

**Pueblo of Jemez Written Testimony**  
**Oversight Hearing on “In Our Way: Expanding the Success of Native Language**  
**and Culture-Based Education.”**  
**Senate Committee on Indian Affairs**  
**May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

The Pueblo of Jemez, is located in north central New Mexico and we have a tribal membership of approximately 3,788. Jemez is a very traditional Pueblo and we have maintained our cultural and religious practices. We are the only Pueblo where the Towa language is spoken, a language that is unwritten. In 1999, the Pueblo of Jemez, through its Vision 2010 community sessions, asserted our authority and desire to determine what is most important to the education of our tribal members.

Jemez began our re-organization efforts in 1999 as part of the Visioning and Planning sessions for our community. From Vision 2010 and the community planning sessions, emerged three overriding themes that have been at the core of our Redefining Education Movement; one of these themes is to Redefine Education – so that Jemez Language and Culture are at the heart of how, where and what we teach our children to ensure the survival and advancement of our Jemez people.

After a series of organizational changes, the Jemez Department of Education was redesigned to reflect a comprehensive approach to education which begins with our most precious resource, our infants and works up to our adult learners & college students. Encompassing all support programs, schools and services from our different tribal programs and local schools: bureau, public and charter. The Jemez Department of Education is a part of the Jemez Tribal Government and Administration. The Education Director reports to the Tribal Administrator who in turn, reports to the Jemez Governors and the Jemez Tribal Council.

The Pueblo of Jemez is pleased with the progress it has made in creating a tribal education system that engages with State, Tribal and Federal institutions. Markers of success for the Pueblo of Jemez Educational System include:

- Creation of the Jemez Education Collaborative, a coalition of Tribal Education Program Managers, Coordinators, and School Administrators from the Public, Bureau and Charter schools serving Jemez students. The Education Collaborative meets monthly to discuss critical education issues impacting our student population. Rather than compete for students, funding and resources, the collaborative works cooperatively to ensure that the best educational services, transitions and supports are provided to our students to ensure their success.
- As part of this collaborative began the development of a Jemez Language & Culture Curriculum from Early Childhood to 8<sup>th</sup> Grade through the annual Teacher Retreat and the Joint Professional Development Days involving all teachers from the local community schools and tribal programs.

- Further, the involvement of the tribe in the schools has resulted in an integration of our tribal language, culture and priorities directly into the curriculum. This was done in coordination with the teachers, community schools, the Jemez Language Team, and the Jemez Education Department. We are, in essence, developing an indigenous pedagogy that best meets the academic needs of our student population.
- Conducting research to support the Jemez educational initiatives focused on developing Jemez Educational Standards, complete with assessments and evaluations, rooted in Jemez Language, Culture and Tribal priorities that integrate State, National and International educational standards.
  - “Becoming Jemez PhotoVoice Project – the early childhood experiences of Jemez children and the context within which language is learned” is a prime example of one such research project being directed by the tribe in collaboration with Arizona State University.

The Pueblo of Jemez Tribal Education Department has developed meaningful relationships with our community and State partners:

- Jemez has established two public charter schools within reservation lands with Tribal Council approval in collaboration with the local public school district, as New Mexico initially set up a dependent charter school law, listing LEAs as the authorizing agents; but the charter law was reauthorized to now allow the State of New Mexico to become a second authorizing agent, making two options available and honoring the government to government relationship between NM and its 22 tribes.
- Jemez has entered into an MOU with the State of New Mexico for alternative licensure for Jemez Language & Culture Instructors. Jemez will determine which of its tribal members are viable to teach Jemez Language & Culture within the local schools and the state will honor the tribe’s authority by granting the recommended individuals an alternative license to teach within the public school systems.
- Jemez also has an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with the NM Public Education Department – Indian Education Division for grant funds awarded to the Jemez Department of Education to support language programs and student support services.

The work of the Jemez Education Department has had and continues to have an impact on increasing the academic performance of our students:

- The Jemez Valley Public School District was only one of two school districts in the State of NM to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as a district in the 2009/10 school year based on the academic achievement of the students within their respective schools.
- Jemez on average has over 80% of its high school graduates going on to 2 & 4 year institutions.

- Through its different programs, the Jemez Education Department is directly reaching and impacting over 450 students per month, and over 100 students per day.
- The four and five year graduation rates for Jemez Valley High School and Walatowa High Charter School are above the state averages and significant for schools with high Native populations.

As Tribes and Tribal Education Departments, we have a responsibility to hold the Federal & State Governments, public school districts and schools that serve our students accountable, to ensure that our students are readily prepared for college or a career. So Jemez echoes that the burden of education for our young people not to be the responsibility of one, but that it truly becomes a joint, collaborative effort, which creates a win-win situation for all; thus ensuring the educational sovereignty of tribes and our right to self-determination.

The Pueblo of Jemez has always been and will continue to be a strong supporter of educational initiatives. Diverse educational opportunities, together with traditional knowledge, fluency in our Towa language and a strong cultural foundation have empowered us and education has opened doors of opportunity. The Pueblo of Jemez realizes that education is a lifelong journey and that it is critical to meet the needs of our community at all levels: educationally, culturally and socially.

The Pueblo of Jemez Department of Education is central to providing different educational opportunities, services and programs to all tribal members. Because of its partnerships and collaborations with higher education institutions, community schools and organizations, state and federal agencies; It is a place from which one is able to access a multitude of services within the educational arena.

In closing, I would like to quote the National Congress of American Indians and the National Indian Education Association's Tribal Priorities for Indian Education. "The health, well-being, and success of Native children are central to Tribal Sovereignty. Tribal Communities, supported by strong tribal governments, are responsible for raising, teaching and caring for children. Native children in turn form the back bone of future tribal success."

Thank you for the opportunity to provide Testimony before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.