

# Peach Notes

## Seeing *Strength* in Our Children

### Superintendent William Santiago

PEACH SPRINGS, Ariz. – Typically, during this time, I would share with you thoughts of the holidays. Having just recovered from perhaps too much turkey on Thanksgiving and not enough exercise!

Looking at December thinking of what to give and wondering what I might receive. Of course, I would share important school information about report cards that will be mailed out and that the Peach Springs Unified School District winter break begins December 20 with the first day of second semester on January 3 and wishing you and your family all the best during the PSUSD winter break.

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### 5th grade Teacher Cultivates Growth in Students

By Sararesa Hopkins

PEACH SPRINGS, Ariz. – Willie Suathogame, a 5th grade student in Mercedes Gansz’s class, tossed his football towards the lofty school cafeteria ceiling while standing in the lunch line. A teacher on lunch duty told him, “Put that away.”

“Oh, sorry, excuse me,” Suathojame said with sincerely

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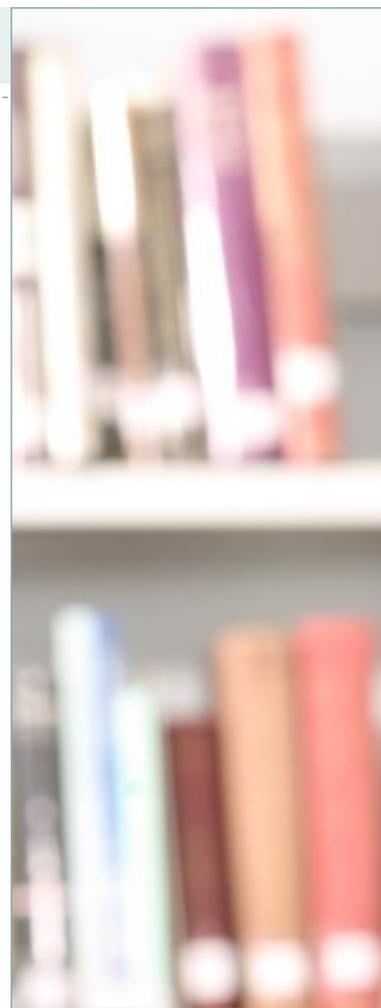
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#### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Student Recognition.
- 5th Grade Teacher Cultivates.
- NIEA Educator of the Year
- Filipino Christmas Traditions.
- Navajo Creation Story.



# EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



**Sararesa Hopkins**

**By Sararesa Hopkins**

This weekend my sister, Laurel, and I made Christmas sugar cookies while my traditional Navajo mother, Bernice, was baffled at our “festive-ness.” My mother Bernice Austin-Begay, is a Chilocco Indian School survivor and graduate, her roots are deep in Navajo-Diné tradition. I respect that, but there is “flaw,” in how she raised her children, me, the oldest; Laurel, Akenabah, and “little

brother,” Ben. We were not reared within an earthen floor hogan like my mother, and we did not awaken to the sound of our parents speaking only the Navajo language (*Diné Bizhaad*).

My siblings and I were reared in a regular square-shaped house, and we each had our own bedrooms. We spoke and heard, mostly, the English language.

**(Continued on P. 20).**

## CONTINUED ON FIFTH-GRADE TEACHER GANSZ CHALLENGES STUDENTS



**Mercedes Gansz, 5th grade teacher, helps Delson Walema during class. Gansz who is a Prescott, Ariz. native holds her students to high standards in academics and behavior. Gansz is in her third year as a teacher for Peach Springs Elementary School.**

in this voice, Suathojame’s refined manners are indicative of how much Suathojame and his fifth-grade classmates have matured and grown in school. Suathojame’s skillful use of manners show how much their teacher has worked hard to raise student behavioral expectations.

“My students all have their own unique personalities that make them special,” Gansz said. “I have some very active students, some very empathetic, some with great artistic abilities and a few great huggers.”

This year Gansz’s teaching methods include,” Utilizing centers and group work. I’m making sure I can really be intentional with their specific needs.”

Friendly and sociable the Prescott, Ariz. native, Gansz has 16 students in her class. Gansz, a 2010 Prescott High School graduate, attended Northern Arizona University to study for her Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Before NAU, she graduated from Yavapai College where she pursued a psychology degree while being a parent to her son. She transferred to Grand Canyon University to work on her master’s degree in psychology, and a master’s in sociology.

“About three years ago, I got my substitute teacher certification, and ended up here in Peach Springs where I fell in love with teaching and working with the kiddos. I am not sure if teaching will be my ultimate career, but for now, this is where I believe I am needed.”

Gansz stays in Peach Springs for the work week and returns home to Prescott Valley on the weekends to be with her 8-year-old, and family. As Gansz’s thoughts drift to her son she said, “He is my world, he is in third grade.”

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## Mercedes Gansz challenges fifth-grade students to high expectations as they rise to the occasion



### CONTINUED FIFTH-GRADE TEACHER

Born and reared in Prescott, Gansz has two younger brothers, “they are the best,”

She added. “I am thankful that I have a very supportive family who has always been there for the both of us.”



Mercedes Gansz, 5th grade teacher, has Christmas holiday decorations throughout her classroom. When Gansz is not teaching, she is taking care of her family, she loves spending time with her close friends, watching a movie. “I love to be outdoors especially to watch the sun go down.”

## SEEING STRENGTH IN OUR CHILDREN

(Continued from Page One)

However, more important of all of that might be is insignificant compared to what we just passed through as a community.

The past week we laid to rest four beautiful souls, Gabrielle Smith, Karen Walema, Samuel Bravo and Lueisha Siyuja.

There is no way to describe the hurt the family members and friends feel. The loss of any life, especially the loss of children is unbearable.

During the past 18 months that I’ve been your superintendent I have learned much, and I still have so much to learn. There is one thing that I am quite certain of and that is the strength, courage and resiliency of the Hualapai Tribe. I have no way to quantify it or describe it through a test or anything of that nature.

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# Peach Springs Elementary School Student Recognition

*For the week of December 13, 2021*

**Kindergarten** **Jordan Marshall Jr** For being a good line leader and willing to be corrected if he is wrong.

**1st grade** **Kimimila Davis** Kimimila has a wonderful attitude at all times. She is always listening and paying attention. She has wonderful carpet time and hallway manners.

**2nd grade** **Tara Martin**- Tara has been very kind to her teachers. She listens and follows directions.

**3rd grade** **Kiki Kiara Kiki** - also known as Little Firecracker - has improved SO MUCH as a student. She always wants to read to me, or be in a small reading group. So proud. Mr. Michael Pratt.

**4th grade** **Delard Jones** for raising his hands during class.

## **5th grade**

1). **Malaiya Powsey** Always turning in her work on time and making sure to stay on task during independent work time. Being respectful towards peers and adults inside the classroom and outside.

**Larissa Walema** Participating more in group discussions and small groups. Helping in the classroom when needed and being respectful towards peers and adults.

## **6th grade**

**Gilmore Powsey** For volunteering to read passages out loud for the class, and making class discussions productive and meaningful by making inferences.

Mr. Obren **Jackie Manakaja** gr 6-simply THE BEST at all times!!!

## **LifeSkills -**

**Barry Martin & Dione Pickayviatt**---For patiently reading a book with Mrs. Hunt.

**Culture**— **Shalayna Havatone**- Shalayna names more than 10 animals name in Hualapai each session 100%.

## **7th Grade**

**Math**— Honani, Rainey - Completing work on time and consistently.

**Science**— Kailey Siyuja and Katie Victorino—Responsible and respectful.

**Social Studies** - Kelly Whatahomigie being a responsible and kind student.

**English as a Second Language**—Jo Shia Arrez listening in class.

Continued on P. 5

# Vice-Principal's Corner

Mr. Pat Wolfe comes to us with 25 years of public education experiences in both Arizona and Nevada. Mr. Wolfe spent the majority of his career as a Social Studies teacher and baseball/basketball coach in the Chandler Unified School District.



**Pat Wolfe**  
**Assistant Principal**

His administrative journey led him to Lake Havasu City where he was Principal at Oro Grande Elementary from 2011-2016, followed by serving in Clark County School District (Vegas) as a High School AP and Athletic Administrator/Title IX more than the past five years.

Mr. Wolfe has immediately embraced the students, staff, and community of Peach Springs and is proud to be a Tiger.

The best is yet to come!



## Social and Emotional Learning Events

By Kayla Crowe

**Social and Emotional Learning Specialist**

Hello Everybody,

Kayla Crowe here from the SEL (social/emotional learning) Team. Starting in late November and running through December, Ms. Elvira Diaz and myself will be guest teaching in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade with Social Studies teacher, Mr. Spencer.

Ms. Diaz and I will be sharing a more personal side of Social Studies; interpersonal communication. More specifically, topics will include identifying anger triggers, staying calm in stressful moments, and expressing our feelings in healthy ways. Please ask your 7/8 grad-  
*er What did you learn today? And don't accept I don't know as an answer.*



## STUDENT

### RECOGNITION

(Continued from P. 4)

#### 8th grade

**Math**—Edmund Suathojame Junior Dini, Miah Chamberlain Completing work on time and consistently

#### Science -

Edmond Suathohamie & Kimora Walema Obedient and show's interest to learn.

#### English as Second

**Language -** 8th Onix Walema - Good Conduct.

#### English as a Second Language—

Romy Holmes Good Conduct.

**Social Studies -** Arman Chamberlain Polite and always does his work.

#### Social and Emotional Learning—

Barry Martin for patiently reading a book with Mrs. Hunt Dione Pickayviatt for patiently reading a book with Mrs. Hunt.

**Submitted by**  
**Stephanie Eglin.**

# WISCONSIN DPI AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES CONSULTANT RECEIVES NATIONAL HONOR FOR WORK



*Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.*

**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction American Indian Studies holds the National Indian Education of Association’s Educator of the Year Award, which he received from the organization during mid-October 2021 in Omaha, Nebraska. O’Connor is an enrolled member of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in Northern Wisconsin.**

**October 19, 2021  
Reprinted with permission  
From the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.**

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction American Indian Studies Consultant David O’Connor recently received a prestigious national honor for the outstanding work he does across the state and on the national level.

Last week, O’Connor received the National Indian Education Association’s (NIEA) Educator of the Year award at the organization’s 52nd Annual Convention and Trade Show in Omaha, Nebraska.

The theme of this year’s conference was Native Control of Native Education: A Time to Lead. The organization presented the award to O’Connor for his work in changing the landscape for all students, with an emphasis on Native American studies and education, in Wisconsin and across the Midwest.

“This award is a testament to the partnerships and relationships I have developed and built throughout my time at DPI,” O’Connor said. “Although

the award has my name on it, it should include all those I work with every single day both here at DPI and in the field. It represents the people of Wisconsin I serve and work with, and the folks every day who are involved in helping move this work forward.” O’Connor has worked at the DPI for nearly a decade, assisting with the implementation of curriculum at schools across the state in the areas of American Indian histories, cultures, and tribal sovereignty, often referred to as Wisconsin Act 31. His work with schools, libraries and others aims to provide training opportunities, develop and disseminate materials, and provide consultation on issues related to American Indian Studies, and the education of Native American students.

In his award acceptance speech at the conference, O’Connor said, “This award humbles and lifts my spirit up both personally and professionally. But I must truly share this award with all my family, friends, colleagues,

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# *GOOD MEDICINE BUNDLE* DIGITAL LESSONS SHARED AT NIEA CONFERENCE

October 20, 2021

Reprinted with permission

From the University of North Carolina-Pembroke.  
University Communications & Marketing

Two participants in University of North Carolina Pembroke's First Americans' Educational Leadership program (FAEL) were among presenters at the 2021 National Indian Education Association Convention in Omaha, Neb. Held October 13-16. Lakola Cook, a 2021 UNCP graduate, and Rodrick Bartley, a Master of School Administration student, presented their work on teaching the Good Medicine Bundle—a resource from the educational initiative, Operation Prevention, created by the Drug Enforcement Administration and Discovery Education.

The 2021 NIEA Convention theme, Native Control of Native Education: A Time to Lead,” recognizes that, through our collective efforts, we can enact educational sovereignty to transform learning experience for our Native students and create true equity in classrooms, school districts and communities.”

Cook and Bartley piloted the lessons in an interactive experience to explore the Good Medicine Bundles and culture-based approaches to wellness and substance misuse prevention.

Cook and Barley were among four Public Schools of Robeson County educators featured in the Good Medicine Bundle resources Master Class series, a professional development tool accessible for educators nationwide. NIEA partnered with Discovery Education—a worldwide edtech teacher—and the Drug Enforcement Administration to develop free culture-based lessons for Operation



*Photo courtesy of UNCP*

Prevention. The Culture-Based Prevention Resources provide digital and hands-on resources for educators to help American Indian Communities avoid the dangers of substance misuse.

According to the CDC, “On average, 130 Americans die everyday from an opioid overdose. Over time, the number of overdose deaths has increased, including among American Indian and Alaska Native people.”

As opioid and substance misuse is dangerously prevalent in Native communities, this partnership was designed to utilize Native values of wellness and community to teach all students how to make better choices and support each other.

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# LONGEST CHRISTMAS SEASON IN THE WORLD

**By Fannie Hunt**

**Special Education Teacher**

Christmas time in the Philippines is festive and colorful. Poor or rich, we have our own ways of celebrating Christmas. I come from a Roman-Catholic family who attends *Misa de gallo*. *Misa de gallo* is an early morning mass which starts on the 16th of December until the 5 AM of the 24th. I used to believe that if you have completed it, then at the last day you can make a wish, and your wish will come true. I'd wake up at 4AM and some of my siblings would go, carrying with us our own chairs and dressing warmly because the church was always packed and there was a high chance of sitting outside. After the mass the church would offer traditional breakfast like a hot cocoa paired with sweet sticky rice or other sweet treats. Hot cocoa is made of pure *cacao*.

My family during Christmas cooks different delicacies and my favorite was the fruit salad. In America fruit salad does not have a sweetener mixed in it, but ours does such as the table cream and/or condensed milk. I do not expect to receive gifts during Christmas time because my family could not afford to buy nine children individual gifts. I have grown accustomed to that and we have been content with just festive food on our table. For decorations, my mom makes her own Christmas stars (made of bamboo and water cellophane) and Christmas lanterns.

In the Philippines we hear Christmas songs at the start of September and my family takes down Christmas decorations after three kings. At school I grew up with Christmas parties in the classroom and we always exchanged gifts.



**Fannie Hunt**

**Special Education Teacher**



In the classroom the students played different games like trip to Jerusalem, freeze dance, among others and some presentations from students. The last day of Christmas at school is almost the same in the Philippines except for the fact that we do not have snow.

# FAMILY IS CENTRAL TO FILIPINO CHRISTMAS



**By Grace & Herbert Redillas**

**Kindergarten Teacher & 8th Grade Teacher**

In the Philippines, where more than 80 percent of the nation is Roman Catholic. If you look up “Long Christmas Season in the World,” the Philippines will come up as a result. For most, Christmas starts the moment it’s September. There’s no textbook explanation for why we celebrate Christmas so early, but there are theories. Perhaps it’s because of our predominantly Catholic beliefs, but then, again, advent only starts in December.

Christmas doesn’t end on the 25th for us, Filipinos. Many adhere to the Christmas tradition *Simbang gabi*, wherein people wake up at the break of dawn (around 3 to 5 o’clock in the morning) to attend mass. These masses run everyday from the 16th of December up until Christmas Eve.

Most Filipino families are also separated for more of the year, with kids off at college and parents going overseas for work.

The mundane act of preparing *Noche Buena* is also something we look forward to, because it’s a time to prep meals and cook together as a whole family.

While most welcome the new year by partying it up with friends, our family-central culture observes one more lavish feast—Media Noche.

The table is usually adorned with food formed into round shapes and an assortment of 12 round fruits, since circles are believed to bring in good fortune.

Aside from that, there’s also the belief that loud sounds will keep the bad spirits from entering the new year, so we make as much noise as possible when the clock strikes midnight—be it with car alarms, instruments, a torotot, or sparklers and firecrackers.

Most people eat their Christmas dinner either on Christmas Eve or Christmas night, but Filipinos often wake up at midnight to welcome Christmas day with *Noche Buena*, a lavish feast of traditional Filipino Christmas dishes like *lechon*, *queso de bola*, *hamon*, spaghetti and fruit salad.

# FANNIE HUNT'S FILIPINO SPAGHETTI RECIPE

By Fannie Hunt

Special Education Teacher

## Ingredients

- 1 lb. spaghetti noodles.
- 1 lb. Italian tomato sauce.
- 8 ounce tomato paste.
- 2 tablespoons minced onion.
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic.
- 2 tablespoons oil.
- 1 lbs. ground pork.
- 1/2 minced carrots and red peppers.
- 2 cups diced or thinly sliced hot dogs.
- 1 cup water.
- 1 tablespoon salt.
- 1 teaspoon seasoning mix.
- 7 ounces evaporated milk.
- Grated cheese for topping.

## Instructions.

1. Cook the noodles according to the package directions. Set aside.
2. Place the garlic, onion, and oil in a large saucepan or skillet. Saute for 3-4 minutes or until soft and fragrant. Add the ground pork and brown the meat until it's completely cooked.
3. Add the minced vegetables and hot dog pieces and stir to combine. Add the water and allow the mixture to simmer for 10-15 minutes. Add the tomato sauce and tomato paste to the meat and continue to simmer the mixture for another 10-15 minutes. Add the evaporated milk and salt and stir until incorporated.
4. Combine the noodles and the sauce in a large pot or mixing bowl. Top with grated cheese.



## Nutrition Facts

Sugars 13.3g  
Calories Per Serving 291  
Total Fat 7.5 g  
Dietary Fiber 5g  
Protein 16.6g  
Vitamin C 29.7 mg  
Phosphorus 217 mg  
Cholesterol 29.8 mg

## Serves 16

Sodium 695.9 mg  
Total Carbohydrate 41.9g  
Vitamin A 98.1  
Potassium 11156.2mg

# GRACE REDILLAS'S *BIKO* RECIPE



By Grace & Herbert Redillas

Kindergarten Teacher

## *Biko* (Filipino Sticky Rice Cake)

Ingredients:

4 cups glutinous rice.

3-14 oz cans coconut milk.

1 1/2 cup water.

2 1/2 cups dark brown sugar.

1/4 tsp. kosher salt.

### Directions

**Step 1**—Soak rice overnight in water.

**Step 2**—Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease a 9X13 baking pan.

**Step 3**—Cook the soaked rice over medium heat in a saucepan with the soaking water, 1/2 can of coconut milk, and white sugar, kosher salt, stirring constantly, until tender and thickened, about 20 minutes. Pour into the prepared baking pan.

**Step 4**—Stir together the brown sugar, remaining 1/2 can of coconut milk, and coconut preserves in a small saucepan, and bring to a boil. Pour the mixture carefully over the rice.

**Step 5**—Bake in the preheated oven until the topping thickens, about 25 minutes. Cool completely. Cut and serve.

*Biko* is a Filipino dessert made of glutinous rice.

Rice is a staple in Filipino cuisine (and many other Asian countries). From rice porridge, rice noodles, rice cakes, and rice cereals, rice is used in many forms and applications.

# The Different Bands of Hualapai

## By Staff Reports.

Currently, there are about 2,3000 Hualapai enrolled members. There are 14 Hualapai Bands, each have their own language dialect and ancestral lands in Northwestern Arizona.

Each Hualapai Band has their own cultural identity and lifeways. Those Bands are:

- Witoov Mi'uka Pa'a* **Middle Mountain**
- Wi gawha da Ba:'* **Red Rock**
- Ha'emda:Ba* **Cerbat Mountain**
- Ko'audva Kopava* **Plateau People**
- Haduva Ba:'* **Clay Springs**
- Danyika Ba:'* **Grass Springs**
- Qwaq We' Ba:'* **Hackberry**
- He:l Ba:'* **Milkweed Springs**
- I'gad Ba:'* **Peach Springs**
- Mad hwa:la Ba:'* **Hualapai Mountain**
- Haksigaela Ba:'* **Big Sandy**
- Hagia:ja Ba:'* **Mahone Mountain**
- Hwalgijapa Ba:'* **Juniper Mountain**



Artwork by Sherwood Begaye.

## CONTINUED O'CONNOR WINS NATIONAL AWARD

my nation (Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa) and communities who have and continue to provide ongoing support. I also

want to say *Miigwech* (*Ojibwewin* meaning, "Thank you.") to my nominators, the NIEA selection committee and others involved in my work, your support has led me to receiving this amazing award." O'Connor dedicated the award to his two daughters Ava Marie and Ellie Ann, to his late parents Thomas F. O'Connor Sr. and Georgeann K. O'Connor, to his grandparents, sisters, brother, nieces,



aunties, uncles, as well as to all his family, friends and colleagues. Lastly, he dedicates this award to those loved ones who are no longer

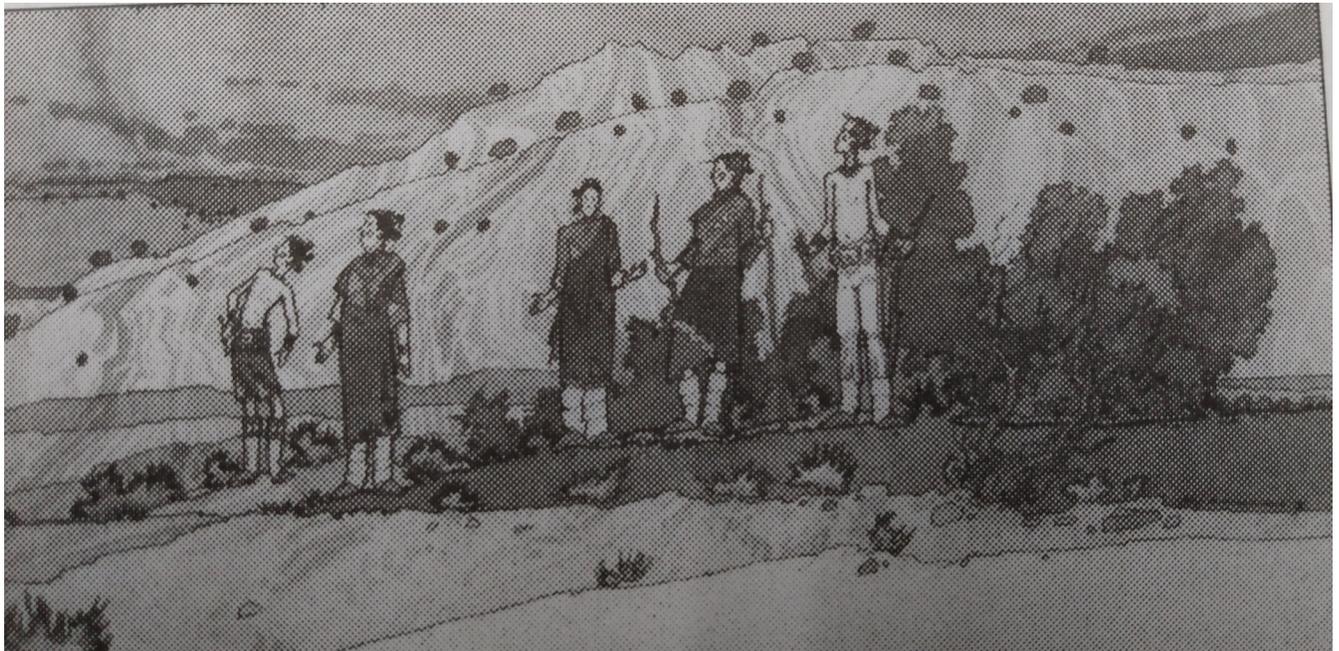
here with us and those yet to come. Congratulations to David on a much-deserved national award!

For questions about this information, contact [Chris Bucher](#) (608) 266-1344. Information: [DPI's David O'Connor Receives National Honor for Work | Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction](#)

## About the Bad River Tribe

- Bad River is located on a 125,000+ acre reservation in Northern Wisconsin
- The tribe has over 6,000 members, about 1,500 live on the reservation in Odanah, Old Odanah, Birch Hill & Franks Field.
- The reservation is over 90% wild land
- The Bad River Band is one of six Ojibwe bands in Wisconsin that are federally

# A Navajo Creation Story: *The Beginning of the Seasons*



*Reprinted with permission by the artist Bahe Whitethorn. A Navajo Creation Story: The Beginning of the Seasons was, initially, printed by Mountain Living magazine, during December 2000.*

*By Sararesa Begay*

*Narrated by Johnson Dennison*

*Illustrations by Baje Whitethorne*

*Reprinted with permission from  
The Arizona Daily Sun*

Johnson Dennison, a Navajo storyteller, tells the creation story in his home on a wet and blustery, overcast winter night. Dennison, 54, ushers me into the warm hogan which sits squat and humble next to his modern modular home located on his ancestral homeland in the Navajo community of Round Rock. The glowing half moon peeks through the thick clouds as I walk on the damp earthen path toward the hogan. The warmth of the crackling wood stove fire embraces my chilled limbs.

“I have learned storytelling from my father,” he says, as his thoughts drift to his dad. “My mother, also told stories, at that time, there was no TV, no radio, we sat in the hogan at night and told stories.”

Enabling Navajo values and beliefs to be passed on, storytelling inspires the imagination and the continuity of heritage. It is believed that each group of man has their own stories and through telling, hearing and believing them, the Navajo people are made strong.

“It’s also an entertainment,” Dennison says adding that his uncle told stories, too. “It was a way for me to spend time with my father. He told me winter-coyote stories which are the same. It was fascinating.”

**Continued on P. 14.**

## Continued on *Good Medicine Bundle* Presentation at NIEA

“Participating in the Good Medicine Bundle has been a highlight of my career. Serving in a tri-fold event as a parent, teacher and student with NIEA has broadened my understanding of the balance of education, culture and equity. It was an honor to be asked to participate and teach my students valuable insights of opioid prevention with indigenous relevance,” said Cook as she reflected upon her experience.

“The relationships made with my students, NIEA and DEA has empowered me to move forward as a transformational leader in education. I look forward to what all this program brings for generations to come,” she added.

Bartley stated, “The Good Medicine Bundle was a great resource to introduce to our young students, especially our Native American students. Our Native students are facing many challenges in our rural county, including the opioid crisis.

“The Good Medicine Bundle is a proactive way to teach our students different coping strategies to overcome the challenges of today by instilling some of our Native American core values. The core values, such as talking circles, are a great way to get insight from all students and give them their voice. Teaching the lessons in the Good Medicine Bundle was a great way for me to reflect on my

teaching and leadership, and I now have a better understanding of the importance of cultural leadership. This bundle has allowed me to become more of a transformational leader,” Bartley said.

“The FAEL Project has emphasized with program participants the importance of being culturally responsive and bringing transformational approaches to leadership when working with Native American communities. Lakola and Rodrick did an amazing job presenting their work at the

NIEA Convention and illustrated the successful implementation of these practices with their schools and community during their presentation,” said Dr. Camille Goins, FAEL project director.

To learn more about the resources and to view the master class videos of the featured presenters, visit the [Operation Prevention](https://www.operationprevention.com/culture-based-resources#masterclass) resource page at [https://](https://www.operationprevention.com/culture-based-resources#masterclass)

**“The Good Medicine Bundle is a proactive way to teach our students different coping strategies to overcome the challenges of today by instilling some of our Native American core values,” said Rodrick Bartley, a Master of School Administration student at the University of North Carolina-Pembroke.**

[www.operationprevention.com/culture-based-resources#masterclass](https://www.operationprevention.com/culture-based-resources#masterclass).

The FAEL project is funded by a five-year, \$1.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to address the shortage of American Indian administrators in the state’s public school districts with a large American Indian student populations.



## CONTINUED ON NAVAJO CREATION STORY

He makes a fist with his right hand to illustrate items in the *naa'taani's* hands, making a zilch, zilch, zilch noise for the rattle.

“To this day, we use the rattle, we use it to sing and dance.

“Who is that?” asked animal and bird people with wide eyes. ‘He’s going to be our leader. ‘After a while, the people recognized the man as the one who went east.

“It must be *daan*,” said *altse hastiin* (first man). ‘*Daan* came back.’

“Yes, it’s me, it’s me,” said *daan* (spring). “I’m the one who went to the east. Look what I got for you.’

“*Daan* (Spring) raised the white basket filled with white corn, ‘This is what we call corn. I found it on the mountain on the edge of the world. The dawn people live there, they work together, they live very peacefully, and they plant corn in the springs, and the plant grows.’

“The animal people and the bird people said, ‘That doesn’t look like there is enough for us to feed on.’”

“‘You don’t eat this corn,’ *daan* (spring) explained. ‘You plant this corn in the ground and it will grow, you pick it and prepare it. Then you save some seeds, and then you plant it again and again.’ If the people do this there will always be *daan* (spring) with the spring shower. To this day the people still plant corn in the spring.

“‘This is what we want!’ yelled the animal and bird people. ‘That is our *naa'taani*. ‘The wonderful food ideas, and that’s it! That is what we are looking for. We don’t need to wait for the other to return.’

“Some of the animal and bird people were cheerful and happy. Others were disappointed. Because it was not their *naa'taani* (leader) that returned.

“There was a celebration, and even *maji*(coyote) was saying, ‘Yes, he’s my cousin.’

“This white robe that *naa'taani* (leader) wore, is the robe of the *ma'ijtsoh* (wolf). *Ma'ijtsoh*(wolf) always wear that white robe. The *ma'ijtsoh* is considered a *naa'taani* (leader) by the Diné(Navajo) and is also dangerous and intelligent.

“The celebration continues where the animal and bird people gathered, camped in tents until someone sights another man approaching the people.

“The sun was rising, here came about another person.”

*Dennison* points to the southern horizon.

“Wait, wait, here comes another!’

“Who? Where? Shout the animal and bird people.

“There was another man who wore a blue robe of feathers. In his hands he held a blue basket with blue corn and a blue turquoise rattle.

“On top of his head was a blue cloud.”

Using his hands *Dennison* glosses over his head.

“Over his head the thunder strikes – a little more harshly, and a storm occurred.

“The animal and bird people said, ‘That’s the man who went to the south!’ The people of the south cheered.

“‘Who are you?’ one of the people asked.

“‘I am *shi*,’ said the man in blue. ‘There will always be *shi* (summer), that will be the way of life.

“‘This is the food and this is called turquoise,’ he said pointing to the corn in his blue basket and the blue rattle. ‘This is called blue corn. **Continued on P. 16.**

# CONTINUED NAVAJO CREATION STORY

Dennison says winter-coyote stories are told during the winter according to the *Diné* (Navajo) cultural protocol. Those stories include the elaborate, intricate Creation Story which can last several nights when told in sections. Summer stories include family stories, pre-*Hweeldi* (pre-Long Walk) and *Hweeldi* (Long Walk) stories.

The winter-coyote story that Dennison shares with me during this evening is three hours long. Before he begins Dennison asks me if I have any questions, requests, or tasks to tend to before he tells the *Diné* (Navajo) story of the creation of *daan* (spring), *shi* (summer), *aak'eed* (autumn) and *hai* (winter). One does not interrupt or talk during *Diné* storytelling out of respect – following *Diné* custom. This is the story as told by Dennison.



Illustrations by artist Baje Whitethorne, Navajo.

“Long ago, *jini* (it is said), there was an *altsé hastiin* (first man), and *altsé asdzaan* (first woman), *majj* (coyote), *Haashch'ch'eel-ti'i* (Talking God) and *Haashch'eeh diné'é* (Holy People), and the insect people in the first world. They moved from the first world, the dark world, to the dark world, to the blue world where they met the bird people.

“In the blue world, there were shrubs, plants, flowers and roots – something the people never saw before. In this world, there were people living there, too, in the east, south, west and north. The insect people were told to stay in one place instead they ate all the vegetation, flowers and roots – something the people never saw before. In this world, there were people living there, too, in the east, south, west and north. The insect people were told to stay in one place; instead, they ate all the vegetation,

flowers and roots.

“The bird people got angry with the insect people, and they got into a fight.”

Dennison uses his hands to show conflict between two beings.

“To this day, they still do. All the people went on to find a place to live peacefully. So, they came upon the third world.

“*Altse hasten* (first man) and *altse asdzaan* (first woman) were the leaders of the group, and they noticed that these insect people and these bird people couldn't get along – it was a concern for them.

“They found the animal people in the third world. There was bear, coyote, badger, mountain lion, bobcat – all the mammals, and they, too, didn't get along with the bird people, and the insect people. So, they lived like that for many years, centuries and generations. Finally, they got tired of living together because there was no peaceful place to live. There was a lot of incest, adultery, jealousy and there was always a lack of food.

“Because of the lack of food, people would eat each other so when you look at the world situation today, and the current society – it's not different from then.

“Someone had the idea that they needed a *naa'taanii* (leader) that everyone would obey and would give some kind of order, way of life. The animal people talked and held council as they discussed the *naa'taanii*. They said, ‘We will gather all the people from the east, south, west and north,’ and they began to gather the beings from the four directions.

Continued on P. 17

## CONTINUED ON NAVAJO CREATION STORY

‘We’ll have them come over here, and when they do come, they won’t get in a fight. There will be order.’

‘I’ll take care of everything,’ said *majj* (coyote). ‘Keep order, don’t fight!’ But everyone laughed and didn’t mind *majj*. ‘Who should be our leader?’ asked the animal and bird people.

You don’t need a leader – I’m the leader,’ said *majj* (coyote) in a mischievous tone. ‘I’m the first leader.’ The animal and bird people laughed and laughed, until they were rolling around with laughter.

‘The bird and animal people knew that *majj* (coyote) is foolish, dishonest and bad. The Navajo people warn that the *majj* is a trickster. *Majj* (coyote) doesn’t mind that we talk about him like that.

‘Then a being from the east direction said, ‘I’ll be the leader,’ and a slim, young handsome man came forward.

‘No, he’s not going to be our *naa’taani* (leader),’ said the bird people and the people of the west. ‘How can we be afraid of him; we can fly in the air. He can’t even fly.’

‘He may be handsome, and he can run very fast,’ said someone from the bird people. The bird and animal people laughed.

Then *néeshjaa’* (owl), the wise one came forward and asks, ‘Since you don’t want him for a *naa’taani* – who will be our leader?’

‘The people from the southern direction explained, ‘We have our own leader.’

‘Then who is it?’ asked *néeshjaa’* (owl) again.

‘From the south, a middle-sized man stepped forward. ‘He has wings – we nominate him,’ said the bird people.

‘Him! He’s not going to be our

*naa’taani* (leader).

*Néeshjaa’* (owl) says, ‘The people of the west direction, why aren’t you talking?’

‘From the western direction, a big man with a lazy walk and yellow eyes walked toward *néeshjaa’* (owl).

‘The big man had a very scary presence.’

Dennison puffs up his chest and imitates the hefty man’s walk.

‘And the bird people started laughing and said, ‘He can’t catch us, we’ll fly way up in the trees. The bird people started rolling around in laughter again.’

*Néeshjaa’* (owl) said, ‘Well, you people over there, you’re just making fun of everybody, who your *naa’taani*? They all stopped laughing, ruffled their feathers and looked around at each other.

‘There was a little boy-like man in the crowd of the bird people. They always picked on him, and it seems like even to this day, people pick on the small people.

‘So, they grabbed him, and pushed him out in front of the crowd of animal and bird people. ‘He’s our *naa’taani*,’ cried the people of the north direction and the people started laughing because they were teasing him

‘*Néeshjaa* said, ‘There’s four *naa’taani* (leaders). But we can only have one.’

‘The animal and bird people, *altse hastiin* (leaders), *altse asdzaan* (first woman) talked and discussed the four *naa’taani* (leaders).

‘Finally, *néeshjaa’* (owl) made another suggestion and pointed in the four directions. ‘Send them out to hunt in the four directions.

**Continued on P. 18..**

## CONTINUED ON CREATION STORY

*to the ends of the world.'*

"Each man who was chosen as a *naa'taani* was told to run to the east, south, west and north. The animal people and the bird people instructed each man to go hunting and bring back their kill. "You, standing there in the east – run to the edge of the world, 'commanded *néeshjaa*. 'You, too, standing there in the south – run south to the edge of the world.' The big man walked lazily over the hill toward the west. The little tiny man flew north. Then there was nothing to do so the animal and people waited all day.

"During the waiting time, *majj* came around and started entertaining the people. *Majj* (coyote) fulfilled the people with amusement and entertainment. That's what we do today, when we don't have anything to do somebody comes around and entertains us. The animal people and the bird people continued to wait until the evening.

"The people camped and waited. After they camped, the next day they wanted, the next day they waited and nobody came back.

"Four night passed. *Altse hastiin* (first man) said, 'They will never come back and we're going to have to find a real *naa'taanii*."

"On the fourth morning, just before the sunrise, someone yelled, 'Look! Someone is walking!'

"Where?" yelled another and all the people strained their eyes to see in the distance. Another yelled, 'I see someone!' The animal and bird people came out of their dwellings and looked at a glowing cloud floating toward them.

"It was clear it was a man, a very handsome man."

Dennison brushes an imaginary cloth over his shoulders.

"He wore a white robe, and above

his head was a floating cloud with rain sprinkles and you could hear a song of soft lightening."

"In his hand he had a white basket with a white rattle."

Dennison holds out his left hand as if he is cradling a basket. He makes a fist with his right hand to illustrate items in the *naa'taanii's* hands, making a zilch, zilch, zilch noise for the rattle.

"To this day, we use the rattle, we use it to sing and dance.

"Who is that?" asked animal and bird people with wide eyes. 'He's going to be our leader. 'After a while, the people recognized the man as the one who went east.

"It must be *daan*," said *altse hastiin* (first man). '*Daan* came back.'

"Yes, it's me, it's me,' said *daan* (spring). 'I'm the one who went to the east. Look what I got for you.'

"*Daan* (Spring) raised the white basket filled with white corn, 'This is what we call corn. I found it on the mountain on the edge of the world. The dawn people live there, they work together, they live very peacefully, and they plant corn in the springs, and the plant grows.'

"The animal people and the bird people said, 'That doesn't look like there is enough for us to feed on.'"

"You don't eat this corn,' *daan* (spring) explained. 'You plant this corn in the ground and it will grow, you pick it and prepare it. Then you save some seeds, and then you plant it again and again.' If the people do this there will always be *daan* (spring) with the spring shower. To this day the people still plant corn in the spring.

"This is what we want!' yelled the animal and bird people. 'That is our *naa'taani*. ' **Continued on P. 19.**

# Continued Navajo Creation Story: The Beginning of the Seasons

‘The wonderful food ideas, and that’s it! That is what we are looking for. We don’t need to wait for the other to return.’

“Some of the animal and bird people were cheerful and happy. Others were disappointed. Because it was not their *naa’taani* (leader) that returned.

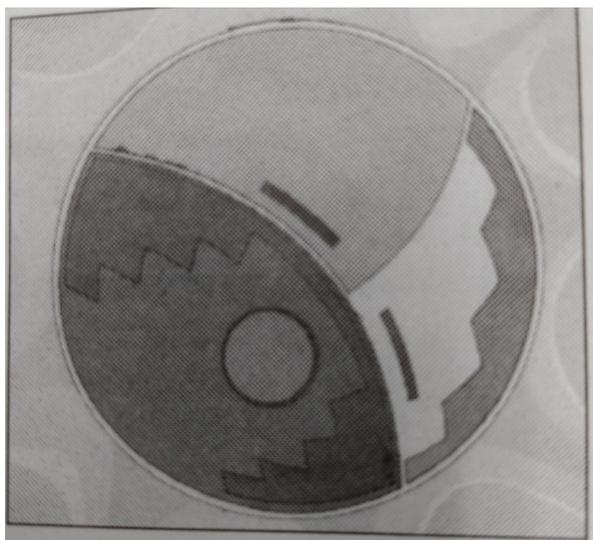
“There was a celebration, and even *majj*(coyote) was saying, ‘Yes, he’s my cousin.’

“This white robe that *naa’taani* (leader) wore, is the robe of the *ma’ijtsoh* (wolf). *Ma’ijtsoh*(wolf) always wear that white robe. The *ma’ijtsoh* is considered a *naa’taani* (leader) by the Diné(Navajo) and is also dangerous and intelligent.

“The celebration continues where the animal and bird people gathered, camped in tents until someone sights another man approaching the people.

“The sun was rising, here came about another person.”

Dennison points to the southern horizon.



“Wait, wait, here comes another!”

“Who? Where? Shout the animal and bird people.

“There was another man who wore a blue robe of feathers. In his hands he held a blue basket with blue corn and a blue turquoise rattle.

“On top of his head was a blue cloud.”

Using his hands Dennison glosses over his head.

“Over his head the thunder strikes – a little more harshly, and a storm occurred.

“The animal and bird people said, ‘That’s the man who went to the south!’ The people of the south cheered.

“‘Who are you?’ one of the people asked.

“‘I am *shi*,’ said the man in blue. ‘There will always be *shi* (summer), that will be the way of life.

“‘This is the food and this is called turquoise,’ he said pointing to the corn in his blue basket and the blue rattle. ‘This is called blue corn. You plant this corn, and you cultivate it and it grows. You eat it, in that way you won’t eat other.

**Continued on P. 20.**

## CONTINUED ON NAVAJO CREATION STORY

“The big man had a very scary presence.”

Dennison puffs up his chest and imitates the hefty man’s walk.

“And the bird people started laughing and said, ‘He can’t catch us, we’ll fly way up in the trees. The bird people started rolling around in laughter again.’

*Néeshjaa*’ (owl) said, ‘Well, you people over there, you’re just making fun of everybody, who your *naa’taani*? They all stopped laughing, ruffled their feathers and looked around at each other.

“There was a little boy-like man in the crowd of the bird people. They always picked on him, and it seems like even to this day, people pick on the small people.

“So, they grabbed him, and pushed him out in front of the crowd of animal and bird people. ‘He’s our *naa’taani*,’ cried the people of the north direction and the people started laughing because they were teasing him

*Néeshjaa* said, ‘There’s four *naa’taani* (leaders). But we can only have one.’

“The animal and bird people, *altse hastiin* (leaders), *altse asdzaan* (first woman) talked and discussed the four *naa’taanii* (leaders).

**Continued on P. 21.**



### Continued on Editor’s Note

When I was born during the summer of 1969, my young mother, who was only 24-years-old, told my dad, Reuben Sr., “We are not going to teach her the Navajo language.”

Her plan to teach me only the English language was not perfect. My mother’s mother, Lilly, my *másání* babysat me. *Shímásání* Lily only spoke the Navajo language (*Dinébizhaad*), and I caught the language, accent and all.

I understood *Dinébizhaad* from then on, and when my parents were discussing “adult matter,” they switch into *Dinébizhaad*. I understood what they were discussing.

“What are they talking about?” my younger sister, Laurel, asked me.

“Hold on,” I would say, and turn my one of my ears to my parents’ Navajo conversation. “They are talking about money.”

Another time, “Uncle Dave and Aunt Ruth are splitting up.”

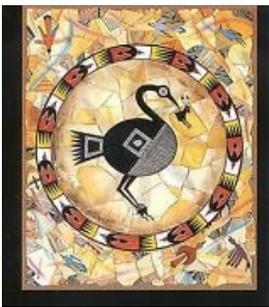
A different time, “One of our Uncles is in trouble.”

# CONTINUED ON CREATION STORY

“I am called the *dolii* (bluebird),’ said the blue man pointing to himself.

“The *dolii* is wise, sings and *dolii* is considered to be a *naa’taani* (leader). It is believed that if the people rise in the morning when the *dolii* sings they will always have wealth and good thoughts. There was more celebrating among the animal and bird people. Then everyone turned their attention to the west.

“At sunset a big man wearing a yellow robe, carrying yellow corn, an abalone shell and a rattle appeared walking dignified and strong. The people looked at him and asked, ‘Who’s he?’



“I

brought you something you can use,’ the big man says. ‘I went to the edge of the world, and I was instructed to tell you, and give a message to tell you that there will always *aak’eed* (autumn).’

“The animal and bird people noticed that a yellow carpet of leaves followed behind him and around the big man. The carpet of leaves was spreading around him.

“‘This yellow corn is what you use to plant,’ said *aa’keed* (autumn). And he instructed the people to plant and cultivate the corn. He was later revealed to be *nashdoitsoh* (mountain lion).



Artwork pieces of “Bird Person,” and Collage created by Sanders, Ariz. resident Sherwood Begaye, Navajo/Hopi.

“*Majj* (coyote) said, ‘Yes, he’s my brother, I had confidence in him.’

“‘Be quiet!’ said the people. ‘Shut your mouth!’ they told *majj*.

“When evening came, there were different colored lights coming from the north in the inky sky and the little man appeared wearing a multi-colored robe with different colored lights behind him. All those lights we see in the north represent the Northern Lights, to this day.

“The animal and bird people noticed a white carpet of *yas* (snow) that floated in front of the little man.

“‘Who is that?’ asked the people.

“‘My message is there will always be *hai* (winter),’ said the north being holding items in his hands. In his basket there were the seeds of squash, melon, cantaloupe, and seeds from all kinds of fruits that people eat today.

**Continued on P. 22.**

## CONTINUED ON NAVAJO CREATION STORY

“I am the one that represent the *hai* (winter). The *yas* (snow) will melt and turn into water, and all these rain people will come. Without me you cannot plan.”

“The *daan* (spring) became the *naa'taanii*, the *shi* (summer) became the *naa'taanii*, the *aak'eed* (autumn) became the *naa'taanii*, the *hai* (winter) became the *naa'taanii* to the Diné (Navajo).

Dennison unclasps his hands scooping at the imaginary far horizons bringing all the *naa'taani* together. In this way, he delivers the lesson of the creation story.

“These four different seasons became a way of life according to natural law. The *hai* (winter) *naa'taani* is the *dahyitihi* (hummingbird).

“Today, the Diné say we have these four *naa'taani* (leaders). These *naa'taani* taught the Diné how to plant, cultivate food and how-to live-in harmony.”

***Johnson Dennison, M.A., is a Navajo storyteller, motivational speaker and lecturer. His presentations are based on Navajo traditional teachings and philosophy. He has been an educational administrators for more than 27 years (as of December, 2000) on the Navajo Nation (K-12) school and at Diné College in Tsaile, Ariz. He has spent much of his life collecting folktales from Navajo elders.***

***He gives presentations at schools, communities, family gatherings, organizational meetings, hospitals, workshops and conferences. He lives in Round Rock with his wife, Rosemary, two children and grandchildren.***

***Sararesa Begay, a native of northern Arizona, has been a feature writer since 1995. Her background includes radio, producing, photography, newsprint and public relations. Begay married fellow journalist/author/columnist John Christian Hopkins during a Traditional Navajo Wedding Basket Ceremony in***

***2007. John Christian Hopkins is an enrolled member of the Narragansett Tribe of Rhode Island.***

***Begay who is now, Sararesa B. Hopkins, returned to school, and earned a Master's of Education in Special Education. She is a community liaison and part-time special education teacher for Peach Springs Unified School District.***

### Recipe for

### Navajo Maazo

*Maazo* (Marbles) is only prepared during the winter time. It is said that if it is prepared during any other season, one will bring snow. *Maazo* is prepared only for family and social gatherings and is not taken to Navajo ceremonies or ceremonial gatherings.

### *Maazo*

Mix 1 cup of juniper ash and 1 cup of boiling water in a Dutch oven or big pot.

Put 3 1/2 cups of water into a Dutch oven or big pot.

Strain the juniper ash into the pot. Stir.

Add 6 cups of blue cornmeal. Knead until the dough is soft and firm.

Shape into thumb-size pieces.

Put 3 cups of water into another big pot. Boil.

Add dough pieces into boiling water. Stir.

Dough will make its own gravy. Serve hot.



Artwork by Sherwood Begaye, Navajo/Hopi.

# EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK CONTINUED

However, I used my *Dinébizhaad* listening for something really important. Where the Christmas presents were hidden in the house or around the house.

When my parents were discussing the “*késhnish bíyeel*.” (Christmas presents).

My ears would perk up, and I would listen very hard.

One year, the *késhnish bíyeel* were hidden in the garage. The next year, the *késhnish bíyeel* were in the camper. After I heard where the presents were hidden, my sister, Laurel, and I would go to look at the *késhnish bíyal* with our flashlights in hand.

Today, my mother says she does not care for Christmas, and it “is all for nothing.” Laurel and I were frosting the Christmas cookies, I listened to her, and I remember that she was brought up in the traditional Navajo way. Christmas does not exist in the traditional Navajo culture, and my mother’s side of the family is traditional Navajo-Diné.

To adhere to Navajo (*Diné*) tradition, and a lot of Native American tribes across the country tell stories during the winter time. In the Navajo-*Diné*, we wait for the snow, *yas*, to fall, and we are able to tell the winter-coyote stories. Winter-coyote stories are Creation stories about how life came to be, according to Navajo-*Diné* tradition. For this edition of *Peach Notes*, I am sharing a winter-coyote story, I wrote for *Mountain Living* magazine during winter, 2000.

Before I close, I have included some National Indian Education Association stories. There’s two more two more stories I wrote, but we are going to print. Next time, they will run in this newsletter.



Native American Christmas Hand Woven Rug. *Unknown Artist.*



Today, contemporary Native Americans are predominantly assimilated and Christianized. Many observe Christmas traditions and customs.

# SEEING STRENGTH OUR CHILDREN CONTINUED

WILLIAM SANTIAGO, SUPERIN-  
TENDENT.

JOHN RIDDLE, PRINCIPAL.

SARARESA HOPKINS, EDITOR.

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However, I know it when I see it.

I see it each day in the actions of community mem-  
bers as they work to restore and heal the community.

Perhaps most important I see it in the eyes of our  
youth.

It is that strength, courage and resiliency that I  
know will bring this community through the darkest hour.  
May we all receive the peace and strength we need to con-  
tinue our walk.

William Santiago, Superintendent.  
John Riddle, Principal.  
Sararesa Hopkins, Editor.  
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