexico experience, and what may have surfaced for future examination (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The basic task was to determine what had been learned from the research effort. An important point to consider, based on decades of failure and avoidance, does it appear that New Mexico intends to resolve the identified educational issues honestly, or as in the past, in the end, will progress disappear through no dedicated permanent corrective actions?

The accuracy of the findings was checked through multiple validity procedures. These included:

- The findings were evaluated in an in-person meeting with San Ildefonso staff and in individual meetings;

- The findings were evaluated in an in-person proposed meeting with the San Ildefonso school district, the participating school administrators, and the New Mexico Public Education Department personnel;
- The author clarified any personal bias that could have impacted the findings;
- The author spent a prolonged period of research time in New Mexico;
- The author used a peer debriefing to validate the research and findings. The individual is a New Mexico Native American and president of the board of directors at the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation, and a former Governor of one of the eight Pueblos of Northern New Mexico;
- The transcripts of each meeting were assembled in a master notebook. Each person interviewed was provided with a transcript of the discussion;
- A detailed summary of findings was shared with each participant with an opportunity for feedback from every participant (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

All consent forms used were provided in a field work notebook, and all questions about any aspect of the interview from participants were entirely answered before an interview was conducted. Any rare or questionable event occurring during any aspect of the interview process was documented as a matter of record. Any questionable answer was explored for clarification, understanding that some attendees may need to speak in clear English. The objective was to make all participants comfortable in a safe, honest place.

### **Data Analysis Actions**

An important technique used at the beginning of the interview cycle was to take the transcript of the first interview and think of the overall purpose of the research as the transcript is closely read. As the review progresses, again, thinking of the purpose of the research, note issues

and ideas that surface. This session resulted in ideas that benefited the conduct of the second interview. The author wrote a quick summary and conducted the same analysis after the second interview. Following this sequence sought to benefit the results as the interviews continued (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Following all interviews, the data were analyzed. As previously mentioned, each participant was assigned a coded number to ensure anonymity. The number was preceded by a letter code identifying the participant's level. For example, a category could start at S-1, S-2, and so on. A parent started at P-1, district L-1, high school H-1, Legislative L-1, Public Education Department M-1. Any Zoom interviews used the code Z-1, and so on. All recordings used this coding and were converted into a text document in Microsoft Word. Each of the individual interviews were summarized, and the grouping level were, in turn, summarized. By a detailed review of each level of interview, a grouping of common themes was extracted and discussed, which through comprehensive analysis, lead to the research findings and the detailed analysis of how each finding was determined. The final discussion examining the results of this qualitative study was to use the data in all aspects of the study to develop a descriptive analysis of overall themes, different ideas, and perspectives that give insight into solutions that will significantly improve the educational experience and success of San Ildefonso youth (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The critical part of data analysis was thoroughly evaluating all aspects of the detailed data assembled to determine what was happening with the research subject. The interview method followed an organized and structured plan to clarify the data. The following summary of how the interviews were structured aided the interpretation and analysis of interviews:

- Before the interview started, a structured checklist defined details such as the who, what, where, and time from a checklist of items;
- Another checklist was used to standardize the start of the interview with items such as a welcome, personal introductions, the expected structure of the interview, and the purpose. An essential item was to ask if there are any questions;
- The start of any interview has an essential point where the person being interviewed must be at ease and comfortable in understanding why participation is essential. Starting with a general question that opens the discussion naturally was an easy way to begin;
- Then, it was time to focus on the interview questions, spoken in a clear and understandable way. Look for ways to expand an understanding of what is being said. This technique expanded what was being said, possibly developing unintended essential information;
- Just as the beginning of the interview was structured, so must the closing be clearly defined, with sincere thanks and an ending from a checklist, explaining what follows the interview. The author answered any closing questions and assure the interviewee that his or her participation was essential to the success of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

As part of the interview process, reducing a large amount of data/information by reducing what has been gathered into a smaller number of specific categories is essential. The analysis was required by judging the critical nature of the information or theory. This process aided the focus of the research and benefited from after-interview margin notes and individual interview summaries that are part of each interview analysis. As mentioned, before any interviews were

conducted, the following steps were used: a pre-interview checklist, an entry or beginning checklist, a conduct items checklist, and a closing checklist.

After the first interview session, as mentioned, a comprehensive review by the author using the recording looked for themes and potential improvement options. This technique followed each interview. This included transcription and documenting the author's notes and comments, including general themes.

Once a series of interviews was complete, all data were revisited developing concepts were explored. Where is the research going, and what is being said? Compare the interview results with reference data. Are new items or discussion surfacing causing new directions? Next comes the coding of data. By coding, this process is developing in some way, like a shorthand designation of the collected data so it can be categorized effectively and organized, so trends begin to emerge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The developed coding was used to further explore themes, whereas, the themes show detail related to where the research was going and formed key sections to consider as findings emerged. The author drilled down on each of the emerging themes and tracked this information with reference data to compare the impact.

The tasking then began to tie all of the research together in a narrative that would develop into research findings. The author expected to develop a narrative describing how the research has been supported through interviews, reference materials, and analysis that is to be reported as conclusions. Developing a summary description for each assessed theme was helpful in describing the findings of the research. The coding produced code factors that were a natural find based on the existing situation, but surprise themes or codes also often appear; finally, often

something ‘out of the blue’ is developed that really is in the form of a new concept to address (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). One of these themes did appear with the suggestion to integrate daily school activity with the Pueblo Education Department tutors.

The final step in this research effort was to link, in Chapter V- Conclusions and Discussions, the history, references, interviews, current facts, proposals for action, future proposals, and projections with clear findings and projected expectations in an objective scholarly fashion.

## **CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the findings revealed during the two-week interview research field visit to New Mexico conducted during the last week of March 2023 and the first week of April 2023. There was considerable planning and scheduling required to achieve the results from in-person interviews that would provide the most accurate information supporting this study. The initial plan was to conduct 20 individual interviews with different levels of individuals who impact the education of San Ildefonso Pueblo students. The planning involved having the San Ildefonso Pueblo Education Department make all direct interview contacts to increase the opportunity for agencies to accept the request. As previously stated, the objective of the field research phase was to start with what Pueblo families had experienced and the perception of family issues facing education. Seven Pueblo families accepted the invitation to be interviewed due to a request for participants in the March 2023 edition of the Pueblo Department Education Newsletter. The overall result of requested organizational interviews, 14 of the 20 requested interviews were accepted. The results of all requested interviews will be discussed. The resulting themes and concerns will be highlighted. The chapter will begin with a description of the scope of Pueblo students, followed by a discussion of the Pueblo Education Department.

The research questions are again highlighted. The setting and the participants are next discussed. Following this initial detail, what each family offered will be explained, followed by each scoped level of organization discussion. In each descriptive case, significant direct quotations are included. Finally, the overarching themes and additional details and materials will be discussed in the summary of this chapter entitled Interview Findings, Themes, and Summary.



## **The Scope of Pueblo Students**

There is a total of 198 Head Start through post-secondary San Ildefonso Pueblo students tracked by the Pueblo Education Department as follows:

- 29 students are followed in post-secondary studies; (7 more recent HS graduates un-enrolled at present);
- 10 students are enrolled in Los Alamos High School;
- 32 students are enrolled in Pojoaque Valley High School;
- 14 students are enrolled in Santa Fe Indian School;
- 6 students are enrolled in various other high schools;
- 3 students are enrolled in Los Alamos Middle School;
- 8 students are enrolled in Pojoaque Middle School;
- 6 students are enrolled in Santa Fe Indian Middle School;
- 3 students are enrolled in various other middle schools;
- 8 students are enrolled in Los Alamos Elementary Schools;
- 29 students are enrolled in Pojoaque Elementary Schools;
- 9 students are enrolled in various other elementary schools;
- 33 students are enrolled in San Ildefonso Day School;
- 8 students are enrolled in Pueblo Head Start (R. Juliani, personal communication, May 15, 2023).

The question of why Pueblo students attend so many different schools involves several answers.

There are no designated schools for Pueblo students. Some Pueblo individuals live off the Pueblo and are closer to other schools other than schools close to the Pueblo. Some residents work at

Los Alamos National Laboratory and use that option to drop the students at school in Los Alamos. Transportation is another issue; student transportation is provided from the Pueblo to Pojoaque Schools, Santa Fe Indian School, and other nearby Pueblos. Another factor for Santa Fe Indian School is that it is the only school providing boarding for students. There is complete freedom of choice for where Pueblo students attend school but with very real transportation limitations.

### **The San Ildefonso Education Department**

The San Ildefonso Education Department is in a combined complex near Pueblo headquarters. The complex has multiple offices, a library, various meeting rooms, a covered outside area, an outside basketball court, and a playground. A sizable detached gym is currently under renovation, not technically part of the Education Department. The current staffing is headed by the Director of Education, supported by two full-time staff employees, one unfilled staff position, and various part-time employees. The Department Mission Statement is:

At Pueblo de San Ildefonso Department of Education, our mission is to enable community members to realize their full potential. We commit ourselves to our community by embracing cultural values, modern applications, and extending a helping hand as the go-to resource for educational support and professional development (San Ildefonso Department of Education Work Plan, 2020).

The education facility is a busy place. One of the most used programs is the 'After School Program,' which operates from September to May and is open to all ages of youth, presently serving about 20 children ages five to 13 years from three to five in the afternoon. Due to one high school's early release of students on Thursdays, the program begins at one in the

afternoon; the program is not offered on Fridays. Subjects covered are tutoring, snacks, computer time, nutrition discussions, arts & crafts, and games.

By far, the most significant activity is the 'Summer Education Enhancement Program,' which last year was attended by nearly 50 youths aged five to 16. Previous programs have had up to 80 attendees. This program starts in June and continues for eight weeks, Monday through Thursday. The program's focus changes yearly, including sports, library, arts and crafts, field trips, and computer learning. The summer program includes complimentary breakfast and lunch meals open to Pueblo residences. Additional temporary staffing is approved to assist with this program.

Other actions by the department include college tours both in and out of state, special tutoring, scholarships, staff school visits, Pueblo required meetings, response required for requests for information from state and other agencies, a monthly Education Bulletin, special events such as STEM Orientation Night, adult classes twice a week covering distinctive and famous San Ildefonso pottery and sewing, and the issuance of free school supplies. Other special programs provide health screening, speech therapy and focus on Head Start students. Approved funding exists for a necessary position to handle 'College and Career Readiness Coordination;' however, the position has been unfilled for many months. This position is necessary and critical to the success of the Education Department.

The stated goals in the Department Work Plan are:

- Provide free essential public library services to the legal service area, including circulating collections, basic reference collections, and internet access;

- Provide programs and resources to meet the needs of community members, including early intervention, special education services, tracking student achievement for the purpose of improving academic performance, promoting higher education, and fostering career readiness;
- Provide out-of-school time educational programming for youth, including afterschool program, summer program, and seasonal summits;
- Incorporate tradition and culture in all activities, including arts, crafts, site visits, seminars, and workshops to teach and encourage the revitalization and preservation of the Tewa way of life (San Ildefonso Department of Education Work Plan, 2020).

### **The Research Questions**

1. What critical factors impact the education of San Ildefonso students?
  - a. How has the Native American culture impacted the education of San Ildefonso students?
  - b. How has the Yazzie vs. the State of New Mexico court ruling impacted the education of San Ildefonso students?
2. What factors would improve the education of San Ildefonso students?
  - a. What resources does the San Ildefonso Pueblo Education Department need to improve the education of its students?
  - b. What staffing does the San Ildefonso Pueblo Education Department need to improve the education of its students?

## **The Setting and Participant Participation**

The Pueblo was the center for most activity supporting the two-week visit. The author was provided with workspace at the Pueblo when necessary. The initial entry briefing for the senior staff was conducted in the San Ildefonso Pueblo headquarters briefing room with the Governor, the Tribal Administrator, and the Director of Education. The family interviews were conducted in a classroom in the Pueblo Education Department. Other organizational meetings were conducted at each site's nearby headquarters in Santa Fe, Los Alamos, or Espanola. Meetings were recorded.

All the family members who signed up to be interviewed were women and their daughters, but they spoke of male children or grandchildren. Every individual interviewed was anxious to participate and contribute very useful information.

### **Interview P-1**

The first interview conducted was best described as an entry interview on the first day at the Pueblo. In attendance were the Pueblo Governor, the Tribal Administrator, and the Director of Education. After discussing the IRB approval and other introductory information, the discussion turned to the approved interview question discussion. The discussion was frank and open. Several themes emerged from the discussion. The first subject addressed resulted in a continuing theme, "My concern is the lack of interest with many parents in youth education," continuing "How to motivate parents to be involved?" A possible solution was discussed in evaluating outreach plans. Brainstorming with the community could be helpful. Role models of successful, educated Pueblo members returning to speak to the community can be helpful in creating achievement interest. Another concern was that the Education Department provides

many actions to enhance education, but some parents do not take advantage of the existing programs. The subject of the need for the Pueblo to have a Strategic Plan for Education that does not currently exist and a combined Pueblo Strategic Plan for all Pueblo activities with both Pueblo Council and member input would be helpful. The group's greatest concerns were the drug and alcohol issue, especially Fentanyl, and trying to preserve Native American culture. The group discussed, "Are we preserving our Pueblo traditions? Where will we be in 20 years?" Does the New Mexico Public Education Department listen to the Pueblo? Yes, the leadership says they do, but the information seems to get shelved at the local level. The Staff changes at the State Department of Education are not helpful. One comment was: "As a Pueblo, we do not give much attention to the local Native American school councils, or school board meetings, we could, but we seldom interact. We go to state meetings but have little involvement at the local level." The group does not feel the state provides sufficient funding to support Pueblo education. A strategic plan would better support and address specific goals and funding needs.

## **Interview P-2**

This was the first parent-child interview on the first day at the Pueblo. The mother is in her late 30s and is employed outside the Pueblo as a social worker. She has two biological children, one in high school and one in middle school. Additionally, she has two foster children, one in high school and one in middle school. The foster children are her niece and nephew, whose mother passed away. After all parent interviews were completed, this interview was the most beneficial. The reason was that the mother's education started in the Pueblo Head Start program and was significantly impacted by support from the Pueblo Education Department. This experience instilled the need for quality education in the family, which greatly impacted the education of her four children. Three are being educated in Los Alamos schools, and one at Santa

Fe Indian School. Through her education, the mother is employed at Los Alamos National Laboratory. The oldest daughter is a four-point honors student at Los Alamos High School. She has been pre-approved to attend New Mexico State University in the biotech program because of her achievements. In an interesting twist, the younger daughter attends Santa Fe Indian School for one simple reason: "I don't want to be around White people." The family honored this daughter's request.

The biggest negative theme discussed by the group was that Pueblo leaders do not encourage the youth and should be more involved. When considering the Pueblo culture, tribal elders are an untapped resource and are very helpful when contacted in person. There is a great sense of belonging for Pueblo members because of the long history of the Pueblo's location and the fact that, historically, the Pueblo was not relocated; this is important. Pueblo culture is strong and alive, as is Tewa language. Another negative impact on education is that there is no bus service to Los Alamos, the school with the highest math and reading scores.

On the positive side, the scholarship options offered are great, especially the newly added amount based on the grade-point average. The oldest daughter is the president of the Native American Culture Club at Los Alamos High School. She has experienced racial comments at school because of her high achievements, especially in math, like: "Why is an Indian in this accelerated math class." However, as an employee for five years at Los Alamos National Laboratory in Los Alamos, the author is not surprised at that expressed attitude. The daughter's performance would quickly counter these comments. The mother is an active member of the Los Alamos High School Native American parent organization. An important theme that would help Los Alamo's teachers to understand Native American culture would be periodic visits by Pueblo leadership or Education Department leadership that would explain aspects of Pueblo culture and

why Pueblo students ask to be absent for certain important cultural events. There is no real understanding of why absences are necessary without knowing the cultural impact.

Neither the parent nor the daughter was aware of the Yazzie lawsuit. The daughter is a part-time employee tutoring at the Pueblo Education Department; she knows the lack of teachers at the Pueblo Day School. For example, the principal is teaching classes of combined grades due to the school's lack of qualified teachers. According to the daughter, the results cause the students to receive less than complete education. This issue impacts the daughter's tutoring because, on a day in the classroom, the teacher is only spending part-time teaching each grade which impacts the child's knowledge; this lack of understanding greatly impacts the tutoring effort. A partial solution, the daughter suggested, would be hiring additional tutors for the After School Program. The daughter suggested that the same issue exists in Head Start. A theme is that the shortage of teachers is causing a deficiency in youth education. The mother stressed just how much education is a family issue. Family involvement and support are critical to improving Pueblo youth's education.

### **Interview P-3**

This interview again clearly showed the impact of different schools on the quality of education. This mother is in her 30s and is employed outside the Pueblo as a classroom aid at a Montessori preschool in Los Alamos. She has two children, one in high school and one in elementary school. This mother strongly commented about her son and daughter's education, starting with education issues caused by a teacher shortage in the Pueblo Day School. One year, her daughter had her teacher switched three times in one semester. A complete lack of effective speech therapy available at the Pueblo impacted her daughter's education, representing a clear theme needing correction. The daughter transferred to Los Alamos schools and now, through



Title Seven, has effective help. “Los Alamos wants to help my daughter, and she benefits.” The mother stated: “There is more quality at Los Alamos schools, more opportunity; I have seen the difference in Los Alamos.” Another important innovation at Los Alamos is called ‘Saturday School’ from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Saturday mornings, affording students to get effective tutoring and offering a special opportunity to complete assignments without losing credit. The program is very responsive. Another benefit from Los Alamos is 24-hour feedback from teachers on any issue of concern. The mother’s son has been in Los Alamos since first grade, and her comment: “This has been a real eye-opener!.” Los Alamos now has a class in Native American history. The only negative issue is that there is no Tewa language class. Her children have suffered no prejudice while in Los Alamos. The mother never received this quality education when attending Pojoaque High School.

An important theme for progress in education is to have tribal officials, including the governor, members of the tribal council, and the Pueblo Education Department, more involved with school graduations, award ceremonies, and events. This is an important aspect of support, being seen as involved in supporting the education of Pueblo students. The Education Department should make meaningful and frequent visits to primary schools supporting Pueblo youth, another strong theme.

#### **Interview P-4**

This interview is with the principal of the Pueblo Day School. The Day School is funded and operates as a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) school. The school has eight staff members and 31 students. The staff includes a cook, bus driver, and technician as part-time employees. There are five on the instructional staff. The school has hired an additional instructor who will be a special education teacher next semester. The BIA hiring process clearance process is very

lengthy, especially the security clearance part. The school is in the advertising process to hire a kindergarten teacher, but the BIA process has yet to produce any leads. The BIA teacher salary used to be higher than the New Mexico teacher salary; however, the New Mexico Governor recently raised teachers' salaries by \$10K, now exceeding BIA wages. Add to this the housing and travel expenses, which makes recruitment challenging.

When considering the facilities and students, there are very few problems. The families are very supportive, and the school has few discipline issues. The only thing to be described as a potential problem is student motivation, which requires attention. This could be improved by cultural attention. She mentioned: "We had a Tewa instructor who planned to assist; however, we lost the instructor and have not found a replacement." We could consider attempting to have successful graduates return to help motivate the students, but we have not addressed this idea. We have also considered having parents with special skills, like Pueblo crafts, visit the school as a motivator, but our efforts have met with hesitancy from elders. The school could also benefit from a periodic visit by the Pueblo Governor or members of the Pueblo Council.

Because this is a BIA facility, the school receives no benefits from the Yazzie court case. While on the same Pueblo, because BIA manages the school, there is some coordination and sharing of information with the Pueblo Education Department. However, as a theme, the coordination could be better. For example, the Pueblo Summer Program interests many of the school's parents and students. The information is shared, but the coordination could be better.

### **Interview P-5**

This interviewee is a grandmother in her 50s raising four grandchildren, one in kindergarten, one in fourth grade, one in Head Start, and one infant, with two older daughters in

high school. She stated: “The Pueblo Learning Center is the most positive factor in my children’s education.” She added: “The After School Program is a great plus for my family.” She continued: “The center has always been there for me.” She said her older daughters are both in Santa Fe Indian School. One is in the boarding dorm program at the school, and the other returns home each night. We have used the Pueblo Day School, and it is nice that the classes are small; however, the students don’t get homework. Two grandchildren are at Pojoaque, and one is in Head Start on the Pueblo. The Pueblo Head Start program is difficult to get into because of the income restriction. The family lets the children choose which school they want to attend.

The interviewee added that Pueblo culture is very important, and the students receive Tewa language training at Pojoaque and Santa Fe Indian School. All of the children are involved and interested in the Tewa language tradition. Another suggested addition to the Pueblo would be a childcare addition to the Pueblo Education complex. A childcare center integrated with the Pueblo Education complex would benefit early learning and Pueblo members. She is not aware of the details of the Yazzie court case. Another strong theme during the interview was the lack of Pueblo officials who attend events that support the Pueblo youth. Some council members are the ones who participate, but appearance and involvement should be a priority focus to show strong support. The interviewee works for the Pueblo and is involved in transportation issues, which include roads, sidewalks, and bus transportation. She suggested that a major theme should be an overall strategic plan for transportation focused on student transportation. Pojoaque and Santa Fe Indian Schools cover transportation to and from those schools. Pojoaque leases a bus service, and Santa Fe Indian School owns one. Roundtrip transportation is needed to support attendance at all Los Alamos Schools. However, a summit on the needs for transportation should include all Pueblo needs. Planning would include funding, tasks, routes, ownership, leasing option, drivers,

and overall goals. The ‘Blue’ inter-Pueblo bus operates at a reduced cycle due to the lack of available drivers and Pueblo-restricted routes.

### **Interview P-6**

The author had an opportunity to meet with and interview a former San Ildefonso Governor who previously worked at Los Alamos and was instrumental in getting permission to admit San Ildefonso students to Los Alamos schools. His initial work has allowed what is today a clear, welcoming acceptance of Pueblo students. The author has heard from many interviewed sources that Los Alamos schools accept and do exceptional tracking of Pueblo students once enrolled. Teacher feedback and effective counseling have been reported as exceptional, with a 24-hour return of emails. The cultural exceptionalism of Santa Fe Indian School was also discussed, and the quality of teachers at the school was discussed as a positive. Nineteen New Mexico Pueblos manage the Santa Fe Indian School, which is very connected with Native American culture. There was considerable discussion of the positive value of the Pueblo Council and the Governor’s involvement in educational awards, graduation, and functional events. One comment: “This impresses the kids that the Pueblo backs us, and we as students are important.”

### **Interview P-7**

The mother in this interview is in her early 30s and is employed by the Pueblo’s Health and Human Services function as a community health worker. She has two children, one in high school and one in elementary school. This interview was very useful because of the detail it provided on communication issues. The parent had attended Pojoaque schools, and her children now also attend Pojoaque schools. She had very positive things to say about the Pueblo Education Department. She explained that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pueblo often did

not have good internet, which hurt the remote education of her children. In that situation, the Education Department contacted the Pojoaque schools and received assignments that helped keep her children on track with their studies. She mentioned other benefits the Education Department provided that directly helped the students, such as school supplies, school backpacks, and a senior graduation gift.

The most important negative issue is communication with some Pojoaque High School teachers. She stated: “At Pojoaque High School, it seems if you are Native American, you are at the back of the line with slow or no response to concerns with your children’s education.” She has often had to go to the principal to get help. Things have somewhat improved since a new Native American Liaison person was hired. The interviewee has a system on her phone that allows her to track her child’s progress, grades, and attendance. When she sees something of concern, she attempts to contact the teachers, but often there are long delays or no response.

The interviewee has little knowledge of the Yazzie court action or any impact on Pueblo education. Concerning Pueblo culture, she sees less focus on culture today than when she attended school. She feels the most significant improvement that could improve her children’s education would be a focus by the Pueblo Education Department to improve the response communication between the Pueblo-attended schools and the parents. Naturally, this is focused on the issues associated with Pojoaque, as previously mentioned.

### **Interview P-8**

This mother is in her 50s and is employed by the Pueblo. She has five children, one in high school, one in college, and three young adults working locally. Two of the working adults are college graduates. Her one child is currently a high school student; the other children were all

educated in the Pojoaque school system. She has been and is very involved with the high school and now is the vice chair of the Native American Parents Club. When asked why all of her children were in Pojoaque and not Santa Fe Indian School or Los Alamos, she said that when she was in school, she attended a Catholic boarding school in Santa Fe. Santa Fe Indian School was their rival, and remembered that she did not want to have her children attend a childhood rival school.

As for Los Alamos, when her first child started school, Los Alamos did not accept out-of-district or Native American San Ildefonso Pueblo students. The interviewee discussed many positive things about Pojoaque schools that are good. The children are involved in sports, and their dedication to Native American culture is a plus. Some cultural benefits are: Tewa is counted for foreign language credit, a Native Liaison staff member at the school, a Native American Parents Club exists, and the school understands excused cultural absences. The Parents' Club meets monthly, and the school listens to the group's concerns. A very good recent addition is night school which provides targeted assistance to students needing tutoring. Night school is a big help to struggling students and provides additional work that, when complete, allows extra credit. This is a very positive motivator for her children and has greatly benefited her family, a positive theme. She feels that night school is especially important because most teachers effectively explain concepts, but some do not. When concepts during the school day are not adequately explained, students question the concept; some teachers just expect the children to use the textbooks to complete their understanding. Night school assists in correcting this issue. Software connects the mother to school performance and helps her to monitor their performance and attendance closely.

The mother has had a positive impression of the Pueblo Education Department since the current director arrived. She is a member of the scholarship committee at the Education Department. She added: “Rick is sincere and asks what we need.” She added: “Rick has built the Pueblo Education Department into a productive and effective unit.” When considering the Yazzie court case, she is familiar with the case, having attended an informational briefing detailing the case. However, she sees little, if any, resulting changes due to the court case. When discussing the Pueblo leadership and the Pueblo Council, last year, the Council lost the biggest supporter of Pueblo education when that member passed away. She believes the Council could pay more attention to educational events that benefit Pueblo students' motivation. She made a very positive comment about the local Northern Community College. Her daughter graduated from that college and is now a teacher in the local area. Her brother also graduated from the same college and now owns a successful local business.

### **Interview P-9**

The mother is in her 70s and is now retired. She has adult children and two grandchildren in middle and high school. This interviewee had been educated in the Pueblo Day school and has two grown sons who also were students at the Day School. She now has custody of the two grandchildren. Because of a divorce, she moved to another state for some time but now lives in the Pueblo. She complemented the performance of the Pueblo Day School in the quality of the graduates. After saying that most Day School graduates go to Santa Fe Indian School, she added that last year's valedictorian at the Santa Fe school was educated at the Pueblo Day School. Her positive comment considering the Pueblo Education Department was that: “It is a place to come if a child needs help or assistance.” She added: “Some parents just use the Department After School Program as a babysitter, while other children need help.” She believes that the

Department should have the training to better interact with the children in determining the purpose for attending. She stated it is important to determine whether they want to socialize or have needs that require focused attention. In her opinion, what is needed is a college-trained professional to assist with the conduct of operations. She believes they are doing what they can do with the current staff, but additional professionally trained staff are required to be effective. When discussing Pueblo culture, she feels that division within the Pueblo degrades the culture, and the younger generation's loss of Tewa as a language also degrades Pueblo culture. She was not aware of the Yazzie court case.

### **Interview P-10**

This mother is in her 50s and is employed by the Pueblo. She has three children, one is in high school, one is an adult, and one young child is not yet in high school. She mentioned that the positive aspect of the educational benefits for her and her child were the financial aid through scholarships. Also, as a parent, her daughter has been significantly helped through the Pueblo Education Department after-school tutoring. She added: "In my education, I got a Chromebook to help me with my studies." The Education Department has especially helped her daughter when she struggles to understand certain concepts. The Pueblo college tours have helped keep her daughter motivated and excited about attending college. The interviewee suggested that the Pueblo Education Department consider inviting the schools with the most student interest to attend a college visit program at the Pueblo. The key would involve students and their parents by linking them with prospective schools in making initial contact and following up with periodic contact by phone or email. The interviewee was not aware of the Yazzie court case.

The interviewee suggested the Pueblo Education Department bulletin board is a very useful tool in providing information on benefits available to Native Americans focused benefits,



especially scholarship information. The information on the board provides more directed information than doing a computer search. The Pueblo adult programs are especially helpful in preserving certain aspects of Pueblo culture, such as pottery and sewing. The sewing classes and demonstrations give important insight into the design and creation of clothing used for Native dances.

The interviewee has three children, two girls and a younger son. The oldest daughter, now 20, and her other daughter, a senior, were educated at Pojoaque High School. Her son is attending eighth grade in a Montessori school. Next year, he will transfer to Santa Fe Indian School. He attends the school because, where they lived at the time, this school was the only seventh and eighth-grade school within a reasonable distance from the home. She is concerned that her son will be behind when he enters high school because of the style of education he has received to date. The final suggestion to improve Pueblo education would be establishing a wellness or workout facility and expanding the Pueblo Education Department facility to allow for more planned activities.

### **Interview P-11**

This interviewee is a mother and a grandmother who works for the Pueblo and has seen many changes since she has been a member of the Pueblo. She said: "We all used to go to the Pueblo Day school until the sixth grade and walk to school; now the Pueblo school has only about 30 students." There was no Pueblo Education Department; now, we have great benefits in having this department for resources and information. There are great scholarship benefits available and much focus on promoting college attendance. The Education Department recently conducted a college orientation tour to several New Mexico colleges, all paid for by the state as part of the Yazzie court case actions. We are seeing some benefits from increased funding from

the Yazzie court case. Many children use the Pueblo scholarship program and one of the New Mexico state scholarship opportunities to pay for college. There is an increased interest in college education mainly through actions of the Pueblo Education Department. Several college graduates have returned to visit the Pueblo in an effort to motivate the children to attend college.

Another positive effort to motivate education includes the annual awards event and parade to celebrate the end of the school year and graduation. The celebration includes a parade where students decorate parents' cars and ride through the Pueblo to the sports field. The Pueblo Governor and Council members meet the children, honor their accomplishments, and have a nice catered meal with a gift for graduates. When asked what could be done to improve education at the Pueblo the interviewee mentioned two things. She said: "The Pueblo Education Department needs more space and to increase the staff to expand contact with area schools." She added:

"The Pueblo Governor and Council need to be more involved in supporting education, they do some now, but I don't know if it occurs to them how much their even brief visit motivates the children. They have an open invitation to all education events, school award programs, sports events, and Native American school events."

All this takes time, but seeing them attend or participate makes a big difference to the students.

### **Interview L-1**

This interview was with the district manager for Los Alamos schools. The schools in Los Alamos are among the best in New Mexico. With the Los Alamos Laboratory in this community, the highly educated residents demand a superior school system. A special system has always existed for these schools to be exceptional in this long-time, relatively closed city. A little-known fact is that the land involved in creating Los Alamos city, county, and laboratory was originally

part of San Ildefonso Pueblo. In the 1940s, the United States Government took back much of San Ildefonso Pueblo land to create Los Alamos and develop nuclear weapons that ended World War II. However, 14 years ago, an effort was started to integrate San Ildefonso Pueblo students, technically out of the district, into Los Alamos schools. A Native American Parent Advisory group was formed, and today, there are 21 San Ildefonso Pueblo students enrolled. The district has worked hard to accommodate this group of students. The district has a full-time Native American liaison who sponsors the student Native American club. The district knew effective communication and good contact with Pueblo families would be important. Every effort is made for the principals and teachers to know their students' families. As mentioned by other interviewees, communication between parents, teachers, and school administrators is exceptionally important. The district made a commitment that once a Pueblo student became a Los Alamos student, the district promised to work with that student to graduate. The innovative Saturday school option has been very helpful in aiding student success. This program allows students needing extra help to receive necessary assistance promptly. There is also a before-school program for situations where transportation is an issue, another innovative move that teachers' staff. The state does not give the district any credit for these innovative programs.

The transportation issue for San Ildefonso Pueblo is recognized, and it should be able to be resolved by a joint effort, possibly adding additional stops to the blue bus system. Attention is given to racial concerns. However, the Laboratory has recently hired a much more diverse staff, and racial issues seldom occur. The virus issue did have an impact on discipline and drug issues, but this is improving today. The Yazzie court case has not produced any real benefits except some additional funding which appears to be put into special programs with no validation of results. Another interesting New Mexico state issue is that the New Mexico Governor has

recently directed that all students get free meals. Because of the income level of many families in Los Alamos, only a few students have been eligible for free meals. However, now the schools need to provide 4,000 free meals costing approximately \$500,000, and how will this be paid for? The state has not mentioned how this item will be funded.

The biggest issue that complicates the education effort in New Mexico is turnover. This year 20 district leaders have resigned: last year, 37 resigned. Looking at the state, the New Mexico Public Education Department has had four directors in just over four years. Anytime a key leader changes, it creates change and takes time to adapt. All of this delays efficient progress. The district manager added, "Turnover is a key issue that delays progress." The turnover has many reasons: there are many fewer college graduates entering teaching; the salaries in New Mexico are still too low; teachers, especially in the highly educated environment of Los Alamos, often face unjustified criticism from residents; and today, the workload and stress for teachers have greatly increased.

When asked what the Pueblo can do to improve the education of Pueblo students educated at Los Alamos schools, the answer was to create effective after-school programs that would complement what is taught during the day in school. This would include a strongly focused after-school program focused on homework and tutoring that connects students to education. For example, there are not enough Native American students to have Tewa language instruction, which could be a function of the Pueblo. There could be a benefit in a joint planning session between our district and the Pueblo as part of a strategic planning session to see how we could improve both functions. There was a discussion of a remote online school education program operated by Los Alamos schools receiving high praise from students and effectively educating students, some at the Pueblo, where necessary because of special situations.

**Interview F-1**

This interview has a different scope and develops new approaches to issues and themes. This interview is with two college-educated Native Americans involved in advancing solutions for all Native Americans but with a focus on Northern New Mexico, including San Ildefonso Pueblo. They mentioned that there are 23 tribes in the state. Both stated the same theme that communication between the state and rural New Mexico, which represents the majority of Northern New Mexico, is ineffective and non-functional. Since *Yazzie vs. the State*, there have been no improvements in the quality of education. The state's plan seems to be let's keep everything the same. The continually changing leadership at the state Public Education Department and acting managers in essential leadership positions cancel any effort to address the real changes needing to be made. Essential issues that need to be addressed are the Native American language and traditions and creating interaction and effective listening and communication with tribal leaders.

When discussing the report issued by the group called, Think New Mexico, 'A Roadmap for Rethinking Public Education in New Mexico,' they addressed this organization and its 10-Point Plan as part of the problem. The group engaged little or no Native American leadership to ask what would work best for tribal students. The big question for tribes to answer is how they define Native American success in education. The report issued by the Tribal Education Alliance with support of the Leadership Institute involving the Santa Fe Indian School, the Native American Budget and Policy Institute at the University of New Mexico, and the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty issued in December 2020 is a recognized solution. The Tribal Education Alliance Report, according to both interviewees, was never considered in Think New

Mexico's 2022 report. The Tribal Education Alliance report 52-page report had three comprehensive solutions and a plan for action: Implementing the Tribal Remedy Framework.

According to one interviewee: "The lack of trust and communication impede progress." Education improvement cannot happen without collaboration with the tribes. Simply stated, improving Native American education will never get done without this cooperation. No person leading the Department of Public Education clearly understood and addressed this aspect of the task. One interviewee had the opinion: "At the present time, the unannounced but practiced approach to any Native American student in Northern New Mexico public schools are: Leave who you are behind; your language, your identity, your culture don't have a place here."

One interviewee offered an example, recently, a state lead education focus group traveled to every New Mexico County sponsored by the Public Education Department. The group met nearby at Northern Community College in Espanola, New Mexico, and asked what in education is not working. Responses continued for a considerable time. The next question was, what is working well? And the answer was that no comment was made, only total silence. The state-wide focus groups are completed, with complete silence from the Public Education Department. The teacher shortage was also highlighted, but there is a positive trend; the number of students enrolled in education at Northern Community College in Espanola has increased this year by 57%, with 36% of the total being Native American students.

### **Interview T-1**

This interview was conducted with a former New Mexico teacher of the year, a former staff person at the New Mexico Public Education Department, and the associate director of a results-oriented think tank of accomplished New Mexicans called Think New Mexico. The

organization's Board of Directors has 11 individuals with comprehensive New Mexico experience, including two Native Americans. The organization issued a comprehensive 10-point plan in 2022 to improve education in the state (Albuquerque Journal, 2022). The initial discussion began with the former New Mexican teacher of the year stating two themes of what is needed to improve education across the board in New Mexico. The first is reducing the class size, and the second is better teacher training in many areas. For example, in her first classroom with primarily Native American students, she had 26 fourth-grade students with various educational abilities and special needs, such as three students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and English Learners, and she was provided no mentor. There were many barriers to success. Some days, the Pueblo would close, and she would have no students come to class or any warning or understanding of why the situation occurred. There was an understanding that students should not use their native language in class. Still, they did, putting her in an uncomfortable situation of trying to respect their culture, while at the same time supporting discipline. She found it difficult to connect culturally with families or students without a mentor, required by New Mexico statute, or specialized training. Certainly, more Native American-certified teachers and assistance from designated mentors would improve this situation.

Both individuals stated that there appear to be numerous groups intent on defending turf, with a little cooperative spirit. Both are very aware of the Yazzie/Martinez court case. The 10-point plan is focused on one mission, to improve education in New Mexico and bring the state into compliance with Yazzie/Martinez. Turnover in New Mexican education is a key reason for little progress. Every change in leadership results in doing some things differently. The next biggest reason for little progress is communication. There has been lots of talk about cultural framework; however, what this means is discussed at high levels, but the plans and ideas never

get to classroom teachers. Both individuals are aware of the Tribal Education Alliance, New Mexico, and the proposed Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Education proposal by the Alliance. The proposed solutions in the Alliance and the 10-point plan, with an open discussion with both groups and a stable Public Education Department, could significantly improve state education direction. The intentional division will lead to no progress. In addressing performance statistics, the annual state assessment done by the Public Education Department needs to be standardized rather than have changes directed by each New Mexico governor that prevents longitudinal analysis.

### **Interview New Mexico Public Education Department**

Every possible attempt was made to contact the New Mexico Public Education Department with no success or response. With as many different attempts by the Pueblo Education Department used, it is obvious the organization was not interested in cooperating in any fashion. Possibly the retirement of the third Secretary Kurt Steinhaus announced on January 28, 2023, and the February 21, 2023 announcement of the fourth Secretary during the New Mexico Governor Michelle Grisham's tenure had something to do with no interest in addressing the Pueblo's request.

### **Interview Espanola HS**

According to a knowledgeable interviewee, a request to visit Espanola High School was not submitted because there are currently no San Ildefonso students attending, or intending to attend this low-rated school with a student graduation rate of 56%.



**Interview Pojoaque HS**

The Pueblo Education Department requested to interview the district superintendent for Pojoaque Schools, and an agreement was made, but without a date and time. In a call to make an appointment, the superintendent was out of the state and was not returning in time for an interview. The information on the impact of this school on Pueblo education will be presented from the experience of the Pueblo families who attend and publicly available information.

**Interview Santa Fe Indian School**

All attempts to speak to a representative at Santa Fe Indian School were unanswered, including a contact provided by the San Ildefonso Pueblo Governor. All texts and phone calls to the individual named were verified as received; however, with no response. Nineteen New Mexico Pueblos, including San Ildefonso, manage and operate this school. During the initial planning on August 26, 2022, the Santa Fe Indian School Family Engagement Coordinator had, in writing, agreed to participate in an interview for the research study. There must be an unstated reason for this omission. This leaves the author with only publicly available information and statistics.

**Interview New Mexico Legislature**

Despite numerous attempts by the author to contact a known, for 20-plus years, member of the New Mexico Legislative Assembly, all requested phone and text messages were verified as delivered but were unanswered. Also, attempts by the Pueblo for an interview were unanswered.

## **Interview Findings, Themes, and Summary**

The approach used to summarize the interview findings and themes will be to return to the details of each interview and consider how each impacts the research questions and themes. This will build an understanding of what will be presented in the following chapter.

### **Research Question 1**

What critical factors impact the education of San Ildefonso students?

- a. How has Native American culture impacted the education of San Ildefonso students?
- b. How has Yazzie vs. the State of New Mexico court ruling impacted the education of San Ildefonso students?

### **Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-1**

This interview highlighted a critical concern the lack of interest by many parents in the education of their students and how this could be improved. A possible solution was to reevaluate outreach efforts through discussions with community members. Another aspect of the discussion centered around this research question is that a strategic plan, which currently does not exist, would be a critical factor that could impact the organization, direction, planning, funding, and evaluation of Pueblo efforts. The Pueblo could also improve the interaction at the local level with local Native American councils and school officials. The subject of ‘Are we preserving our Pueblo culture’ is a big concern, which would be part of our strategic planning and evaluation process. Except for some additional funding, there is little impact resulting from the Yazzie court ruling. Discussions occur with New Mexico Department of Public Education officials, but nothing seems to result from those discussions. One final concern is the impact of drugs such as Fentanyl and alcohol.

### **Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-2**

This mother and family emphasize education as a key to success for her four children. The mother was initially educated in the Pueblo Head Start program. Three of her children are in school in highly-rated Los Alamos. Because of racial and cultural feelings, the fourth chose to be educated at Santa Fe Indian School, which the family supported. Addressing the first research question, both the mother and daughter believe a critical factor impacting the education of Pueblo students is the lack of encouragement and support from Pueblo leaders. This lack of showing interest impacts the cultural pride that should be part of the leaders' efforts. The Pueblo language, Tewa, has an important impact on the Pueblo's culture and should be strongly supported with efforts to educate Pueblo youth. The Pueblo elders should be considered an asset in advancing the Pueblo culture with students.

The Pueblo Education Department should be more active in school visitation and supporting Native American interests and culture at school meetings and interactions. A necessary and important critical education factor should involve providing complete student bus service to and from Los Alamos schools. The available scholarships are another critical factor positively impacting Pueblo students. The daughter commented on how much the lack of qualified Pueblo Day School teachers has impacted the education of the schools' students; the daughter tutors as a part-time employee at the Pueblo Education After School Program. Neither the daughter nor the mother were aware of Yazzie court case.

### **Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-3**

This interview again highlighted the lack of teachers in the Pueblo Day School. The interviewee, a mother had strong feelings of a direct impact on her daughter caused by this

deficiency in that during one semester at the school, her daughter had her teacher switched three times, which harmed her learning. Also, the lack of available accessibility to speech therapy hindered her success. After transferring to Los Alamos schools, the daughter receives excellent education and support. A critical factor impacting her daughter's education is that "Los Alamos wants to help educate my daughter." The Saturday School option is a very positive addition to helping the daughter's education, plus other Pueblo students. The interviewee added another benefit from her daughter's schooling; there is a 24-hour return from teachers when the mother has questions or concerns. The only cultural issue with Los Alamos schools is that there are no Tewa language classes; however, there is a class in Native American history. The interviewee is not aware of the Yazzie court decision. The issue of the Pueblo leadership, including the governor, council, and the Pueblo Education Department, being more involved in graduations, award ceremonies, and events is an important aspect of cultural support for students.

#### **Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-4**

This interview was with the principal of the Pueblo Day School, which the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs operates, finances, and controls. Other interviews show that a teacher vacancy is acknowledged and impacts classroom activities. There are cases where more than one teacher teaches multiple grade classes. Since the Bureau controls the teacher hiring and security clearance process, the hiring process can take several months. Add to the long hiring process, the cost of living, the entry salary, and the availability of housing, and it is challenging to find qualified and security-cleared teachers. One special education teacher in the hiring process is expected to report in August. One critical issue for students at the school is student motivation and cultural learning. The school lost its Tewa teacher and has not found a replacement. The school has recently considered asking recent graduates to return to address the student body to

help motivate or add cultural Pueblo craft events or demonstrations but has not started any. Another action that would help would be visits by the Governor or members of the Pueblo Council.

Because the Bureau of Indian Affairs operates the school, the Yazzie court case has no impact on school operations.

“While the school is at the Pueblo, we have contact with the Pueblo Department of Education, but that linkage could be improved. Many of our parents expect to have their children participate in the Pueblo Summer Program. A visit to describe the program by the Education Department would also benefit participation.”

#### **Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-5**

This interviewee stressed the importance of the Pueblo Learning Center for her family in achieving educational success. She is raising four grandchildren and has two daughters in Santa Fe Indian School. She stated: “The center has always been there for me.” The family has had children in the Pueblo Day School with the benefit of small classes. These two children are now split between Santa Fe Indian School and Pojoaque. One grandchild is too young to attend school. They also have one grandchild in Head Start. The family lets the children choose the school they want to attend. Again, she feels all the children are successfully educated with excellent support from Pueblo Education Department.

Pueblo culture is important to the family and especially the Tewa language training. All the children receive excellent cultural attention, including language training. Another cultural benefit would be visits to all Pueblo-attended schools and education awards and events by the Governor and members of the Pueblo Council. Another future help for advancing education

would be a childcare addition to the Pueblo Education Department. This would allow an early-age focus on education as a motivator for our youth. The transportation to and from all schools should be evaluated to benefit attendance, including Los Alamos schools. The interviewee is unaware of the Yazzie court case or any resulting benefits.

### **Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-6**

This interviewee had been a previous Pueblo Governor who had been instrumental in opening Los Alamos schools to San Ildefonso Pueblo students. His children were successfully educated at Los Alamos high achievement schools. However, the areas for improvement in attending Los Alamos schools were transportation and more cultural focus. He added that there had been significant cultural advances at Los Alamos through establishing the Native American Parent organization, a student Native American club, and a Native American history class, but more could be done. He also commented on the excellence of cultural attention at the Santa Fe Indian School. The involvement of the Governor and Council in educational matters, such as awards, graduation, and functional events, is an important matter impacting students' cultural focus and motivation. He knows all aspects of the Yazzie court case but has not seen much progress impacting Pueblo students.

### **Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-7**

This interview benefited the subject of how effectively the Pueblo Education Department assists as a critical factor impacting Pueblo education. During the recent virus emergency, the Education Department did many extra actions to ensure her children had schoolwork enabling them to keep up with classes. This would not have happened without the involvement of the Department. Also, the distribution of essential school supplies by the Education Department

incentivizes student progress. A critical factor impacting her students' education is the lack of effective communication with some teachers at Pojoaque schools. She has often had to contact the principal to get help or answers. She has a cellphone application where she monitors her children's progress and attendance. When she sees a need to contact the teacher, there is often no response or a long delay in receiving an answer. Things have improved since a Native American liaison was hired, which shows the importance of this position in the school system. She believes that a focus of the Pueblo Education Department should be to emphasize the importance of prompt feedback during visits to all Pueblo-attended schools. The interviewee had little knowledge of the Yazzie court case or any benefits resulting from the case.

#### **Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-8**

This mother has four children in Pojoaque Schools and is involved in school matters, including vice chair of the Native American Parents Club. The mother is very pleased with the school's performance. The school's beneficial and critical factors benefiting her students include teaching the Tewa language, a night school to benefit when students struggle with certain subjects or concepts, the school sports program, and the ease of transportation to and from the school. However, there is a difference in the quality of some of the teachers. This issue involves some teachers' inability to explain concepts, which causes the students to rely on their textbooks or night school to understand certain concepts. The interviewee is very impressed with how the current Director of the Pueblo Education Department has advanced the impact of the department as a critical factor benefiting Pueblo students. The Department focuses on asking how they can help and make improvements. She also complimented the nearby Northern New Mexico Community College on educating two of her older children, who now have successful careers.

She is very knowledgeable of the Yazzie court case, having attended an informational briefing on the case; however, she sees little changes resulting from the case.

### **Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-9**

This interviewee had been educated in the Pueblo Day School many years ago and has two grown sons who were also educated there. The interviewee now has custody of two grandchildren. She complemented the education the Day School provides. She also complimented the Santa Fe Indian School and its cultural programs. She also wanted to complement the beneficial role of the Pueblo Education Department as a place to come if a child needs help or assistance. She suggested additional training for the Department staff could help determine those who needed help or those who just wanted to socialize. A college-trained professional addition to the Department as the director of operations would improve support. Considering Pueblo culture, the interviewee suggested that the cultural division in the Pueblo and the loss of focus on the Tewa language degrades the culture. This interviewee was unaware of the Yazzie court case or any change it may have caused.

### **Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-10**

This mother's first mention of a critical factor impacting the family was the financial scholarships that helped the mother and her daughter succeed in their educational efforts. The Pueblo Education Department has also been a critical factor, especially the bulletin board where a Pueblo member can find essential information on Native American benefits, especially related to scholarships. The mother mentioned how critical the after-school tutoring has been to her daughter's success in school. A special mention of the motivational benefit of the college tours on her daughter was another benefit provided by the Education Department.



When it comes to Pueblo culture, again, the positive efforts of the Education Department's adult evening classes are an essential factor in enhancing the Pueblo's culture heritage. Her daughters, one 20 and her other a high school senior, were educated at Pojoaque High School, where they received adequate cultural education and Tewa language training. Her son, who attends a Montessori school, will transfer to the eighth-grade next semester at Santa Fe Indian School. A final suggestion to improve the education of Pueblo youth is to establish a wellness and workout center and to expand the existing Educational Department facility to add space for more planned activities. This would create additional opportunities to draw members' families to the Department. When mentioning Yazzie, the mother is unaware of the Yazzie court case.

### **Research Question 1: Discussion Interview P-11**

This interviewee is a mother and grandmother. When she initially went to the Pueblo Day School, there was no Pueblo Education Department. She sees how critical the Pueblo Education Department has changed things and become a critical factor in advancing all Pueblo education efforts. The students greatly benefit by gifting school supplies, scholarship help, tutoring, adult classes, college tours, school interaction, tracking student progress, after-school and summer programs, and much more. She added that we are seeing some benefits from the Yazzie court case in additional funding, such as for college tours.

Pueblo culture has been enhanced by the annual end-of-school parade celebration and the interaction that brings the Governor, Pueblo Council, families, and students together to celebrate graduates and all students as they celebrate the end of the school year. When asked what factors could impact and improve the education efforts for the Pueblo; the answer was that two things are critical. First, expand the Pueblo Educational Department facility to provide more space for

additional programs and staff. Second, the Pueblo Governor and Pueblo Council need to be more involved in educational issues. She added, “I know they care; they have a busy schedule, but even a short visit enhances our Native American culture.” She continued, “I have seen how much it motivates our youth. I don’t know if they understand how powerful and meaningful each visit is to the youth and our culture.”

### **Research Question 1: Discussion Interview L-1**

This interview was with the district manager of Los Alamos, and she quickly volunteered to be interviewed after she received the invitation from the Pueblo Education Department. The author remembers from contacts with the school over 50 years ago as an admissions counselor for the US Air Force Academy how exceptional this school was rated. This school’s achievements are among the best in New Mexico every year. So, it is not surprising that the district manager would be the first to agree to participate in any effort to participate in research into an analysis of P-20 education of San Ildefonso Pueblo. Remember, the entire Los Alamos country, school district, and Los Alamos National Laboratory were created from the original property of the Pueblo. Fourteen years ago, Los Alamos agreed to accept out-of-district San Ildefonso students in the school system, a progressive move at the time. San Ildefonso Pueblo students’ integration and critical benefits have gradually improved yearly. As for attention to cultural issues, the county has developed a Native American history class, supported a Native American Parent’s Advisory group, formed a student Native American club, hired a full-time Native American Liaison staff member, established and staffed a before-school program to deal primarily with transportation issues, and also formed a Saturday-school program for students who need focused help to be successful. Finally, once a San Ildefonso Pueblo student is accepted as a Los Alamos out-of-district student, the district accepts a commitment to assist that student to

a successful graduation. The state does not credit the school district for these innovative actions, which is especially interesting in a post-Yazzie court case world. The Yazzie court case has not produced any real benefits to the district. The only minor impact of the Yazzie court case is some additional programs with no validation of results.

Two issues that do not currently have solutions are Pueblo student transportation to Los Alamos schools and Tewa language instruction. The transportation issue should be easily resolved with meaningful discussions and potential funding from the Yazzie case. The Yazzie language issue certainly impacts the cultural aspect of instruction. The number of students at Los Alamos schools does not justify adding a Tewa language. A suggested solution could be to have Tewa classes taught at the Pueblo Education Department.

When asked what the Pueblo can do to benefit the success of San Ildefonso students, the suggestion was made to develop a comprehensive after-school program that would complement what was taught that day. This could be done with close cooperation with the schools and the Pueblo Education Department. Success would depend on having multiple qualified tutors and communication links to alert the Department to focused areas needing attention. The discussion also included identifying a significant issue that is a primary reason that education does not progress: turnover at all levels. For example, 37 district leaders resigned last year, and there is significant turnover at the Public Education Department; for example, the fourth New Mexico Secretary of Education in recent times assumed the position in March 2023. Without stability in leadership, progress is reduced.

### **Research Question 1: Discussion-Interview F-1**

This interview was with two college-educated Native Americans directly involved with improving educational issues involving the 23 tribes in New Mexico. Both described Yazzie vs. New Mexico and the state's response as a failure. There are two issues blocking progress; one is constantly changing leadership at the Public Education Department, both in appointed and acting positions, and the other is a failure by the Department to communicate effectively, especially with the state's rural areas. Essential areas that need to be addressed are Native language and cultural traditions and creating an effective environment where listening and interaction with tribal leaders are honest and genuine and where the specific needs of Native Americans are part of the solution. The lack of trust and communication impedes progress. Yazzie cannot be addressed, or education cannot be improved without collaboration with the tribes. According to both interviewees, no person leading the Public Education Department has ever understood or addressed this aspect of the task to address Yazzie. The positive recommendations of the report issued by the Tribal Education Alliance have essential solutions that need to be addressed by the state. Other reports, such as the one discussing New Mexico educational issues issued by Think New Mexico, fail to address tribal issues because the organization did not effectively engage Native American leadership and ask and document those leaders' responses to what would work best for Native American tribal students to be successful.

### **Research Question 1 Discussion-Interview T-1**

This interview was with two leaders of a highly respected New Mexico results-oriented think tank of accomplished New Mexicans called Think New Mexico. The organization has addressed New Mexico issues for over 20 years. One interviewee was a previous New Mexico teacher of the year with considerable experience teaching Native American students. The other

person interviewed was the associate director of the organization. The organization's board of directors has two Native American members. The organization released a 2022 ten-point proposal to improve education in New Mexico, including proposals that, if approved, would impact San Ildefonso students. In discussing these proposed proposals, each one seems appropriate to discuss as part of actions to address both Yazzie and Martinez's court issues. For example, one of the ten points is to reduce class size; another addresses improving teacher training. However, none of the points for improvement addresses specific Native American issues of coordination with Native leaders.

Both interviewees are very aware of the Yazzie aspect of the court case. The continuous turnover at the Public Education Department and district-level management is causing little progress to be made. Also, it appears that along with the instability of turnover, various organizations seem intent on fighting turf battles with little cooperative spirit. The basic issues are known, but without a cooperative exchange, there will be no solutions to New Mexico's education issues or Yazzie/Martinez. Communication also delays progress; for example, there has been lots of talk about a cultural framework at high levels, but because of poor communication with the teachers in the field, little of the plans or discussion ever gets to classroom teachers.

## **Research Question 2**

What factors would improve the education of San Ildefonso students?

- a. What resources does the San Ildefonso Education Department need to improve the education of its students?

- b. What staffing does the San Ildefonso Education Department need to improve the education of its students?

### **Research Question 2: Discussion P-1**

This interview's top topic was the motivation and involvement of parents in the education of Pueblo students. A potential plan forward was described to examine and update the Pueblo's outreach plans. Creating a strategic plan by the Educational Department with involvement and input from the Pueblo Council, the Governor, and Pueblo members will be helpful. Staffing at the Education Department and necessary funding will be included. The plan should include if the Education Center facility will meet our future needs. The issue of how the Pueblo addresses preserving the Pueblo traditions and culture must also be addressed. Another topic for consideration is how all functions are involved and support the Education Department, including school visits by staff and members of the Pueblo Council.

### **Research Question 2: Discussion P-2**

This interview produced the same theme that the Pueblo leaders do not encourage the youth and need to be more visible in events and activities focused on educational achievement. Pueblo culture is important, as is the Tewa language. The Pueblo leadership should find ways to advance Tewa language instruction. Student bus service to all Los Alamos schools should be provided to schools with the highest achievement scores and graduation rates. Tutor staffing at the after-school program should be expanded to support the current subject instruction, and some schools lack of teachers or adequate instruction methods. The Pueblo Education Department needs to be more active in visiting schools to explain Pueblo culture and to establish a closer cooperative relationship with all Pueblo-attended schools. This would require an expansion of

the current staff to be successfully executed. The Pueblo Education Department needs to find ways to involve families more in the education process.

### **Research Question 2: Discussion P-3**

The teacher shortage at the Pueblo Day School was again mentioned as an issue. A positive comment was made concerning the benefits of Los Alamos Saturday School and its role in benefiting Pueblo students. The interviewee stressed that there is more quality instruction at Los Alamos. Communication with teachers is exceptional. The only issue is the lack of Tewa language classes. More involvement by Pueblo officials and the Pueblo Education Department is an important cultural benefit. The Education Department should have a close and continuous relationship with Pueblo student schools through frequent visits.

### **Research Question 2: Discussion P-4**

This interview was with the principal of the Pueblo Day School, operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The issue mentioned is the shortage of teachers and the long clearance process. The interaction with the school and the Pueblo Education Department should be enhanced since most students use the after-school and summer school programs. This could involve school visits and discussions with school parents, which impacts the Department's staffing. One issue requiring attention is student motivation, which could be improved by periodic visits by the Governor, members of the Pueblo Council, the Director of Education, previous graduates, elders with special skills, or stories of Pueblo culture.

### **Research Question 2: Discussion P-5**

This interviewee praised the Pueblo Education Department for the support of her family. The after-school program is a critical factor for her family. The Pueblo culture is important to her

family, and the Tewa language is provided at all schools her students attend. The interviewee suggested that expanding the Pueblo Education Department to add a childcare center would enhance the educational effectiveness and learning at the Pueblo. This addition would take planning, funding, and additional staffing. However, once established, the addition would benefit early learning and, in the long run, would enhance Pueblo education. This interviewee also stressed the importance of Pueblo officials being more involved in educational events supporting the Pueblo youth. Once again, the need for an overall transportation plan covering all attended schools, including Los Alamos, was included in the discussions.

### **Research Question 2: Discussion P-6**

Most of the time spent with this discussion centered around research question 2 was the importance of the Pueblo officials' involvement in educational events, such as awards, graduation, and education function events by members of the Pueblo Council and the Governor. This involvement impresses the students and shows they are important to the Pueblo leadership. This interviewee was responsible for initially allowing Pueblo students to attend Los Alamos schools as out-of-district students.

### **Research Question 2: Discussion P-7**

This interviewee praised the performance of the Pueblo Education Department during the recent virus emergency in assisting students in keeping involved in their education and making school connections for homework. She feels it is important for the Department to be closely connected with student-attended schools to enhance communication between parents, students, teachers, and school administrators. Often she has difficulty getting answers from Pojoaque teachers when she sees school performance issues. The issue has improved recently with the



addition of a Native American Liaison person at the school. Still, there have been instances where the interviewee has had to contact the principal because of no teacher response. She believes communication would be improved with more frequent interaction with attended school by the Pueblo Education Department.

### **Research Question 2: Discussion P-8**

This interviewee is very involved with the Pojoaque school system to the extent that she is the vice chair of the Native American Parents Club. She discussed that the school has an excellent sports program and is culturally sensitive to Pueblo culture. The Tewa instruction is excellent and counts for a foreign language credit. She commented that the night school addition is helpful for students who need extra help to be successful. The addition of night school is especially effective when some teachers concentrate more on reading textbooks over classroom discussions of concepts. The interviewee had praise for the current director of the Pueblo Education Department for enhancing actions benefiting student education. The director is very sincere and always asks what we need to be successful. She is a member of the Department scholarship committee, which she sees as essential to the student's progress to higher education. She also highlighted the value of Pueblo's senior leadership involvement in educational events and suggested improving efforts.

### **Research Question 2: Discussion P-9**

This interviewee was initially successfully educated at the Pueblo Day School many years ago. Now that she has custody of grandchildren, she again praised the performance of the Day School. She also complimented the Pueblo Education Department for providing an after-school program where a child can receive help or assistance. She suggested the Education

Department could function better with added training for the staff on how to better interact with the students in determining the purpose of attending the after-school program. She suggested the addition of a college-educated person to assist with the conduct of operations. This addition and adding more staff with tutoring skills would be helpful. The gradual diminishing of the Tewa language is a disappointing factor in Pueblo culture.

#### **Research Question 2: Discussion P-10**

This interviewee suggested the expansion of the Pueblo Education Department facility to provide more room for new programs. Additionally, she suggested that a wellness or workout facility would help the Department by drawing additional members and students to the Department's facilities and programs. The college tours have assisted in keeping her daughter motivated to attend college. The Department bulletin board is a benefit in providing clear information on available scholarship opportunities. The adult evening programs promote Pueblo culture through pottery and sewing classes.

#### **Research Question 2: Discussion P-11**

This interviewee suggested that the Pueblo Education Department facility space needs to be expanded to allow more space for programs and the addition of more staff and to expand the interaction with local schools on a much more frequent basis. The Governor and Pueblo Council care about our students, but it would be helpful for them to be involved in more educational events. This takes time and attention to schedules, but seeing their involvement makes a big impression on students.

## **Research Question 2: Discussion L-1**

The district manager and the Los Alamos school board have enhanced many efforts to attract and commit to the successful education of San Ildefonso out-of-district Native American students. This includes adding a Native American history course, hiring a full-time Native American Liaison employee, establishing a Native American parent advisory organization, establishing a Native American student organization, adding an optional Saturday school for any student needing additional help, and adding a before-school program to address transportation issues. One issue that remains to be addressed is a cultural issue in instruction in the Pueblo's native language Tewa. With the relatively small number of Pueblo students in the Los Alamos school system, there is insufficient justification to have a Tewa language class. A likely solution would be to have a Tewa class at the Pueblo, by expanding operations to address this need. A final issue that needs to be addressed is the transportation of students to and from Los Alamos schools. This should be achievable by rerouting existing bus transportation. An additional suggestion would be to link the Pueblo's after-school program with the Los Alamos class programs so the after-school program could directly connect with the Pueblo Education Department tutors to complement what is taught that day in school. This addition may cause an increase in the available tutors at the Pueblo. Still, it is expected to add a significant benefit to the education of the students who attend Los Alamos schools.

## **Research Question 2: Discussion F-1**

This interview of two college-educated Native Americans involved in addressing solutions for Native American education in New Mexico addressed the overall attention to Native American-focused issues in New Mexico. This input was essential for the author's research. However, their input was focused more on state-wide issues. Essential issues to be

addressed include Native American language and traditions and the impact on Native American education. The continual changes in state education leadership positions allow the fundamental policies to remain unchanged. Addressing the Yazzie court case cannot succeed without collaborating with the tribes. The two clearly stated that no person leading the Department of Public Education has ever clearly understood and addressed this aspect of the task.

### **Research Question 2: Discussion T-1**

This interview, like the previous one, was focused on state-wide issues. The group represents a results-oriented think-tank of New Mexican citizens whose mission is to improve the quality of life for all New Mexicans, especially those lacking a strong political voice. In 2022 they published a 10-point plan to improve education in the state. While the plan did not specifically address San Ildefonso Pueblo, all 10 of the proposals, if approved, would impact Pueblo's students. The proposals would directly benefit aspects of the Yazzie court case. Although there are two Native Americans on the organization's Board of directors, and the organization is fully aware of Yazzie/Martinez, the proposal has faced criticism that it does not address specific Native American interests in achieving educational success

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS and DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will address this research's overview, updates, and conclusions pertaining to this intense study to identify factors impacting P-20 education for students of San Ildefonso Pueblo in Northern New Mexico. This subject has been impacted by a long history of insufficient attention by the State of New Mexico, as evidenced by the court decision in a lawsuit by Yazzie, a Native American, and Martinez, a Hispanic, against the State of New Mexico for student education. The state was found to have violated the State Constitution (Article XII, Section 1), which states, “A uniform system of free public schools sufficient for the education of, and open to, all children of school age in the state shall be established and maintained” (Evans, 2019). The case was initially filed in 2014, and the trial began in June 2017. The verdict was announced in 2018 that the state had not complied with either state or federal laws in the education of Native American, Hispanic, or English Learner students. The court was given until April 15, 2019, to provide resources and funding to provide students with uniform and sufficient education to comply with the state constitution. Today, five years after the court decision. The issue remains unresolved.

The methodology used is a case study style of qualitative research technique (Yin, 2018). The educational issues for Native American students at San Ildefonso Pueblo and Native American students across the state have existed for decades. The research used multiple levels of inquiry to understand the scope of the problem with educational issues for San Ildefonso Pueblo students. Multiple levels mean conducting interviews starting with the Pueblo families. school

districts, attended schools, Pueblo Education Department support, Pueblo leadership, New Mexico focus groups, the State Public Education Department, and New Mexico Legislature. The author found that not all levels of inquiry would agree to cooperate, despite the request to be part of the study initiated by the Pueblo Education Department or the Pueblo Governor. Open-ended questions with a discussion using face-to-face contact were used for the interviews conducted.

### **The Research Questions**

1. What critical factors impact the education of San Ildefonso students?
  - a. How has Native American culture impacted the education of San Ildefonso students?
  - b. How has the Yazzie vs. the State of New Mexico court ruling impacted the education of San Ildefonso students?
2. What factors would improve the education of San Ildefonso students?
  - a. What resources does the San Ildefonso Pueblo Education Department need to improve the education of its students?
  - b. What staffing does the San Ildefonso Pueblo Education Department need to improve the education of its students?

### **New Mexico Update**

The Tribal Education Status Report issued by the New Mexico Public Education Department for school years 2021-2022, released November 15, 2022, clearly identifies the issues of deficient attention to the education of Native American students in the state over an extended time (Grisham, 2022). The source of the data was assembled resulting from achievement data from the ‘New Mexico Measures of Student Success and Achievement for

grades 3-8; and the New Mexico Assessment of Science Readiness for students in grades 5, 8, and 11<sup>th</sup>. The report shows that in the years covered, American Indians were the lowest-performing group of all New Mexican students. For example, only 19.9% were proficient in reading compared to 50.5% of Caucasian students. In math, only 13.8% were proficient compared to 41% of Caucasian students, and in science, 20.9% were proficient compared to 53.5% of Caucasian students (Grisham, 2022).

The New Mexico Public Education Department has not addressed any advances in Native American education since the Yazzie court case was decided. The frequent leadership changes under the Office of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham have been partly why no real progress has been made in Native American education. Governor Grisham hired Karen Trujillo as her first education secretary in January 2019. Trujillo was fired in June 2019. In August, the Governor hired Ryan Stewart, an African American who lived in Philadelphia and commuted to New Mexico for two years before he stepped down. Next, the Governor hired Dr. Kurt Steinhaus, a New Mexico educator, in 2021 (McKay, 2023). Steinhaus left at the end of January 2023 (Clark, 2023). The fourth Secretary of Public Education, Dr. Arsenio Romero, a New Mexico district superintendent, was appointed by the Governor in February 2023 and began his new position on March 6, 2023 (Davis, 2023).

Other changes continue to cause turmoil. For example, in late November 2020, the New Mexico Department of Public Education Director Stewart hired a new Deputy Secretary of Identity, Equity, and Transformation, Vickie Bannerman, who reported for work in December 2020. She resigned in February 2023. Deputy Cabinet Secretary Jacquelyn Archuleta-Staehlin was appointed and charged with overseeing actions to address the Yazzie/Martinez case on January 26, 2023, and she resigned eight days later (Clark, 2023). On May 11, 2023, the new

Secretary, Romero, announced a complete change in the Department leadership team. Two cabinet members are from the existing staff, two are from other New Mexico leadership assignments, and one is a new hire from out of state (Candelaria, 2023). The most significant recent appointment impacting the education of San Ildefonso Pueblo is the position of Assistant Secretary of Indian Education KatieAnn Juanico, who previously was the education director of San Felipe Pueblo. She is a Native American from Acoma Pueblo. Her task is to direct Indian Education Programs, Indigenous language, and culture projects and will work and consult with New Mexico tribes (Candelaria, 2023). Appointing a Native American and a Pueblo member who has worked in education significantly improves direction.

Twice a year, the New Mexico Public Education Department meets with all Native American tribes (Pueblo de San Ildefonso, 2022). The meetings are called Indian Education Government-to-Government meetings. The most recent meeting was in May 2023, when the new Assistant Secretary for Indian Education was introduced. San Ildefonso Pueblo was told that the new Assistant Secretary would meet individually with each pueblo and tribe in the state to discuss educational issues. The previous meeting of the Government-to-Government group was held on December 8, 2022. The following were San Ildefonso Pueblo Governor's educational priorities and position statement submitted for the December meeting:

- Priority 1: Assessing College & Career Counseling Services & Collaborating with School Districts to Supplement. There is no clear understanding of the effectiveness of career counseling our Pueblo students receive in public schools. Help is needed to assess if they receive the guidance they need to choose college or other pathways to a post-secondary career.



- Priority 2: Enhancing Early Childhood Services & Facilities. This priority has two functional needs. Childcare services are unavailable at the Pueblo and are needed to ensure youth access quality, healthy, safe, supportive, and culturally responsive childcare. The other need is pre-kindergarten. The existing Head Start facility is 50 years old, in need of repair, and of insufficient size to support the needs of the Pueblo.
- Priority 3: Expanding Capacity of Current Facility. The Pueblo Education Department is part of the Pueblo library and needs to be expanded to accommodate existing and future operations. The library must also be expanded to increase collections, expand student programming, and potentially house an early childhood center with culturally responsive childcare services.
- Priority 4: Expanding Access to Quality K-12 Public Education. Most of Pueblo's students attend Pojoaque Valley School District or Los Alamos Public Schools. However, there is no transportation to Los Alamos, a high-performing school district, effectively restricting our students from academic opportunities. More families would choose this option if transportation were available (R. Juliani, personal communication, May 23, 2023).

During the May 2023 meeting, the following items were discussed:

- Background: Yazzie/Martinez Court Ruling and the Tribal Remedy Framework Progress;
  - What is Yazzie/Martinez?
  - What is the status of the legal case?
    - State efforts to dismiss the case have failed. Until the State complies, the court retains jurisdiction over the case.

- Following discovery on behalf of the plaintiffs, it was determined that the State had failed to plan how to implement the court order.

The Tribal Remedy Framework Proposal appears to have become the major focus in addressing Yazzie/Martinez. The three Tribal solutions to New Mexico's educational troubles were introduced in this research paper in chapter II. The May meeting expanded each of the three solutions in more detail. All 23 New Mexican sovereign nations have endorsed the Tribal Remedy Framework developed as previously discussed by the Tribal Education Alliance, with support from the Leadership Institute at Santa Fe Indian School, the University of New Mexico Native American Budget and Policy Institute, and the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty (Rudiger, 2020).

Because of the importance of the new focus on this document, each of the individual proposals and the impact on San Ildefonso Pueblo education each are listed:

- Elevate the role of Tribal Education Departments and build their capacity, including by creating a pipeline for Native professionals through investing in college and career preparation programs;
- Share public resources more equitably by providing stable and consistent state funding for Tribal Education Departments;
- Formalize collaboration between Tribes and school districts through local governance and accountability framework;
- Establish Native-led technical assistance centers in support of tribes and schools;
- Invest in tribal libraries as community education centers to provide extended learning, summer school, technology access, career and support services;

- Invest in early learning education programs developed and delivered by tribal communities, with Tribes retaining authority over educational standards;
- Increase capacity of tribal community-based networks to deliver integrated student support services, and enable schools to coordinate and contract with Tribes for providing students with health and social supports;
- Develop policies to address institutional racism; adopt trauma informed practices; implement Indigenous justice models to end marginalization and school push out;
- Establish Indigenous curriculum development centers; expand Native language programs; ensure full tribal authority over Native language and culture programs;
- Invest in a pipeline for Native teachers, educational leaders, and staff, and ensure pay equity for Native language teachers (Rudiger, 2020).

This listing of targets seems like an aggressive move to address the Yazzie part of the court case. However, making a list of solutions differs greatly from planning, funding, implementing, and validating that each has successfully accomplished the intended outcome. One alarming factor is that none of Think New Mexico's 10 suggestions has been mentioned in any solution for Yazzie. To succeed, the New Mexico Public Education Department must develop an action plan for the above ten proposals, including a schedule, required funding, and a validation method. The interaction of proposal plan users and organizational players must be part of the planning, validation, and approval effort. Once this phase is complete and agreed/approved, the next challenge is to submit a consolidated plan, schedule, and cost that the legislature and New Mexico Governor can approve. Success in this proposed effort will be difficult to accomplish in the New Mexico Governor's tenure,

The New Mexico Legislature has recently passed some funding actions to address Yazzie/Martinez, for example:

- In 2022, HB60 was passed, giving salary parity to certified Native language teachers, equivalent to certified teachers with BAs and Mas;
- In 2023, HB148, Early Childhood Department Tribal Agreements passed, giving Tribes the right to access state funds and to use their own educational standards for early childhood education, consistent with self-determination and self-governance principles;
- In 2023, HB198 Career Tech Funding for Indian Education Schools was passed to expand career technical funding to BIE and Tribally Controlled Schools;
- In 2023, HB280 passed requiring the New Mexico Higher Education Department to establish two Technical Assistance Centers to support tribes, schools, school districts, school; boards to implement the state Indian Education Act;
- In 2022, a Tribal Capital Outlay of \$12M was approved for planning and design for Tribal education infrastructure such as Tribal libraries, education centers, early childhood education, and care centers. In 2023 \$22M was approved for the phase 1 funding of the construction of tribal libraries (R. Juliani, personal communication, May 23, 2023).

With this update complete, the author will continue tracking events in New Mexico and at San Ildefonso Pueblo. A huge challenge continues for the State and the Pueblo to address education deficiencies.

## Discussion of Findings for Research Question 1

1. What critical factors impact the education of San Ildefonso students?
  - How has the Native American culture impacted the education of San Ildefonso students?
  - How has the Yazzie vs. the State of New Mexico court ruling impacted the education of San Ildefonso students?

A critical aspect of this research question directly impacting the education of Pueblo students was mentioned during the P-1 interview: the perceived lack of parent interest in student education. This would include educational and cultural issues. The suggested fix was to evaluate the existing outreach plans. The task would also involve creating a strategic plan for Pueblo education and combining its goals, need for funding, and planned outcomes with validation actions into an overall Pueblo strategic plan. The value of sponsoring the return of successfully educated Pueblo students to assist with planning and speaking to the students, council, and parents was discussed and mentioned in several individual parent interviews.

When discussing Native American culture, many aspects of opinion and detail were furnished during the interview process. Based on interview feedback, each attended school has positive aspects of supporting Native American culture. Although Santa Fe Indian School did not agree to an interview and therefore was not directly part of the interview process, when discussing the school with Pueblo parent interviewees, the Santa Fe Indian School received positive comments regarding supporting Native American culture. The school is the only facility that offers boarding. Another factor supporting Native American culture is the fact that, since 2000 with the signing of the Santa Fe Indian Act, the land and school were turned over in trust and now are owned and controlled by 19 Pueblos in New Mexico and only admit Native

American students. This move allowed the school to build curricula and programs based on educational sovereignty, focusing on educating New Mexico Indian children to support their cultural and traditional beliefs and customs (About SFIS, n.d.). According to 2023 statistics, the school graduation rate is 90%. Math proficiency is 6% lower than the New Mexico state average of 21%. The reading/language proficiency is 28% which is lower than the New Mexico state average of 33%. The school has a low student/teacher ratio of 9:1 which is lower than the New Mexico average of 14:1 (Public School Review, 2023).

The next school Pueblo students attend is Pojoaque School District, the closest and most attended by Pueblo students in all grades. Interviews discussed the school's values as mostly respecting Native American culture. The interviewees overall thought this school was acceptable for cultural values. There is a Native American Parents Club that meets monthly, and the school teaches Tewa the Pueblo language with credit for a foreign language, has a Native Liaison staff member, and has a strong sports program. There were some negative comments during interviews about the timely response from teachers when parents were trying to deal with student problems. There were comments about the positive impact of the school's evening program, which was established to assist student learning after hours. According to 2023 statistics, the school graduation rate is 70%, the bottom 50% in New Mexico. Math proficiency is 50% in the top 20% of New Mexico schools. The reading scores are less than 50% in the bottom 50% of New Mexico schools. The school has a student/teacher ratio of 19:1, higher than the New Mexico state level of 14:1 (Public School Review, 2023).

According to statistics, the highest achievement-rated school attended by Pueblo students is Los Alamos High School. The school does have one distractor from a cultural aspect in that it does not have instruction in the Native language Tewa. Otherwise, this out-of-school district

school is in the top 10% of all schools in New Mexico. The overall graduation rate is 94%, in the top 5% of all New Mexico schools. Math proficiency is 61% in the top 5% of all New Mexico schools. The reading scores are 78% in the top 20% of all New Mexico schools. The student/teacher ratio is 17:1, higher than the New Mexico average of 14:1. As previously mentioned, the entire city and county of Los Alamos were removed from San Ildefonso Pueblo land during World War II to create the Los Alamos National Laboratory and nuclear weapons that ended the war with Japan. Fourteen years ago, the Los Alamos school district agreed to educate San Ildefonso students even though they were in the Pojoaque school district. Los Alamos has taken great steps to be culturally sensitive to Pueblo students by creating both a student and parent Native American organization, creating a course in Native American history, hiring a full-time Native American Liaison staff member, creating a Saturday school for assisting students, and providing a morning school, staffed by teachers for students with transportation issues. As previously mentioned, the only cultural issue is instruction in the Native language Tewa, which is not justified by the number of Pueblo students, according to the interview with the Los Alamos school district superintendent. However, San Ildefonso Pueblo could provide this missing cultural issue removing this gap. Another issue to be addressed is that there is no school bus service between the Pueblo and the various Los Alamos schools (Public School Review, 2023).

When considering Tewa instruction at the Pueblo, the Pueblo Head Start program does not teach Tewa; however, the Head Start teacher does include Tewa (mostly in songs) in the daily program. The Pueblo Day School did have a Tewa teacher, but the teacher is no longer available. Also, in the recent past, the Pueblo Education Department has taught Tewa during both the afterschool and summer programs; however, they have not been able to continue due to

a lack of a teacher. Last year, nine individuals attended an adult evening class, but the class has not been continued. The Pueblo has been trying to fill its Tewa Language Manager position, which has been vacant all year.

Another critical aspect of cultural and motivational aspects impacting Pueblo education success involves the involvement of the Pueblo Governor and Pueblo Council. This was the most mentioned item during all Pueblo parent interviews. Every Pueblo member interviewed mentioned the importance of the Governor and members of the Pueblo Council being more involved and visible in student and school matters. Most understood that both the Governor and members of the Council are busy, but suggested they make a concerted effort to attend functions even if only for quick visits. This also involves visits to school functions, district superintendents, school principals, school board meetings, and other meetings that involve Pueblo students. Interviewees all recommended that as a member of the Pueblo Council, educational support visits should be an expected and supported role. Many realize the importance of even a brief visit and a few words can do to motivate a student to excel.

When considering any benefits or improvements the Yazzie court case has created for the education of Pueblo, students, very few actual benefits surfaced; money from Yazzie has financed some college visits conducted by the Pueblo Education Department; however, on a grander scale, many words have been spoken, leadership has changed, but no person interviewed saw any substantive changes.

## **Discussion of Findings for Research Question 2**

2. What factors would improve the education of San Ildefonso students?



- a. What resources does the San Ildefonso Education Department need to improve the education of its students?
- b. What staffing does the San Ildefonso Education Department need to improve the education of its students?

Based on the series of San Ildefonso Pueblo members' interviews, the most important action to address is a lack of community interest in Pueblo education issues. The solution is a reexamining of how the Pueblo conducts outreach. The issue of outreach to the community would be incorporated into an overall strategic plan. This should include several preliminary sessions to develop the scope of a multi-year Pueblo Education Strategic Plan. Steps to developing the finished plan must include input from community members, Pueblo leadership, the Pueblo Education Department staff. Input from Native American contacts and representatives from the three most attended school districts would also be useful to consider. Key input from Pueblo members who were successfully educated in the strategy group will be critically important. The term of the plan should be at least five years. There are individuals who have exceptional skills in developing strategic plans, and the process would be more effective with that skill. When a draft plan is complete or at the midpoint, the details must be presented to the Governor and Pueblo Council for discussion and comment. The final action is the signature by the Governor and communication of the final product in community meetings. Often strategic plans are developed and put on the shelf. To achieve success, quarterly progress meetings must have the attention of the Governor and the senior staff.

As for resources for the Pueblo Education Department, one of the ways to increase interest in the Department's operation is to add functions mentioned during Pueblo member interviews. The facility is too small at present and prompt action must be undertaken to expand

the space provided. Several interviewees suggested the addition of a childcare facility in an expanded annex to the existing building. This addition will bring new members to the facility and opportunities to begin youth education and exposure to Pueblo culture. Another interviewee suggested an expansion of the building that would add a state-of-the-art exercise center, again creating an addition that would add more Pueblo member involvement and interest.

A function and a resource that directly impacts Pueblo culture is Tewa language instruction, an item mentioned as important by each Pueblo interviewee. As previously mentioned, a cultural distraction for students attending the highest-performing Los Alamos schools is that the Tewa language is not part of the curriculum. Remembering that Los Alamos, a separate school district, openly accepts Pueblo students in all of Los Alamos schools is important. This is done by the Los Alamos school district and the school board with no incentive from the state of New Mexico. Remember, however, the entire county of Los Alamos, including the Los Alamos Laboratory, were previously part of the land given to the Pueblo by the United States government. Tewa is taught at Santa Fe Indian School and Pojoaque schools, but both of these schools have lower achievement scores than Los Alamos. So to correct the fact that the Pueblo culture is an important aspect for Pueblo members, a way must be found to effectively teach Tewa at the Pueblo Education Department, both for students needing this instruction and for members desiring the instruction. Several needs could be filled when a Tewa instructor is hired and hopefully made a Pueblo Education Department adjunct staff member. This addition is required; a way should also be found to have this certified instructor address the deficiency at the Pueblo Day School, partially funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Albuquerque, and to support some Tewa training at Head Start.

An excellent idea shared during the interview L-1 suggested that Los Alamos students' education could be enhanced by integrating what is taught daily at Los Alamos schools and linking these instructional details with tutors in the Pueblo afterschool program. Adding to this idea was a suggestion made during interviews with P-9 and P-5 that the teacher shortage at the Pueblo Day school is a factor that distracts from some aspects of student learning. A potential fix would be to have close coordination between the school and the Pueblo Education Department concerning how the Education Department could use the after-school program tutors to address homework and daily curriculum subjects of the day to enhance that day's instruction. Another aspect of this follow-up effort would be to train the Pueblo Education Department staff and tutors on ways to divide incoming students into a group that wants to socialize and a group that wants to benefit and enhance their education, according to interview P-9. Explaining these changes directly to parents to show the improvements made to the education of their students with periodic feedback directed to parents should enhance this effort.

Spreading the word directly to students' parents in a monthly educational update by the Pueblo Education Department or as an annex to the existing Department of Education newsletter should enhance parent and member interest in education matters. Additional communication items include the availability of the cellphone application to monitor student progress and attendance (interview P-8) and publicizing Los Alamos Saturday School and Pojoaque Night School. The benefits of the scheduled evening cultural classes are important to continue Pueblo's cultural progress. Other evening classes, such as computer classes, may interest Pueblo members. Consider this option for expanding Pueblo member interest in the planning for the education strategic plan.

Interest and focus on college visits and opportunities for multiple scholarships are important to be continued and must be addressed in strategic planning. College visits, especially to New Mexico colleges, should be continued, as discussed with interviewee P-10 and others. The scholarship board in the Pueblo Education Department could be improved by adding other Native American options for scholarships, including, for example, Native Forward in Albuquerque and the American Indian College Fund in Denver. Repeating an earlier suggestion, have Pueblo successful college graduates attend, either in-person or by Zoom a discussion and motivational college night. Invite representatives from New Mexico colleges to attend by Zoom, or, better yet, in person. Provide a special invitation to Northern Community College in nearby Espanola, New Mexico, highlighting the offered teacher program. Invite parents, grandparents, the Governor, and members of the Pueblo Council, offer refreshments and snacks.

When considering part b of research question 2, the staffing of the current Pueblo Education Department does not adequately support the existing or future mission. A critical need is the Pueblo College and Career Readiness Coordinator's unfilled staff position. The other critically needed position is one of two titles: the Assistant Director of the Pueblo Education Department or the Chief of Operations of the Pueblo Education Department. Why is this needed? Today, the existing staff cannot effectively handle all the essential responsibilities needed to support effective mission requirements. Because of the daily demands of the Director, coordination, necessary visits to attended schools, Native American coordinators, school principals, district superintendents, and other essential organizations supporting Pueblo education do not happen on a frequent basis. Close coordination between the Pueblo Education Department and Northern Community College in nearby Espanola, New Mexico, should exist because of the school's broad benefits available for variable education programs, especially

when addressing the lack of Native teachers. The addition of directed tutoring programs will necessitate an expanded tutoring staff. Also, as the Department is expanded, a more robust management team with specific leadership roles will grow by adding a childcare facility, fitness facility, an expanded library, and additional Department space.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was not without limitations. The nature of a qualitative study does not lend itself to generalizability. The findings of this study, while potentially transferable, are limited to the participants and structures involved. The number of participants was also a limitation of the study. Another limitation was due to the failure of three organizations to cooperate with numerous attempts by the San Ildefonso Education Department to contact and schedule discussions during the two-week data collection period. First, all the attempts to cooperate with the study were purposefully made by the Director San Ildefonso Education Department, with a full explanation of the purpose and timeframe involved. Initial meetings directed at obtaining permission and approvals began in March 2022 during a meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with the Executive Director, Gilbert Vigil, of Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council Incorporated. This initial meeting was followed by the author's meeting with the full Council. In the case of Sandia Fe Indian School, in 2022, an official agreed in writing to be part of the study; something unknown changed that initial decision, and all efforts to cooperate in the 2023 two-week field research were ignored, with no response.

Regarding the New Mexico Public Education Department, all requests were ignored without response or communication. All contacts by the Pueblo were directed to known individuals, not general addresses. With the Department's disorganization and staff changes, plus five years of a confusing and ineffective response to the Yazzie/Martinez court decision, it is not

surprising that they did not want to be part of the study. When considering the partial response by Pojoaque's district to cooperate, it is possible that the initial acceptance and the second request for a specific meeting time when the administrator was out of state was just an administrative error. When considering what these omissions did to detract information from the study, the impact was minimal, because other Pueblo member interviews supplied detailed information concerning Santa Fe Indian School and the Pojoaque district operation. In the case of the Public Education Department, the reference materials provided a good insight into all attempts at addressing the Yazzie court case.

### **Implications for San Ildefonso Pueblo**

Besides the relatively small amount of financial help for various programs such as college tours, the Pueblo is and has been in a wait-and-see mode for five years since the Yazzie court decision. Despite some improvements, generally, everything has remained the same. With the appointment of the latest New Mexico Public Education Secretary in March 2023 and his May 2023 announcement of his new leadership team, progress may be made.

### **P-20 Implications Discussion**

When considering if a seamless development process of education existed for all different levels of learners at San Ildefonso three thousand years ago, the answer was yes. The answer today would be that it partially exists because of a Pueblo Day School, a Head Start program, adult evening classes, and other programs sponsored by the Pueblo Education Department. Add to these three complete school systems: Santa Fe Indian School, Los Alamos schools, and Pojoaque schools. In addition, a few miles away, Northern New Mexico College offers over 50 bachelor's, associate, and certificate programs. Additionally, a few miles away in Los Alamos is

a branch of the University of New Mexico that offers 14 certificate programs and 18 associate degree programs. With the much-discussed and expected addition of a childcare facility to the Education Department, a desired expansion of early education can be added to the Pueblo education system. New Mexico has a new emphasis with the newly formed Cabinet Secretary of Early Childhood Education and Care Department. The mission of this Department is: ‘Optimize the health, development, education, and well-being of babies, toddlers, and preschoolers through a family-driven, equitable, community-based system of high-quality prenatal and early childhood programs and services’ (New Mexico Indian Education Newsletter, 2022). This department has received high praise for the active way they have funded, strengthened, and partnered with the 23 Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations’ early childhood programs and services. With these combined programs and validated Yazzie solutions, a successful P-20 educational program can be established.

### **Opportunities for Future Research**

For obvious reasons, the subject of this research will continue to be an interesting topic for members of the Pueblo. The author expects to return to the Pueblo and New Mexico regularly and continue researching this topic. As previously described, education and its impact on the future of the Pueblo are important issues that need to be resolved. The Yazzie court case finally surfaced a critical problem that has existed for decades. The author looks forward to seeing the day when New Mexico education can be recognized as being progressive in both achievement and in regards to understanding the importance of San Ildefonso culture in the education process.

## Recommendations and Conclusion Discussion

A recent report concerning educational rankings of New Mexico in critical areas highlighted details on success levels for a state's young person's education success encompasses preschool enrollment, standardized test scores for eight-graders, high school graduation, and college readiness and results are generally last in the nation, these facts should be a call for action. New Mexico scores are 50<sup>th</sup> in education, 50<sup>th</sup> in pre-K-12, 50<sup>th</sup> in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math scores, 50<sup>th</sup> in NAEP reading scores, 50<sup>th</sup> in college readiness, 48<sup>th</sup> in preschool enrollment, and 48<sup>th</sup> in high school graduation there is much room for improvement (US News, 2023). This was, and is, the general situation in the state for many years. In 2018 with the court decision in the Yazzie/Martinez vs. the State of New Mexico, the education situation for Native American, Hispanic, and English learners was identified. Now five years later, there may be some help for improvement. The fourth leadership team during New Mexico Governor Lujan Grisham was installed in May 2023 under the leadership of Education Secretary Arsenio Romero, with three previous Education Secretaries' examples of how not to proceed. Although the last Secretary, Kurt Steinhaus, had begun to move in the right direction. According to the results of the initial Native American Government-to-Government meeting in May 2023, it appears the new direction for a Native American solution will focus on the Tribal Remedy Framework, endorsed by all New Mexican Pueblos, Tribes, and Native American Nations, as previously explained.

However, the road ahead to a solution is not simple. The work to address the 10 requirements in the Tribal Remedy Framework will be difficult to create, plan, acquire sufficient funding to implement and establish and validate that the solution has been achieved. There will be challenges before any change can be made. A disappointing omission is the 10-Point Plan



issued by Think New Mexico, also previously examined, which added some essential ideas to consider but has seemingly not gained any consideration in the solution (Albuquerque Journal, 2023).

At San Ildefonso Pueblo, immediate action should be focused on motivating members and leadership to support the entire educational program. A necessary action is to draft with community and leadership dedicated involvement a five-year strategic plan addressing Pueblo culture, finding a Tewa total solution, steps to motivate more leadership and member support, addressing the expansion and staffing of the Pueblo Education Department, focus necessary interactions with attended schools and agencies. Additionally, finding transportation solutions to Los Alamos schools, addressing funding necessary for successful strategic plan implementation, establishing an implementation schedule, and a validation assessment to evaluate success. The goal is that the strategic plan will be a complete detailed plan to address the future of education for the Pueblo. The plan should include what was discussed, uncovered, and proposed in this study as a partial guide.

With the appointment of the new Secretary of Public Education appointment and an assessment of previous work, it appears there is an avenue for solutions. The appointment of a knowledgeable KatieAnn Juanico, a former Pueblo education director, to be Assistant Secretary for Indian Education Programs should be an important improvement for progress. The author will be closely watching for what is expected to be visible prompt advancements of San Ildefonso Pueblo education. The author believes this research was conducted without bias using objective, honest methods and approaches. As for the future, the author is anxious to meet in person with the Pueblo Governor and Council to discuss the research findings. In closing, the author will continue to track activities to benefit the education of San Ildefonso Pueblo students.

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**APPENDIX A**

Murray State University IRB Approval Letter





### Institutional Review Board

328 Wells Hall  
Murray, KY 42071-3318  
270-809-2916 • msu.irb@murraystate.edu

**TO:** Randal Wilson, Educational Studies Leadership and Counseling

**FROM:** Jonathan Baskin, IRB Coordinator *JB*

**DATE:** 3/20/2023

**RE:** Human Subjects Protocol I.D. – IRB # 23-140

The IRB has completed its review of your student's Level 1 protocol entitled *An Analysis of P-20 Education at San Ildefonso Pueblo in Northern New Mexico*. After review and consideration, the IRB has determined that the research, as described in the protocol form, will be conducted in compliance with Murray State University guidelines for the protection of human participants.

**The forms and materials that have been approved for use in this research study are attached to the email containing this letter. These are the forms and materials that must be presented to the subjects. Use of any process or forms other than those approved by the IRB will be considered misconduct in research as stated in the MSU IRB Procedures and Guidelines section 20.3.**

**Your stated data collection period is from 3/20/2023 to 12/24/2023.**

If data collection extends beyond this period, please submit an Amendment to an Approved Protocol form detailing the new data collection period and the reason for the change.

**This Level 1 approval is valid until 3/19/2024.**

If data collection and analysis extends beyond this date, the research project must be reviewed as a continuation project by the IRB prior to the end of the approval period, 3/19/2024. You must reapply for IRB approval by submitting a Project Update and Closure form (available at [murraystate.edu/irb](http://murraystate.edu/irb)). You must allow ample time for IRB processing and decision prior to your expiration date, or your research must stop until such time that IRB approval is received. If the research project is completed by the end of the approval period, then a Project Update and Closure form must be submitted for IRB review so that your protocol may be closed. It is your responsibility to submit the appropriate paperwork in a timely manner.

The protocol is approved. You may begin data collection now.

**Opportunity  
afforded**

[murraystate.edu](http://murraystate.edu)