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Robert A. Roessel Jr. and Navajo Community College: Cross-Cultural Roles of Key Individuals in Its Creation, 1951–1989

T. GREGORY BARRETT AND LOURENE THAXTON

Estelle Fuchs and Robert J. Havighurst presented the results from a national study of American Indian education in their book *To Live on This Earth*. Based on data obtained by researchers at the University of Chicago in 1972, the authors characterized the general state of Native American education in the following way: “With minor exceptions, the history of Indian education had been primarily the transmission of white American education, little altered, to the Indian child as a one-way process. The institution of the school is one that was imposed by and controlled by the non-Indian society, its pedagogy and curriculum little changed for the Indian children, its goals primarily aimed at removing the child from his aboriginal culture and assimilating him into the dominant white culture.”¹

The creation of Navajo Community College (NCC) represented the establishment of a cross-cultural brokerage intended to overcome these assimilationist tendencies and to serve five additional purposes: (1) to give the Navajo people a Navajo-owned and -operated college with a curriculum taught by Navajos to help achieve Navajo educational self-determination in higher education; (2) to make higher education for Navajo college students

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more culturally relevant and culturally specific to the Navajo culture; (3) to help stem the tide of dropouts from colleges around the country by students who had received scholarships from the Navajo Tribal Scholarship Program; (4) to provide general education courses for Navajo students who might want to transfer to four-year colleges and universities; and (5) to provide job skills that were needed on the Navajo Reservation thereby helping to reduce the “brain drain” from the Navajo Nation.²

This article’s thesis is that a cross-cultural brokerage composed of Indians and non-Indians was essential for bringing NCC to fruition. To explain this brokerage, the study first examines the concept of cultural brokerage and then uses the concept as a lens through which to explore the roles of various constituencies in the establishment of NCC.³

CULTURAL BROKERS

First, what does the term *cultural broker* mean? Margaret Connell Szasz has provided the most fully developed elaboration of the concept of cultural brokers. In her introduction to the edited book *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker*, Szasz argued that thousands of Native and non-Native intermediaries transcended the cultural frontiers of our continent since contact between Natives and non-Natives began in North America. These intermediaries served as interpreters and mediated spiritual understanding. Some were traders, and others served as diplomats. Many bridged Native and non-Native worlds and often facilitated understanding and forged bonds between cultures with divergent and distinct identities. Regardless, the demands of moving between these frontiers required extraordinary skill because “intermediaries became repositories of two or more cultures; they changed roles at will, in accordance with circumstances. Of necessity, their lives reflected a complexity unknown to those living within the confines of a single culture. They knew how the ‘other side’ thought and behaved, and they responded accordingly. Their grasp of different perspectives led all sides to value them, although not all may have trusted them. Often they walked through a network of interconnections where they alone brought some understanding among disparate peoples.”⁴ The cultural intermediaries whom Szasz described were persons who bridged the gap between their culture of origin and that of their geographic and cultural neighbors. According to Szasz, “regardless of the directions they have followed, all of these intermediaries have been molded by their own personal circumstances and the cultures that have nurtured them. All of them have also been shaped by the historical conditions that affected societies and individuals during their lifetimes.”⁵

When cultural intermediaries such as those described by Szasz come together to achieve a common cultural purpose, they create what we term a *cultural brokerage*. In the case of NCC, this cultural brokerage required transcending the common conventions for educating Native Americans of that time and integrating a new vision for Native American higher education through the assistance of representatives from American academe, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), the Bureau of Indian Affairs

(BIA), the US Congress, agencies of the executive branch of the federal government, and, most importantly, the Navajo people. We begin by explaining the role of American academe with emphasis on the importance of one non-Native academic in the process. The role of this one key individual, Robert A. Roessel Jr., and the role of his life partner and fellow cultural intermediary, his wife Ruth Roessel, will be discussed and reemphasized as the importance of each of these organizations and communities in establishing NCC is explicated.

ROLE OF THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND ACADEMICIANS IN PRE-1960S NAVAJO EDUCATION

The BIA was an important agency in the history of Indian education because throughout most of its history the agency controlled both the budget for Native education and the emphasis on how education for Natives was to be administered. Although the BIA had existed for nearly a century, it was only in 1921 that the bureau assumed direct services for Native American higher education. As early as 1928, Lewis Meriam's report to the bureau recommended providing effective education to enable Indians to take advantage of the opportunities in the non-Indian world. Nonetheless, for many years the bureau largely continued to ignore the emerging problems regarding the poor quality of Indian education and the lack of opportunities for Native people to attend college.⁶

In their 1941 study *Children of the People: The Navaho Individual and His Development*, a joint research project between the Committee on Human Development of the University of Chicago and the US Office of Indian Affairs, scholars Dorothea Leighton and Clyde Kluckhohn concluded that gradual self-management of changes in lifeways should begin "as soon and proceed as rapidly as possible."⁷ These authors were calling for immediate efforts to assimilate the Navajo and other Indian peoples into the larger American culture and society. Fortunately for the preservation of Navajo culture these recommendations were not heeded. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the emphasis of the BIA's educational policy shifted from a limited academic focus to a vocational focus and back to a limited academic focus that, according to Guy B. Senese, reflected the bureau's vision for the Indian's future. "Changes in bureau policy showed that the BIA responded to pressure from those who wished, during the 1950s, to get the Indian off the reservation and into gainful employment. The bureau began, in the 1960s, under different but still persuasive forces, to de-emphasize the off-reservation vocational boarding school and to place new stress on public and day school operation and academic curricula."⁸

Like the efforts at assimilation, efforts to secure higher education for Native Americans proceeded slowly. As late as the period between 1966 and 1970 only twelve institutions across the country, including NCC, had fifty or more Native Americans enrolled. Less than a handful of these institutions offered programs in Native American studies.⁹

THE EARLY CAREER OF CULTURAL BROKER ROBERT A. ROESSEL, JR.

Ten years after Leighton and Kluckhohn published *Children of the People*, Robert A. Roessel Jr. moved to the Navajo Reservation in 1951 fresh from having completed his master's thesis, "Sheep in Navajo Culture," at Washington University in St. Louis. Roessel taught at the Crownpoint BIA School during his first year on the reservation. The Crownpoint School had a fence surrounding it, a barrier that prevented the Navajos and the instructional staff from interacting outside of schooltime. This was not the type of environment Roessel had hoped for when he came to teach on the Navajo Reservation, so the next year he requested and was granted a transfer to Round Rock where he was able to have direct contact with the Navajo people.¹⁰

At that time, Round Rock was a small isolated community located almost in the middle of the Navajo Reservation and had never had its own school. His first year, Roessel used "a tar-paper-covered classroom and one metal warehouse" as the school for thirty-five Navajo elementary children. Roessel delineated the significance of four important events while he was at Round Rock. Between 1952 and 1955, he used this opportunity to prove he could successfully build a school; employed the construction process to develop and refine his philosophy on community building and organizing within Navajo communities; availed himself of this opportunity to learn and become fully enculturated in the Navajo way of life through attending more than one hundred Navajo ceremonies; and, perhaps most critically, met the woman who became the most important person in his life—his future wife and partner in their lifelong cultural brokerage, Ruth.¹¹

Between 1955 and 1957 Roessel served as lead teacher in the trailer school at Low Mountain where he taught one hundred day students beginning through third grade. In April 1957, he was reassigned against his will and given a letter of reprimand by the deputy commissioner of Indian Affairs after a dispute about feeding volunteer adult workers using BIA funds. His response was a letter to the commissioner of Indian Affairs that stated that he was "disillusioned with the Bureau" and tendered his resignation so he could pursue his doctorate in education at Arizona State University (ASU).¹² Roessel began his doctoral studies at ASU in the fall of 1957; he also taught at ASU from 1958 to 1971. His early teaching was as a lecturer in anthropology, but he soon began teaching about American Indian education while still a graduate student. Roessel's 1960 dissertation, "An Analysis of Select Navaho Needs with Implications for Navaho Education," reflected his assumption that "Navahos should have a major role in determining the educational objectives and the educational program(s) for Navaho children."¹³

A year earlier, in 1959, while still working on his dissertation, Roessel established the Center for Indian Education at ASU—the first educational center designed specifically to prepare teachers who planned to teach Indian students. Courses in the curriculum included Curriculum and Practices for Indian Children and Guidance of the Indian Student.¹⁴ Community building was his approach to Navajo education. In his *Handbook for Indian Education*, Roessel stated his belief that omitting material from the curriculum about

Indian life and the students' tribe "devalued their Indian heritage and attacked their identity."¹⁵ The Center for Indian Education was the brainchild of Dr. G. D. McGrath, dean of the College of Education at ASU. Robert Roessel indicated that due to the uniqueness of this project McGrath took a great risk in approving the center's establishment. Several on the College of Education faculty were opposed to the project. Nonetheless, the Center for Indian Education was able to gain respectability by securing substantial research-grant funding from the federal government. It was also the first such center in the United States to grant a master's degree in Indian Education.¹⁶

By the mid-1960s, Roessel had reached the top of his profession. The War on Poverty had begun, and he was instrumental in helping to develop the federal government's Indian antipoverty programs that impacted education on the Navajo Reservation. He had continued success in securing grants and recruiting students for the Center for Indian Education. He was also on the board of directors of the Lukachukai Demonstration School, an experiment in Navajo educational self-determination funded jointly by the OEO and the BIA. Lukachukai Demonstration School was "intended to demonstrate the ability of relatively uneducated Indian people to control their own school." Unfortunately, at the Lukachukai Demonstration School's spring 1966 meeting, the Navajo tribe representatives, the OEO, and the BIA all agreed that the experiment was a failure. In a meeting held just after the board meeting, Sandy Kravits, director of demonstration and research projects for the OEO, Allan Yazzie, chairman of the Navajo Education Committee, Buck Benham, head of Navajo education for the BIA, and Roessel all discussed why the Lukachukai Demonstration School had failed. They unanimously agreed that the demonstration had failed because the school had two leaders: "One [of the leaders was] the BIA principal and one [was] the Director of OEO monies. The principal had the final authority. When Tom Reno, the Director of the OEO component, wanted to build a Hogan inside the school compound the principal said no. Consequently, all of the innovative ideas Tom Reno had were dead and never tried."¹⁷

In his personal memoir, *He Leadeth Me*, Roessel related the pressure that was applied by these powerful authorities in their efforts to convince him to make a second attempt at a demonstration in Navajo educational self-determination. Buck Benham indicated that the BIA was willing to dedicate its newly completed school at Rough Rock for one more experiment. Then Sandy Kravits applied intense pressure. "Kravits turned to me and said the only way the OEO would fund the demonstration part would be for me to be in charge and run the school."¹⁸ Roessel took a week to discuss the move with Ruth and his mother and to meditate on the possibilities. He negotiated a block on his position at ASU. It was agreed that the College of Education wouldn't fill it for one year so he could return to the university if he so desired; then Roessel plunged into the challenge.¹⁹

At Rough Rock Demonstration School's dedication ceremonies on 30 April 1966, Raymond Nakai called on the school to "develop programs which will make the community and parents a vital force in Navajo education . . . [and] . . . make the Navajo children proud of who they are and knowledgeable

about their community, tribe, and history.”²⁰ Later that summer, Robert Roessel returned to the reservation in order to help the Navajo develop the Rough Rock Demonstration School and was able to broker the support of the OEO, the BIA, and tribal leadership to establish the school at Rough Rock. The school opened in the fall of 1965 with 220 students, most of whom lived in dormitories on the new campus, and provided education for Navajo students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Rough Rock was the reservation’s first Navajo-controlled school and chief among its missions was the creation of a Navajo-specific curricula.²¹ Rough Rock Demonstration School proved to be overwhelmingly successful and garnered national attention. In a 1988 article on the Rough Rock Demonstration School in *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, John Collier Jr. described Roessel as an “essential presence who drew the loosely related Navajo population into a supportive community.”²² Philleo Nash, former commissioner of Indian affairs, believed that Rough Rock Demonstration School “was the single-handed creation of Bob Roessel, a charismatic educator of great energy, imagination, creativity, and determination.”²³

CULTURAL BROKERAGE IN THE FOUNDING OF NAVAJO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By 1959, the Navajo Education Committee and the tribal leadership had become worried about the 50 percent dropout rate of Navajo freshman students who were being supported by the tribe’s college scholarship fund. This failure led the leaders to begin to explore the possibility of establishing their own college. Roessel’s dissertation noted that the tribal education committee had requested that ASU develop a survey about establishing a community college. Though no action was taken on the needs assessment at that time, the survey was pigeonholed for later utilization. In a conversation between Roessel and Navajo Education Committee Chairman Dillon Platero on 20 February 1960, Platero was quoted as saying, “We plan to go ahead with the proposed community college survey. We need it and want it. It’s only a matter of time.”²⁴

Perhaps the most influential piece of federal legislation in making NCC possible was the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Thomas Clarkin in his study, *Federal Indian Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, 1961–1969*, asserted that creation of the OEO provided five major benefits for American Indians: (1) the opportunity for Native Americans to devise and operate their own programs; (2) valuable administrative and bureaucratic training for Native Americans who wished to run for tribal offices and to manage tribal businesses; (3) new leadership opportunities for ambitious young Native Americans (for example, Navajo tribal chairmen Peter MacDonald and Peterson Zah were leaders who gained managerial experience through OEO); (4) an agency the tribes could deal with that was not a part of the BIA; and (5) desperately needed social services on reservations.²⁵ Nonetheless, not until 1965 did Navajo educator Dillon Platero, Navajo leader Allen Yazzie, and Tribal Councilman Guy Gorman manage to convince the Johnson-era War on

Poverty agency, the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity (ONEO), to fund the feasibility study for the college. The study's conclusions, issued in February 1966 as "Survey Report, Navajo Community College," included a recommendation that a tribally controlled community college be established.²⁶

The BIA's support was also important to the hoped-for college's success, but that support was not overwhelming in the new institution's planning stages. In his study, *Diné: A History of the Navajos*, Peter Iverson described a 1967 meeting at Many Farms, Arizona (NCC's initial home) that was indicative of the relationship between tribal leaders and the BIA and of the Navajos' commitment to the idea of establishing their own college. Tribal Chairman Raymond Nakai had summoned BIA officials and business leaders to share his goal of creating the first Indian-controlled college. After Chairman Nakai's remarks, a BIA bureaucrat immediately dismissed the idea. "My god, Mr. Chairman," he exclaimed, "you don't mean to tell me that you Navajos think you can run a college." To which Nakai replied, "We're not asking for your permission but rather telling you what we are going to do."²⁷

Several factors converged to warm the BIA's attitude toward a tribally controlled college for the Navajo. First, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, chair of the US Senate Committee on Education's Special Subcommittee on Indian Education, launched a national investigation of Indian education in 1967. After Kennedy's assassination in 1968, his brother, Senator Edward Kennedy, became chairman. The committee's report *Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge* (Senate Report 91-105) caused quite a stir. According to Norman T. Oppelt, the study found that "only 18% of the students in federal Indian schools went to college compared to a national average of 50%; only 3% of the Indian students who enrolled in college graduated, the national average was 32%; and only 1 of over 100 Indian college graduates received a Master's degree (Senate Report 91-105)."²⁸ Referring to the Meriam Report of 1928, the Special Subcommittee on Indian Education concluded that "the major findings of the Meriam Report were that (1) Indians were excluded from management of their own affairs and (2) Indians were receiving a poor quality of services (especially health and education) from public officials who were supposed to be serving their needs."²⁹ According to the subcommittee, "These two findings remain as valid today (1968) as they did more than forty years ago."³⁰ One of the few Indian education programs not condemned by the Kennedy Report was Rough Rock Demonstration School on the Navajo Reservation. However, despite the fact that Rough Rock provided an example of the "benefits that innovation and Indian inclusion could bring to the BIA's education division," the institution proved difficult to replicate. The OEO's and the BIA's sponsorship meant that the school received twice as much funding as did other Indian schools of comparable size.³¹

Because President Lyndon B. Johnson considered Robert F. Kennedy to be his chief rival, he rushed a message to the American people on 6 March 1968. Declaring a new goal in federal policy "that erases old attitudes of paternalism and promotes partnership," Johnson recognized the Indian "right to freedom of choice and self-determination" and called for a new federal policy

“with emphasis on Indian self-help and with respect for Indian culture.”³² According to Clarkin, “These pronouncements articulated the direction Indian affairs had taken . . . and evidenced the changes in Indian affairs since the 1953 promulgation of HCR 108, which had called for the termination of federal services to the tribes.”³³ Republican presidential candidate Richard M. Nixon took President Johnson’s policy statement on Indians a step further when, in a campaign speech on 27 September 1968, he declared that “we must assure the Indian that he can assume control of his own life without being separated involuntarily from the tribal group, and we must make it clear that Indians can become independent of federal control without being cut off from Federal concern and Federal support.”³⁴ All of these policy statements and this political posturing by candidates for the US presidency and by the incumbent president had the effect of improving the climate for Native American self-determination in higher education. Margaret Szasz argued that a combination of Indian self-determination, the success of Rough Rock Demonstration School, and changes in the BIA all converged to make the timing of NCC’s founding almost perfect. Due to this convergence, bureau leaders, almost without exception, supported the new college.³⁵

To assist in securing funding for the college, the tribal leaders brought non-Native Robert A. Roessel into the planning process. Support from OEO was enhanced by the creation of a local office—ONEO. The first director, appointed by the Johnson administration, was a young Navajo leader named Peter MacDonald who later became chairman of the Navajo Tribal Council.³⁶ Roessel helped draft and present a proposal for the school to the ONEO. Funding was secured for the college with the strong support of OEO officials in Washington, D.C. Two OEO officials in Washington, Sanford Kravitz and Richard Boone, were especially influential in making the initial funding for NCC possible. As the official responsible for demonstration and research for OEO, Sandy Kravitz had already demonstrated his commitment to Navajo control over Navajo education. He was instrumental in supporting the Lukachukai Demonstration School, the Rough Rock Demonstration School, and NCC.³⁷ Richard Boone, the original director of Community Action Programs for OEO, was in a position that enabled him to bypass the BIA and provide funds directly to the tribes. Boone had a strong belief that Indian communities were capable of the initiation and operation of education programs tailored to their own needs. He understood the necessity to fund Indian educational programs disproportionately to the number of participants enrolled in order to help those programs achieve equity with the other programs that had been receiving funding for many years. According to Roessel, Richard Boone also “stood up to the BIA when it exerted great pressure to have all OEO Indian funds given to the BIA.”³⁸

On 17 July 1968, the Navajo Tribal Council made the decision official by passing a resolution to establish NCC.³⁹ Robert Roessel was rewarded for his successful grant writing and lobbying efforts by being offered the first presidency of NCC. He resigned as director of the Rough Rock Demonstration School to assume those duties.⁴⁰ Committed to the Navajo community’s control of its own educational facilities, Roessel served as president for only one year

(six months of the college's actual operation). After that year, he accepted the position of college chancellor. Both Roessel and his successor, Dr. Ned Hatathli, believed the college's curriculum should center on Navajo cultural studies and that non-Indian faculty should be replaced with qualified Indian faculty as soon as they could be found.⁴¹ Roessel served as a cross-cultural broker for the cause of Navajo self-determination by helping to create Rough Rock Demonstration School and NCC under the Navajo people's ownership and control. The preservation and dissemination of Navajo studies as a central focus of both schools' curricula was key to this self-determination.

THE EARLY DAYS OF NAVAJO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

With the Navajo community's backing, the college secured \$450,000 annually for three years from OEO, \$250,000 from the Navajo tribe, and \$60,000 from the Donner Foundation. The college opened on 20 January 1969 with an enrollment of 551 students.⁴² From the outset, the NCC Board of Regents, an all-Navajo body, took personal responsibility for the school through an active, hands-on role. Guy Gorman served as the board's first president, Carl Todacheene served as vice president, and Chester Yellowhair was elected secretary-treasurer. Other board members included Yazzie Begay, Timothy Benally, Howard Gorman, Wilson Skeet, Larry Isaac (student representative), and Tribal Chairman Rayond Nakai, who served as an ex-officio member. Dillon Platero, who replaced Robert Roessel at the Rough Rock Demonstration School, was also appointed to the Board of Regents. Ned Hatathli and Allen Yazzie were appointed as vice presidents, with Hatathli designated to succeed Roessel as president.⁴³

In their monthly board meetings, regents learned specific details regarding the college's operation and received the normal generalizations, assurances, and vision of NCC's administrative staff. They had high hopes for the college. At the 4 November 1968 board of regents meeting held at the Tsaile-Wheatfields chapter house shortly before the college was to open, Regent Howard Gorman expressed this sentiment of board ownership and responsibility: "Now we have a college on the reservation so our students can go to college here at home. We have our own language and culture in the curriculum. We will be able to provide another chance for the many that never before had a chance. The college is guided and controlled by an eight-member board of regents. We provide the direction. It is our college."⁴⁴ Due to this sense of ownership, the board of regents had developed a purpose, philosophy, and objectives in the latter part of 1968, several months before NCC was officially opened.⁴⁵ The Navajos clearly wanted NCC to be The People's College. To implement this mission, NCC adopted a policy of open admission in which no entrance examination was required.⁴⁶

Robert Roessel, along with a number of key volunteers, recruited talented Navajos from across the United States to serve as faculty. Though the college's initial curriculum included general education and vocational courses, at its heart the curriculum consisted of Navajo studies. One of the college's early goals was to preserve and disseminate Navajo culture to The People by The

People. Roessel's wife, Ruth, a Navajo tribal member, became director of the Navajo studies program.⁴⁷

RUTH ROESSEL AND HER ROLE IN DEVELOPING NAVAJO STUDIES FOR THE COLLEGE'S CURRICULUM

Ruth Roessel and her husband had formed a true partnership in this cultural brokerage. The two met while she was a senior at Fort Wingate High School, a BIA boarding school, and he was the principal at Round Rock, her hometown. The former Miss Ruth Wheeler's high school education was primarily vocational and when she applied for admission to Haskell Institute in hopes of becoming a secretary her application was denied. She related that her future husband, Bob, wrote a "very hot letter" to the superintendent. In a later retrospective Mrs. Roessel wrote,

Many years later, after I had graduated from college, I met that man from Haskell who had told Bob, and had told everyone, that I didn't have the ability to be a secretary. It was really good to meet him and to tell him that I had finished college with a degree in elementary education from Arizona State University. Later, when I got my Master's Degree, I thought of him and wondered how many other students were prevented from going on to higher education because someone gave them tests that were wrong and unfair?⁴⁸

A foundational figure in the development of Indian studies as an academic discipline, Ruth Roessel described her personal philosophy in her edited monograph *Women in Navajo Society*. It was a philosophy that was to influence her approach and commitment to Navajo studies. "When I am asked what my philosophy is, I reply, 'I believe in my culture. I am a Navajo, and I am proud of it; therefore, it makes me who I am and what I am.'" In speaking of The People she related that "the key to our future is in our hands. It is our Navajo culture. We must teach it, we must learn it, we must live it and we must respect it."⁴⁹

Gaining credibility for the new field of Indian studies was not to be an easy proposition, however. Mrs. Roessel identified a number of difficulties that had to be overcome in order to create effective Indian studies programs in her 1974 monograph *The Role of Indian Studies in American Education*. First was the difficulty of finding knowledgeable faculty who had the pedagogical skills necessary to hold the interest and create the desire to learn Navajo culture. Initially, recruiting knowledgeable educators from across the country to teach in the NCC Navajo studies program overcame this.⁵⁰ The second difficulty was overcoming the idea that Navajo culture could and should be taught by the Navajo family. Mrs. Roessel's argument regarding this problem was that many Navajo families no longer had the cultural knowledge needed to teach their children about Navajo culture. She asserted that this largely was due to a period during which federal government policies attempted extinction of Native culture largely through boarding school education: "Indian adults

who became educated often were washed white in the sense that their heritage was denied, if not taken away from them.”⁵¹ Many educated Navajos no longer had the cultural knowledge necessary to teach Navajo studies. A third difficulty was the lack of quality teaching materials created by Navajos for Navajos. “Many believe that it is vital for Indian people everywhere to develop their own materials which can be placed on library shelves and on students’ desks just like materials that are used in other school subjects,” she wrote.⁵² Though not ignoring scholarship by acknowledged non-Indian scholars such as Clyde Kluckhohn, Dorothea Leighton, Washington Matthews, and Father Berard, Mrs. Roessel addressed this problem through the establishment of Navajo Community College Press.⁵³

Other issues identified by Ruth Roessel included “legitimacy” of Indian studies, the nature and composition of the discipline, educated Navajos who felt Indian studies was not a fit subject for inclusion in the school’s curriculum (largely expressed about primary and secondary education), and financial support for the study of Native culture. Legitimacy was achieved by seeking and securing regional accreditation from the North Central Association for the Navajo studies portion of the college’s curriculum. The nature and composition of Indian studies programs was addressed by convening a National Conference on Indian Studies at NCC in May 1974, an effort that was funded by the Weatherhead Foundation of New York City. The issue of educated Navajos who felt Navajo studies was not appropriate for the curriculum was overcome by soliciting the support of the overwhelming majority of Navajos who did believe it was appropriate. The funding issue was deemed to be a nonissue because of the large number of funding sources that were available to support the development of Indian studies programs.⁵⁴ Such was the state of Navajo and Indian studies, but what was the situation at the college?

When NCC opened in January 1969, it was in an underutilized space at the new Many Farms High School—a BIA boarding school facility. Despite its success in securing national, community, and tribal support, the college’s nonacademic environment limited its ability to recruit and retain students. Most students resided in dormitories due to the remoteness of the campus. Peter Iverson, in his personal memoir, described living conditions on the Many Farms campus as difficult at best: “Those who lived on campus were sentenced to reside in Dormitory Nine, with no rugs on the floor, no carpeting in the hallways, harsh overhead lighting, and paper-thin walls. The high school furnished the cook, the food, and high school students whose presence extended the lines in the cafeteria. The cook obviously regarded pepper as a dangerous spice and his concoctions lacked imagination, variety, or taste. Students complained constantly about the food.”⁵⁵ It wasn’t until after the new campus was built in 1973 at Tsaile, Arizona, on lands donated by the Yazzie Begay family that living conditions improved markedly for residential students who lived on campus. Even then, the new campus’s isolated location forced students either to live on campus or to commute a minimum of thirty miles each way to classes. This isolation soon led to the establishment of branch campuses in Shiprock, Tuba City, and Chinle.⁵⁶

NAVAJO COMMUNITY COLLEGE UNDER FULL ADMINISTRATIVE AND GOVERNING BODY CONTROL OF THE NAVAJO

Hatathli Administration (1969–72)

In July of 1969, when Robert Roessel assumed the college's chancellorship in order for Ned Hatathli to become NCC's first Navajo president, a new vision of total Navajo control over the college took hold. In a position paper dated 21 April 1970, Hatathli asserted:

Navajo Community College was established to bring higher education to the Navajo Reservation. About this there is no question but the most important area of demonstration and innovation is Indian control over Indian education, specifically Navajo control over Navajo education.

The College must never lose sight of its responsibilities in this area. At this College the traditional relationship must be reversed. Here we must constantly and continually work toward greater and greater control of the College in the hands of the Navajos. The Anglos should not be in the driver's seat. They should not be the ones directing and controlling this college.⁵⁷

Shortly after issuing this position paper, President Hatathli proposed an all-Navajo college council. Composed of faculty, students, and staff, the Navajo council would be responsible for making day-to-day decisions and recommendations affecting the college's administrative and curricular affairs "at the level below that of the Regents, but at a most significant level." This gave virtually complete control of decision making in the college to the Navajos.⁵⁸

When Roessel expressed his concern that the non-Indian faculty was being denied a voice in college governance, Hatathli responded: "This is an Indian owned and an Indian operated institution, and we certainly don't want any people other than Indian to dictate to us what is good for us."⁵⁹ Though not specifically addressed in his published works, Roessel's concern regarding the lack of a non-Native voice in governance may have arisen from the fact that the only interest the college seemed to have in its non-Native faculty and staff was the financial contributions they and other non-Native funding organizations could make. The college's emphasis on hiring Native faculty also afforded no job security for non-Natives regardless of their performance in the classroom. The remote location and difficult conditions at the college plus the one-year contracts for faculty also contributed to the high rate of turnover among the non-Native faculty members. Hatathli's rationale may have been based on his desire to have the college under the complete control of The People and on the fact that in 1970 only 40 percent of NCC's faculty was Navajo—information that potentially would have given governing control of faculty decision making to non-Natives had they been allowed a vote in the governance process. Whatever his reasoning, Hatathli expressed his belief in the nonessentiality of the non-Indian faculty members for the long

term by stating that, in his opinion, they were simply “working themselves out of a job.”⁶⁰

On 13 April 1971, almost two and a half years after the college first began operation, a milestone occurred in the life of NCC. On that day, the land on which the new permanent campus of NCC was to be built was blessed in the Navajo way with a ceremony dedicated to the future. Colorado Congressman Wayne N. Aspinall, chairman of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee from 1959 through 1973, gave the keynote speech at the dedication of the land for the proposed site of NCC. This visit to Tsaile, Arizona, crystallized Aspinall’s support for the college.⁶¹

Marjane Ambler, in her 2002 editorial celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) published in *The Tribal College Journal*, provides an interesting anecdote as to how Congressman Aspinall came to feel such a strong allegiance to the college. It seems Aspinall and several others were asked to grasp the gish, the Navajo’s traditional digging stick, during the college’s groundbreaking. It was a hot day and Aspinall was stooped over with his hands below the other dignitaries’ hands on the gish during the ceremony. The ceremony was long, and Bob Roessel became increasingly concerned about the elderly congressman’s health. When the groundbreaking was finished, the congressman slowly stood upright and called Roessel to his side. “I have been to mosques; I have been to synagogues; I’ve been to churches all over the world. But I felt God when I felt that stick. You will get your college,” he said. Overcoming the objections of congressional and BIA opponents, Aspinall was true to his word and secured the passage of the Navajo Community College Act.⁶² Margaret Szasz argued that passage of the Navajo Community College Act (PL 92-189) by Congress in December 1971 virtually ensured the college’s early financial security, which almost guaranteed its survival through its infancy. According to Szasz, the act included the following:

[It] provided that the Indian Bureau would allocate funds to NCC equivalent to Bureau funding for Indian students in Bureau post-high school programs such as Haskell Indian Junior college. Since this amount alone would provide 65 percent of the total budget for NCC, it was essential to assured future growth. With the passage of this legislation, NCC was able to begin the first phase of construction, a \$5.3 million project that would provide facilities for the initial stage of 500 students. As more funds were procured, the school eventually planned to expand to a total student body of 1,500.⁶³

Ned Hatathli died unexpectedly in 1972 of a shotgun blast in the bedroom of his home. According to an account by one of his relatives, Hatathli had been drinking. Friends indicated that he was despondent because he had just been passed over for the area BIA director’s job. It was not clear whether Hatathli’s death was accidental or a suicide.⁶⁴ What is clear is that his death was a great loss to the NCC community.

Atcitty Administration (1972–77)

Thomas Atcitty, Hatathli's successor, with the support of new Tribal Chairman Peter MacDonald, ignored the board of regents' wishes and moved NCC away from its emphasis on Navajo culture toward "a more mainstream non-Indian community college" curriculum. He also began applying admission standards to new applicants. MacDonald, a former executive with Hughes Aircraft who had headed ONEO programs on the Navajo Reservation, wanted NCC to have more prestige. Atcitty, a cousin of MacDonald's who became a leader in the tribal college movement as a founder, member, and spokesperson for the AIHEC, traveled frequently and seemed to lose touch with the faculty and regents at the Tsailé campus.⁶⁵

Robert Roessel expressed his disappointment that the board of regents had capitulated to Chairman McDonald's pressure and not selected Dillon Platero as the college's replacement for Hatathli. Roessel wrote that he felt out of place at NCC when Thomas Atcitty "rightly selected his own close advisors and I was not one of them." He felt that Chairman McDonald's intention of making NCC "the Harvard of the West" was diametrically opposed to the college's original purpose—to hold the Navajo studies program at the heart of the institution. As the result of these actions, Roessel left the college in 1974, applying for and being appointed to the position of superintendent of schools for the Chinle Public School District.⁶⁶

His new circumstances notwithstanding, in February 1974 Roessel presented the position paper "State of the College, Navajo Community College Today" to the board of regents. His presentation, which emphasized many of the college's strengths, including its regents, also expressed concern about the college's curriculum moving away from its Navajo studies focus, the deemphasis of the vocational education curriculum, the amount of time President Atcitty was spending away from campus on NCC and AIHEC business, and what he perceived as a breakdown in communication between the president and the college's students and faculty. NCC's board chairman, Guy Gorman, expressed his own concern regarding what he believed to be the excessive influence of tribal politics then being exerted on the college.⁶⁷

In *Tribally Controlled Colleges: Making Good Medicine*, Wayne Stein argued that there was also tension among the faculty: "Non-Indian faculty were intent upon building a school in the image of a classical higher education institution, and Indians such as Ralph Davis, Navajo-Choctaw, Jerry Brown, Flathead, and John Tippecconic, Comanche, were intent on a college which reflected Navajo/Indian values. Since 65% of the faculty were non-Indian, it was a constant losing effort on the Indians' part."⁶⁸ Stein further stated that although the non-Indian faculty took issue with Atcitty's administrative policies, they supported his efforts to make NCC a more mainstream community college.⁶⁹

Atcitty's public persona was not completely a detriment to the college, however. He was instrumental in passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1974 (PL 93-638), which lent legal support for President Nixon's position on Indian self-determination. This act required

the secretary of the interior to submit a report to Congress that included “a specific program, together with detailed legislative recommendations, to assist in the development of Indian controlled community colleges” (88 Stat., Sec. 203.4).⁷⁰ The act’s intent was “to provide maximum Indian participation in the Government and education of Indian people; . . . to establish a program of assistance to upgrade Indian education; and to support the right of Indian citizens to control their own educational activities.”⁷¹ NCC also achieved several other substantive accomplishments under Atcity’s administration. A new branch campus at Shiprock began operation in 1974; construction of the new Tsaile campus was completed; and the process to gain accreditation by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools was begun in 1976. Atcity’s relationship with Peter McDonald facilitated strong political alliances between the college and the tribal council. And the skill he displayed as founder, developer, and national spokesperson for the AIHEC made him a credible and respected national leader in the movement for self-determination in Native-controlled higher education.⁷²

However, during his extended absences from the campus, Atcity’s troubles at the college only seemed to accelerate. The president had continued Hatathli’s practice of providing genuine power to what he now called the President’s Advisory Council, the all-Navajo council equally composed of administrators, faculty, and students. After years spent deemphasizing the centrality of Navajo studies in the curriculum against the board of regents’ wishes, which culminated with the replacement of long-time regents Guy Gorman and Dillon Platero on the board, the climate of uncertainty as to the college’s mission and direction only served to exacerbate the situation on campus. Atcity’s dismissal of Lawrence Issac, vice president of academic and student affairs, at the 12 January 1977 board of regents meeting proved to be the last straw.⁷³ The crisis was brought to a head on 16 January 1977 when a united group, estimated to be 80 to 90 percent of the NCC faculty, students, and staff, presented a document to the board of regents that delineated concerns about President Atcity’s administration of the college, outlined specific conditions at NCC, and called for his resignation.⁷⁴ Concerns expressed in the document by this group of college constituents included “President Atcity’s frequent absences from campus, student enrollment decline, faculty turnover, lack of internal communications with students and faculty, poor internal fiscal and management style, noncompliance with board direction and policy, drop in educational quality, confusion in the curriculum offerings, and lack of administrative professionalism in the field of education.”⁷⁵

Though President Atcity was able to garner some support from the board it simply wasn’t enough to overcome the united front mounted against him. Even his cousin, Tribal Council Chairman Peter McDonald, expressed the need for a change at the college in a 3 February 1977 letter to the editor of the *Navajo Times*. Ultimately, on Monday, 14 February 1977, Atcity was forced to tender his resignation at the college’s spring 1977 board meeting. The board, in a 5–0 vote, accepted his resignation as president but refused to let Atcity leave the college and asked that he remain at NCC for at least a year to help with fundraising.⁷⁶

The question as to whether or to what extent Robert Roessel may have been involved in the actions that were designed to remove Thomas Atcitty from office is unclear. Roessel's name was not mentioned in any *Navajo Times* coverage of the meetings and events that precipitated Atcitty's removal from office. However, it is clear that he still kept his hand on the college's pulse even during the two tumultuous years Roessel spent as Chinle School District superintendent and at the beginning of his and Ruth's second terms of service to the Rough Rock schools (1976–80). His monograph *Navajo Education, 1948–1978: Its Progress and Its Problems* provides a detailed account of the curricular, financial, and administrative issues that surrounded the Atcitty administration. His 1974 presentation of "State of the College, Navajo Community College Today" indicated his ongoing interest in the college's direction and curriculum.⁷⁷

McCabe Administration (1977–78)

The board of regents acted quickly to replace Atcitty and appointed Donald McCabe as the college's interim president on 26 February 1977. He assumed his duties 1 March 1977. A PhD candidate at Stanford University, McCabe had served as director of planning and research for the Navajo Tribes Division of Education for fifteen months and had also served in a variety of educational positions in California, New Mexico, and Arizona prior to his appointment. His charge from the board was to establish "a new communication and cooperation among faculty, administration and students" during his six-month appointment, after which he would be considered for the position permanently along with others who might be designated by a special NCC search committee.⁷⁸ Wayne J. Stein argued that much of McCabe's effort during his brief administration was devoted to passing the AIHEC legislation that was being proposed in the nation's capitol. James Hena, the director of NCC's development office, kept the president and regents up to date on lobbying activities in Washington. His was a complicated proposition because "Hena was in the difficult position of preserving NCC's status of having its own legislation (Public Law 92-189) and of working cooperatively with NCC's sister tribally controlled colleges to develop competing legislation."⁷⁹

Though McCabe was appointed to the permanent position of NCC president on 6 July 1977, his situation at the college was subject to controversy. Stein asserted that McCabe "enjoyed good political support from the tribal government and a number of NCC's regents," and the *Navajo Times* indicated he had "solid support from a mix of Indian and non-Indian students, faculty and staff," but a want ad in the *Navajo Times* dated 30 June 1977 seemed to paint a different picture of his status with his administrative team just weeks before his permanent appointment. Among the key position openings being advertised for the college in that week's edition of the *Times* were vice president of administration, vice president of academic and student affairs, dean of instruction, dean of students, and administrative assistant to the president.⁸⁰

In August, McCabe and board of regents president, Carl Todacheene, presented the "Annual Report of the Self-Study Steering Committee (July,

1977)” to a special advisory committee of the Navajo Tribal Council. The self-study reported several problems that had been resolved and several others that remained to be resolved. Among the problems that appeared to have been resolved were the resignation of Thomas Atcitty, the college’s former president; the decrease in enrollment at NCC; and the “lack of management.” Among the unresolved problems that were being addressed were “the alleged mismanagement of funds, the poor student housing, the lack of communication among the students, faculty and administration, the high turnover of faculty, students, and staff, and the lack of quality faculty.” The tribal college’s leaders addressed these issues and provided recommendations for addressing each of them. The self-study report was unanimously accepted by the advisory committee, and a charge was given for the president and the regents of the college to implement the recommendations.⁸¹

Donald McCabe was inaugurated on 15 December 1977, but already there were indications of possible trouble for his administration. The inauguration was held after the fall term had ended and most students had gone home. Asked about the inauguration’s timing, NCC Public Relations Director David Allison stated that there had been scheduling difficulties because the facilities had been in use. Nonetheless, Boyce Ben, vice president of the Associated Students called for a boycott of the inauguration because “McCabe had not come to speak with the students since becoming president and because grievances from last year have not been met completely.” However, a dissident student indicated that the small group of Associated Students was not representative of the whole student body and rather than activism on campus the general mood on campus was one of apathy.⁸²

By March of 1978, several former McCabe advocates attended the board of regents monthly meeting and expressed their concern about the direction in which the president was taking the college, the increase in admission standards, and his failure to keep Navajo studies at the heart of the curriculum. Following the regular meeting, a special meeting was called to discuss accusations made by Robert Roessel regarding McCabe’s conduct. The board deliberated several hours regarding these issues, and though the president was allowed to continue, members of the regents who remained critical of McCabe rendered the administration impotent due to the withdrawal of support.⁸³

Capitalizing on what the board felt to be the optimum opportunity to inflict the greatest embarrassment on the college, on 14 July 1978, during a joint meeting with the NCC Board of Regents and the Arizona Board of Regents to discuss articulation and transfer agreements, President McCabe passed a handwritten letter of resignation to Chairman Todacheene and stormed out of the meeting. The NCC regents accepted the president’s resignation and the college’s day-to-day operations were assigned to Joy Hanley until a permanent president could be engaged.⁸⁴ In interviews with *People* magazine and the *Navajo Times*, McCabe leveled charges of meddling and asserted that the board of regents forced his administration to engage in nepotistic hiring practices. Despite this alleged pressure, McCabe expressed his personal commitment to a set of management ethics, a set of principles to which, he implied, the regents did not adhere.⁸⁵

After the 3 August 1978 board of regents meeting in which McCabe's public representation of the reasons for his resignation were discussed, a resolution expressing the board of regents' disappointment in the manner in which McCabe had chosen to resign and take his criticism of the regents to the press was considered and ratified. On 10 August 1978, the *Navajo Times* published the resolution in the form of a letter to the editor signed by Regents Chairman Carl L. Todacheene. The letter took the high road and chose not to address specific allegations about McCabe but instead responded to the allegations levied against the board and expressed their unanimous disappointment in the unprofessional manner in which the former president had taken his dissatisfaction public.⁸⁶

Hanley Administration (1978)

When Acting President Joy Hanley assumed control the college was beset with a variety of problems among all of its constituents—a situation that she had inherited from the recent past. Wayne J. Stein asserted that some of those problems included “recurring crises brought on by administrative upheaval, the doubts of the federal government agencies who funded the college about its viability, and student unrest. Other problems related to tribal government: questions about the departure of two presidents, and the Navajo community's questions about the direction and interpretation of the college's mission by recent administrators.”⁸⁷

Essentially, the acting president served in a caretaker's role allowing the regents to search for a permanent president and calming the concerns of NCC's multiple stakeholders. One major accomplishment that transpired during the Hanley administration was the congressional enactment of the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978, the first portion of which was designed to “offer financial assistance to community colleges chartered by, committed to, and having a majority Indian student body or governing board.” The bill provided earmarks for grants to support technical assistance, feasibility studies, and support for institutions of higher education. The act's second half, an earmark for NCC, would be \$6.6 million for 1980 based on a full-time equivalency of 1,650 students—an increase of \$1.3 million from fiscal year 1978.⁸⁸

Jackson Administration (1979–89)

Following the rapid turnover of the preceding two presidencies, NCC hired Navajo educator Dean C. Jackson as its sixth president. Jackson, who served NCC from 1979 to 1989, established curricular balance and stabilized the administration while he promoted a Diné philosophy of learning. This philosophy, which “places human life in harmony with the natural world and the universe,” was essential to Jackson's success. He was forced to deal with federal budget cuts for the college's operating expenses, which dropped from \$6 million to \$3 million annually.⁸⁹ Despite the financial challenges faced by the college, President Jackson moved the college from one of its darkest periods to one in which it achieved “stability, harmony, and educational quality.”⁹⁰

During President Dean Jackson's administration at NCC, Robert Roessel found his peace with the college. The president's emphasis on promoting a Diné philosophy of education and returning Navajo studies to the center of the college's curriculum was exactly what Roessel had long desired.

THE LATER CAREER OF ROBERT A. ROESSEL JR.

After his second term at Rough Rock, Roessel served the Navajo people in a variety of capacities. From 1980 to 1983, he worked under Dillon Platero as a special assistant at Navajo Academy while he helped secure more than \$3.5 million for a new high school. When Peterson Zah became chairman of the Navajo tribe in 1983, he invited Roessel to join his education staff. Roessel did and served as director of resources and research for one year. From 1984 to 1985, Roessel became the executive director of the Navajo Education and Scholarship Foundation and was able to raise \$3.6 million to help build a new Navajo Education Center.⁹¹ In 1985 Roessel became superintendent of schools for the Cedar Public School District, which included all of the Hopi Reservation and parts of the central Navajo Reservation. He served that district for two years. Between July 1987 and June 1988, Roessel served as a consultant for an organization that he and his wife Ruth called Talking God Indian Education Consultants. In 1988, Roessel returned to Round Rock Elementary School, which he had founded in 1952 as principal.⁹²

During Roessel's tenure at Round Rock Elementary School, Peterson Zah was elected first president of the Navajo Nation. Zah invited Roessel to join him, again, in tribal government, and Roessel served as director of research and planning for the Navajo Division of Education at Window Rock from 1991 to 1995. He returned to NCC as a vice president from 1995 through 1996. Between 1996 and 1997, Roessel started the Round Rock Community Foundation. Finally, in 1997, he returned to Rough Rock Community School where he served as executive director until his retirement in June 2000. Even after retirement, Roessel could not slow down. In 2001, he served as a consultant for the Dilkon Community School District and for the ASU-Rough Rock Teacher Training Program.⁹³

CONCLUSION

Reyhner and Eder assert that NCC "was the result of collaboration between local desires and outside expertise."⁹⁴ Yet, as the present study shows, the administrative brokerage of tribal leaders such as Raymond Nakai, Dillon Platero, Guy Gorman, Carl Todacheene, and Allen Yazzie was necessary to make the idea of the college credible to the Navajo people. The federal policy brokerage of unsung supporters in the OEO and the ONEO was essential in securing funding for the college's initial founding at its temporary location at Many Farms High School. The political brokerage of at least one prominent national figure, Congressman Wayne Aspinall, was vital as he fought, almost single-handedly, to enable the federal legislation to make funding for NCC's permanent main campus a reality. And the acquiescence and ultimately even

the BIA's quiet support played a substantial role in helping to create the college. Perhaps the most important cultural brokerage was that forged by the partnership of one dedicated couple—Robert and Ruth Roessel.

Bob Roessel's skill in brokering the possibilities of Navajo culture and education to foundations, federal agencies, and other decision makers through his grant writing, fundraising, and administrative expertise along with his commitment to the cause of Navajo educational self-determination made him the perfect complement to Ruth Roessel's ability to turn her expertise in Navajo art, culture, and tribal social and sacred values into curricular and educational resources for the classroom. Their powerful partnership created a cultural brokerage that made NCC a strong symbol of the possibilities of self-determination in Indian higher education for the Navajo people. The Navajo studies program became an influential prototype for Native American studies programs assisting other tribes to preserve their own society and culture and a model for other Native peoples across the country who were desirous of establishing their own tribally controlled colleges and universities.

On 16 February 2006, NCC lost one of its founders and greatest supporters. "Our Navajo Nation has truly lost one of our sons, one of our brothers—Dr. Robert Roessel," lamented Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr. in a posthumous tribute to Bob Roessel. "Dr. Roessel came to our land as a young man and embraced our culture with his whole heart. Then he taught us, one after another, to love who we are as individuals, as a people and as a culture. The meaning of his life was to teach the Navajo people to love the wisdom and teachings of our medicine people and to combine that with the highest attainment of academic achievement so that we could live true sovereignty as individuals and as a Nation."⁹⁵

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NOTES

1. E. Fuchs and R. J. Havighurst, *To Live on This Earth: American Indian Education* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), 19; J. Reyhner and J. Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 252.
2. L. L. House. "The Historical Development of Navajo Community College"

(PhD diss., Arizona State University, Tempe, 1974), 64–67, 70–71, 127; Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 295–96; W. J. Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges: Making Good Medicine* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 9–10, 14; M. C. Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination since 1928* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press 1999), 176–80. The statement regarding the creation of NCC being an attempt to overcome assimilationist tendencies and to serve five additional purposes is not derived from a list assembled in any single source, but rather it represents a set of purposes parts of which were included in each of the sources cited above and from a variety of other sources that contributed to this manuscript's development.

3. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 301; The Higher Learning Commission: A Commission of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges, http://www.ncahlc.org/index.php?option=com_directory&Itemid=192&action=ShowBasic&instid=1729 (accessed 17 June 2007). As a note of clarification, the Navajo refer to themselves as “The People,” and in the Navajo language the word for “The People” is *Diné*. To reflect NCC as the College of The People the Board of Regents officially changed the institution's name to Diné College on 17 May 1997.

4. M. C. Szasz, *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 6.

5. *Ibid.*, 20.

6. T. W. Taylor, *The Bureau of Indian Affairs* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 20–21. In a break with previous BIA reports to Congress that had emphasized forced enculturation, the Meriam study recommended a program “based on an understanding of the Indian point of view and a recognition of the good in Indian economic, social, religious and ethical concepts” seeking “to develop . . . and build on . . . rather than crush out all that is Indian” (Lewis Meriam et al., *The Problem of Indian Administration*, Institute for Government Research, Studies in Administration [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1928], 22).

7. D. Leighton and C. Kluckhohn, *Children of the People: The Navaho Individual and His Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947; New York: Octagon Books, 1974). Citations are to the Octagon edition.

8. G. B. Senese, *Self-Determination and the Social Education of Native Americans* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 87.

9. Fuchs and Havighurst, *To Live on this Earth*, 262.

10. T. L. McCarty, *A Place to Be Navajo: Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-Determination in Indigenous Schooling* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002), 74; Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 260; R. A. Roessel Jr., “An Analysis of Select Navaho Needs with Implications for Navaho Education” (EdD diss., Arizona State University, Tempe, 1960); R. A. Roessel Jr., *“He Leadeth Me”: An Account of How God/Jesus/Holy People Have Led Me Throughout My Life* (Round Rock, AZ: Roessel, 2002), 18. *Note*: This book is only available from the Labriola Research Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, 2002. Citations are from a photocopy.

11. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 260–61; Roessel Jr., *“He Leadeth Me,”* 18–69; Robert A. Roessel, *Indian Communities in Action* (Tempe: Arizona State University Bureau of Publications, 1967), 110.

12. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 260–61; Roessel Jr., *“He Leadeth Me,”* 69–119; R. A. Roessel, *Indian Communities in Action*, 110.

13. Roessel Jr., “An Analysis of Select Navaho Needs,” 13–14.

14. J. Begay, "Education Pioneer: Roessel Believed in Navajo Control of Education First, Last, Always," *Navajo Times*, 23 February 2006; Roessel Jr., "He Leadeth Me." *Note*. A discrepancy exists between the assertion of the *Navajo Times* article and Bob Roessel's personal memoir; both state that the Center for Indian Education (CIE) at ASU was founded in 1960. However, the center's Web site states that it was founded in 1959, thus the use of 1959 as the founding date (<http://coe.asu.edu/cie/> [accessed 10 July 2006]).

15. R. A. Roessel Jr., *Handbook for Indian Education* (Los Angeles: Amerindian Publishing Company), 1962. Cited in Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 261.

16. Roessel Jr., "He Leadeth Me," 121–23.

17. *Ibid.*, 124.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, 124–25.

20. P. Iverson, *Diné: A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 233. There is a discrepancy in the date for the founding of Rough Rock Demonstration School. Iverson indicated that the dedication ceremonies occurred on 30 April 1965. However, Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 261; Roessel Jr., "He Leadeth Me," 124, 126; and Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 171 all stated that the school was founded in 1966. Therefore, we use the dedication date as 30 April 1966.

21. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 296; Begay, *Navajo Times*, 2006.

22. J. Collier Jr., "Survival at Rough Rock: A Historical Overview of Rough Rock Demonstration School," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 19 (1988): 259; Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 260.

23. R. Allen, "Whither Indian Education: A Conversation with Philleo Nash," *School Review* 79 (1970): 105; Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 260.

24. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 296; Roessel Jr., "An Analysis of Select Navajo Needs," 211.

25. T. Clarkin, *Federal Indian Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, 1961–1969* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 125–26.

26. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 296; Roessel Jr., "An Analysis of Select Navaho Needs," 211; "Survey Report, Navajo Community College" (Tempe: Bureau of Educational Research and Services, College of Education, Arizona State University, 1966). *Note*. In the article "A Light in the Night" by Robert A. Roessel Jr. published in the *Journal of American Indian Education* 11, no. 3 (May 1972): 26–29, Dr. Roessel asserts that the feasibility study was completed in February 1968 and the college was established in July 1968 after working out details with the BIA for the college to temporarily use the new BIA Many Farms High School as its first home. Because the Hayden Historical Library collection at ASU catalogs the document as February 1966, we use this date as the date the feasibility study's findings were issued.

27. Iverson, *Diné*, 235.

28. N. T. Oppelt, *The Tribally Controlled Indian College: The Beginnings of Self-Determination in American Indian Education* (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1990), 28.

29. Oppelt, *The Tribally Controlled Indian College*, 28; Special Senate Subcommittee,

Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge, 91st Cong., S. Rep. 91–501 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1969), 13.

30. Oppelt, *The Tribally Controlled Indian College*, 28; US Congress, Senate, *Indian Education: A National Tragedy*, 13.

31. Clarkin, *Federal Indian Policy*, 236–37.

32. *Ibid.*, 260.

33. *Ibid.*

34. R. M. Nixon. Statement made on 27 September 1968. *Indian Record*, January 1969, 1–2. Nixon's statement was cited in Oppelt, *The Tribally Controlled Indian College*, 32.

35. Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 177.

36. Roessel Jr., *Navajo Education, 1948–1978: Its Progress and Its Problems* (Rough Rock, AZ: Navajo Curriculum Center, Rough Rock Demonstration School, 1979), 47.

37. Roessel Jr., *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*, 59; W. J. Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges: Making Good Medicine* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 10.

38. Roessel Jr., *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*, 59; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 10.

39. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 296; Roessel Jr., "A Light in the Night," 26–29; Senese, *Self-Determination*, 108.

40. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 296.

41. *Ibid.*, 177–78.

42. Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 176–77; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 16; L. L. House, "The Historical Development of Navajo Community College" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, Tempe, 1974), 74; Roessel Jr., *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*, 59. The only agreement regarding enrollment figures during NCC's first year seems to be that accurate figures are not available. Although Szasz states 301 students enrolled the first semester, Stein contends 309 students were enrolled, House asserts that maximum enrollment the first semester was 330, and Roessel cites a chart showing full-time equivalent enrollment of 551. Because Dr. Roessel was the college's first president, we defer to his enrollment figure. There does seem to be a general consensus that student attrition ranged from 30 to 50 percent during the college's first semester of operation.

43. Iverson, *Diné*, 235.

44. P. Iverson, "The Early Years of Diné College," *Journal of American Indian Education* 38, no. 3 (Spring 1999), 12–13.

45. Roessel Jr., *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*, 62; House, "The Historical Development of Navajo Community College," 71–72.

46. House, "The Historical Development of Navajo Community College," 74; Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 296.

47. Iverson, *Diné*, 236. Iverson provides a partial list of the early Navajo faculty and staff at the college.

48. Ruth Roessel, *Women in Navajo Society* (Rough Rock, AZ: Navajo Resource Center, Rough Rock Demonstration School, 1981), 169, 171–72.

49. Ruth Roessel, "My Philosophy," in *Women in Navajo Society*, 175, 177.

50. Iverson, *Diné*, 236; Ruth Roessel, *The Role of Indian Studies in American Education* (Tsaile Lake/Chinle, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1974), 9.

51. Ruth Roessel, *The Role of Indian Studies in American Education*, 9.

52. Ibid., 10.

53. Roessel Jr. in *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*, 63–69, identified a number of books and other publications that had been produced by Navajo Community College Press under the direction of Broderick Johnson.

54. Ruth Roessel, *The Role of Indian Studies in American Education*, 13–18.

55. Iverson, *Diné*, 235; Iverson, “The Early Years of Diné College,” 3–4.

56. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 296–97.

57. House, “The Historical Development of Navajo Community College,” 66–67.

58. Ibid., 67–68; Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 178.

59. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 297; Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 177–78.

60. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 297; Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 178.

61. Roessel Jr., *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*, 60; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 15–16; M. Ambler, “Thirty Years Strong,” *The Tribal College Journal* 14, no. 2 (Winter 2002) available from <http://www.tribalcollegejournal.org/themag/backissues/winter2002/winter2002ee.html> (accessed 12 July 2006). Two possibly conflicting accounts explain Wayne Aspinall’s presence at the Tsaile campus groundbreaking. Based on an interview with Guy Gorman, Wayne Stein relates that after numerous trips to Washington, DC, the college’s administrators and board members had made little headway in seeking support for NCC until Carl Todacheene, vice chairman of the NCC Board of Regents convinced Congressman Wayne Aspinall to grant the delegation a five-minute meeting with him in his Washington office in early 1971. During the meeting with the congressman, Mr. Todacheene congratulated him on his upcoming wedding before settling into what promised to be another vain attempt to convince a congressman of the college’s needs. However, Mr. Todacheene’s sage bit of research and his common courtesy led to an hour-long meeting in which the congressman provided all the details for his upcoming marriage. This, in turn, led to the delegation inviting Congressman Aspinall to be their guest of honor at the groundbreaking ceremonies at the new Tsaile Lake campus location on 13 April 1971. After his visit to the groundbreaking ceremonies, Mr. Aspinall became such a staunch supporter of the college that he personally led the effort to pass the Navajo Community College Act (Public Law 92-189), which passed on 15 December 1971. Marjane Ambler simply states that Aspinall, who had never been considered a friend to American Indian causes, was cajoled by Ruth Roessel (Navajo) to attend the groundbreaking ceremony for the new campus of NCC. This assertion was discussed more fully by Robert Roessel in his memoir “*He Leadeth Me*,” 131.

62. Ambler, “Thirty Years Strong”; Roessel Jr., “*He Leadeth Me*,” 131–32.

63. Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 179.

64. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 298; E. Benedek, *Beyond the Four Corners of the World: A Navajo Woman’s Journey* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

65. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 298; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 22.

66. Roessel Jr., “*He Leadeth Me*,” 135–36.

67. Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 22–23. Robert A. Roessel Jr. implied that national and international recognition that his wife Ruth received for her active

role in developing the field of Indian studies may have contributed to the decision to deemphasize Navajo studies at the college. Referring to the early 1970s he wrote, "Tragically, the publicity and attention given the Navajo studies director overshadowed even the President of Navajo Community College, and the administration of the college decided to fragment Navajo Studies as a means to make it 'stronger'—or so they said" (Roessel Jr., *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*, 76).

68. Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 23.

69. Ibid.

70. Oppelt, *The Tribally Controlled Indian College*, 33.

71. Ibid.

72. Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 23.

73. Gail Adler and Wendy Feder, "Crisis Hits Navajo College," *Navajo Times*, 20 January 1977, A-1, A-4, A-6, A-11; Roessel Jr., *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*, 72–78; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 24.

74. Adler and Feder, "Crisis Hits Navajo College," A-1, A-4, A-6, A-11; Laurie Burnett, "NCC Group Asks President to Quit," *Gallup Independent*, 18 January 1977; Roessel Jr., *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*, 72–78; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 24.

75. Adler and Feder, "Crisis Hits Navajo College," A-1, A-4, A-6, A-11; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 24. House, in his 1974 dissertation "The Historical Development of Navajo Community College," had compiled a similar list of "Immediate Problems," 79–111, as did Robert Roessel Jr. in *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*, 72–81, which was a post-Atcitty assessment of the college's issues and status.

76. Wendy Feder, "NCC President Resigns," *Navajo Times*, 17 February 1977, A-1, A-7; Peter McDonald, letter to the editor, "Navajo Community College Needs a Change," *Navajo Times*, 3 February 1977, A-4; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 24; Iverson, *Diné*, 246; Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 299–300; Roessel Jr., *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*.

77. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 299; Roessel Jr., "He Leadeth Me," 139; Roessel Jr., *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*, 59–81; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 24.

78. Wendy Feder, "McCabe: New Acting NCC President," *Navajo Times*, 3 March 1977, A-1, A-13; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 24.

79. Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 24.

80. "McCabe New President of NCC," *Navajo Times*, 14 July 1977, A-6; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 24; want ad, "Position Openings Navajo Community College," *Navajo Times*, 30 June 1977, B-20.

81. Ron Schreier, "Navajo Community College Sees Progress," *Navajo Times*, 25 August 1977, A-13.

82. "McCabe Is Inaugurated at NCC," *Navajo Times*, 15 December 1977, A-24.

83. Roessel Jr., *Navajo Education, 1948–1978*, 76, 80–81; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 25.

84. Pat Begay, "Navajo Community College President Don McCabe Resigns," *Navajo Times*, 20 July 1978, A-14–15; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 25.

85. Begay, "Don McCabe Resigns," *Navajo Times*, 20 July 1978, A-14–15.

86. Carl L. Todacheene, letter to the editor, *Navajo Times*, 10 August 1978, A-9.

87. Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 25–26.

88. "Congress Funds Navajo Community College," *Navajo Times*, 2 November

1978, B-8; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 25–26; *Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978*, Public Law 95-471, Stat. 1325, 95th Cong., 2d sess. (October 1978), Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office. *Note*: Title II of this act entitled Navajo Community College Act of 1978 is the operative portion of the act for NCC.

89. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 300; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 26.

90. Iverson, *Diné*, 236, 256; Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 299–300; Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges*, 26.

91. Roessel Jr., “*He Leadeth Me*,” 139–40.

92. *Ibid.*, 141.

93. *Ibid.*, 141–42, 150–52.

94. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 297.

95. The Navajo Nation, “Navajo Nation Bids Farewell to Preeminent Educator Dr. Robert A. Roessel, Jr., First Diné College President,” news release, 18 February 2006. *Note*: Bob Roessel continued to teach at ASU until 2004 when his health began to fail him. As Diné College approaches its fortieth anniversary, Ruth Roessel continues to serve her people as an educator of nearly sixty years and as president of the Round Rock Chapter of the Navajo Nation.