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Indigenous Language Educator's Experiences: Addressing Issues on the New Mexico Indian Education Act of 2003 and Strengthening the New Mexico Indigenous Language Programs in Public Schools

Geneva Becenti

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Indigenous Language Educator’s Experiences: Addressing Issues on the New Mexico Indian Education Act of 2003 and Strengthening the New Mexico Indigenous Language Programs in Public Schools

By

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Dissertation © Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
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The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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DEDICATION

To all the Indigenous Language educators from elders, to teachers, to administrators to parents and youth.

I remember my late mother who told me: “be a caretaker of our language and one day it would feed you and your children.” Ahéhee shíímá for providing me the gift of our language, diné bizáád. Now, I understand what you have trained me to do. Dóó shízhei ahéhee for teaching and providing me your unconditional love and support. Your thought, stories and methods are embedded throughout this dissertation endlessly.
Ahéhee
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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation is a qualitative case study focused on Native American language and culture teachers’ views on the New Mexico Indian Education Act of 2003 (NMIEA). The study was a two-part research project with data being collected through: 1.) surveys and 2.) interviews. In the first phase of the study, approximately 49 surveys provided an overall evaluation from parents, community members, teachers and administrators on the NMIEA. The survey explored whether or not the act is serving its purpose. Some of the respondents provided comments as well as recommendations. In the second-part of the study, 18 participants were interviewed. The teachers described their challenges and provided recommendations to the language policies, including curriculum development.

The structure of the study is based on data analysis of the following themes: support, alignment and development. There are multiple layers to this case study. The teachers provided recommendations related to how curriculum and policies should be shaped and what professional development means to them.