

EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Shortly after the return of the Navaho to their own country following the exile to Fort Sumner, the first effort to offer an educational program resulted in complete failure. A small day school was opened at Fort Defiance in 1870 with a very few children attending. They stayed to satisfy their curiosity and to receive some clothes which were donated, then they vanished, and all efforts to bring them back proved fruitless. In 1883 the first boarding school was started at Fort Defiance, fraught with problems of insufficient funds and help. This also lasted but a short time. Then the Government turned to the Missionaries, who were appearing on the scene wanting to be of some benefit to the Indians, suggesting that they establish both Missions and schools. There were four early missions, each adding a school as soon as possible. The a Methodist school, first ~~xxx~~ at Hogback, near Farmington, soon moved to that town. the Mission The second at Sait Michael's, established by the Franciscan Order in 1898, with a school opening in 1902 by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Third, the Presbyterian Mission at Ganado, Arizona, established in 1901, with a school opening the following year and a hospital ten years later. Fourth, a Mission founded by the Christian Reformed Church at Rehoboth, near Gallup, also in 1898, with a school opening shortly thereafter. Other denominations followed in other areas of the reservation, such as the Episcopal Mission at Fort Defiance ~~wharb~~ the effort was largely in the medical field.

Many trials and tribulations beset these early endeavors caused by the natural suspicion of both the Navaho children and their parents, many of whom did not wish to have their children away from home. The policy of forcing the children to go to school was an

unfortunate one. It is a matter of record that there even were instances of physical brutality due doubtless to lack of understanding of Navaho ways and by the sheer frustration on the part of some staff members at finding themselves so isolated, so helpless in performing their tasks under conditions of hardship and remoteness.

Slowly the Indian Service progressed with many varied endeavors; new schools were built, and some children did attend. But the policy of forcing education on the Navaho provided many stumbling blocks. For a long time the children were forbidden to speak Navaho, or to wear Navaho clothes, and everything possible was done to try to superimpose our culture onto the Navaho. Some children from twelve years to sixteen, were sent away to schools in California and a number of points in the east, with the intent to fit them ~~formerge~~ into our society, but this was too much to expect in a few short years. More than 95% of these children came home where they found themselves misfits at home, for they did not fit into the reservation life. More reservation schools were built, and there was still only partial success due to lack of staff understanding.

With the coming of the New Deal a new policy was adopted, due in part to the road improvement program, and a decision was reached to develop new day schools, bringing the children to school by bus, just as in any country community in the country. This was a big step in advance and soon many well trained teachers with more modern methods and better understanding undertook these teaching jobs. Some teachers created a desire on the part of the children to learn, some even conducted adult education classes in the evenings, with people coming from miles away to attend these classes. But there were still many more children of school age than there were facilities for them. The Indian Service Educational System continued to grow and improve until a turning point was reached when children were

clamoring to go to school. In recent years the ~~Federal~~ Public School System has taken over many of the Bureau of Indian Affairs schools and has erected many new ones. At the suggestion of Dr. George Boyce, long in the Indian Service, dormitories were built in a number of the reservation border towns so that children from twelve years up could go to the public schools in these towns.

So to-day there are hundreds of eager children soaking up everything they can learn, like little dry sponges. Some are still shy and diffident, but most are absorbing their school work with unusual rapidity, and many go on into a fields of more advanced learning.

The same slow process has paralleled the schools in the field of medicine. For many, many years, it was unthinkable for a Navaho to turn to a white Medicine Man. But slowly progress was made in such specific fields as the eye disease, trachoma, and other special lines. Some thirty years ago, young doctors came to work at certain of the hospitals, and found themselves filled with enthusiasm over the people and the work to be done, and bringing with psychological approach to their work. And though there have been many superstitions to overcome and the difficulties of winning trust, they have forged ahead with progress in many ways. It has been here that Annie Wauneka has done so much with her work in the Tuberculosis program and other fields. The first Navaho doctor is now practicing at a new hospital at Kayenta, and there are many Navaho Registered Nurses, dentists and technicians. As this number grows there will come a day when the Navaho will care for their own.

Since the Public Health Service took over the ~~Federal~~ medical program there have been many new developments such as new

hospitals, new health centers and health stations and the services that go with them. There have been several private clinics such as the Cornell clinic shown here where special research has been done. Here I found a Navaho technician at work with the Cornell doctors. While there is still much work to do, the acceleration of the past fifteen years is doing so much for the benefit of the health of the Navaho People.