Editors’ Introduction
The Next 50 Years for ASU’s Center for Indian Education — Revisiting History and Engaging the Future

On May 6, 2011 we hosted a gathering at Arizona State University to re-launch the Center for Indian Education (CIE) into its next 50 years. With several former CIE directors present, along with members of Arizona Native nations, friends from other Arizona universities, the larger ASU community, and CIE faculty, students, and staff, we paused to reflect on CIE’s 52-year history and its present and future contributions to Indigenous education. This Editors’ Introduction and the keynote address by Dr. Monty Roessel that follows are intended to share those reflections with our readers.

We begin with the moment when the idea for an Indian Education Center — a new, even revolutionary concept — came about. The year was 1959. Arizona had been a state for all of 47 years, and although the federal government had passed a law granting the continent’s original sovereign citizens “citizenship” in 1924, Arizona waited another 24 years to legalize “citizenship” for Native peoples in the state. The year 1959 was just five years post-\textit{Brown v. Board of Education}, with not a trace of school desegregation on the horizon; that would not come in any significant measure for another 20 years and indeed, it is an ongoing battle today. American Indian students remained in segregated boarding schools where they faced forced manual labor, physical and emotional abuse for speaking their Native language, and a curriculum that, with few exceptions, had the single-minded goal of erase and replace: “Erase Native languages; replace with English. Erase Native religions; replace with Christianity,” and so on (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006, p. xxii).

But the year the Court ruled on \textit{Brown} was significant for another reason: Congress had just passed House Concurrent Resolution 108, empowering the federal government to violate its trust and treaty obligations by terminating tribes’ sovereign status and relationship with the federal government. In a single year, 109 tribes and 12,000 Native American citizens were terminated, ushering in massive social and physical displacement not seen since the early reservation period and a federal land grab of more than 2.5 million acres of Native lands. Education rights and services were terminated along with land and other rights that had been “guaranteed” by the tribal-federal trust relationship through treaties, court decisions, and federal law.

And so, in the larger picture, the Center was established in an extremely unfriendly, racist, and hostile environment for Indian education and Indian people.

What was ASU like in 1959? It had just had its name officially changed from Arizona State College to Arizona State University the year before. Prior to that, ASU was known as Arizona State Teachers College at Tempe, the Normal
School of Arizona, and Tempe Normal School. The point we want to make is that this was all a new — and risky — social, educational, and political landscape. It would be 10 more years until a special U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Indian Education issued its scathing indictment of federally controlled American Indian education, calling it a “national tragedy” (U.S. Senate Special Subcommittee on Indian Education, 1969), and five more years until the Johnson administration launched its War on Poverty, with the shower of civil rights and economic development legislation that followed. Those who began the venture of an Indian Education Center could see those developments only dimly, if at all. Yet they chose not to wait, but to spur on the needed change — to craft and become agents of change.

This is the context for the present moment and what the Center for Indian Education means for ASU and for Native communities and education. This was the context in which Dr. Robert A. (Bob) Roessel, his wife and lifelong partner Ruth Roessel, and other ASU faculty, Native leaders, and grass roots community members began what would become the CIE. In many ways, the Center’s charter is outlined in Roessel’s (1969) book, *Indian Communities in Action*, which includes accounts of CIE-sponsored work with reservation-based community action programs, including a “personal presentation and evaluation of community development” by then-ASU student Peterson Zah (1969). Zah would go on to become the first President of the Navajo Nation and later in life, to serve as ASU President Michael Crow’s special advisor on Indian affairs. The charter Roessel and Zah outlined in 1969 was this: Native American communities in action for their own self-directed education. It is a charter that continues to resonate in the Center’s work today.

The Center leaders who followed — ourselves included — all shared this philosophy. We see it represented in this journal, now celebrating its golden anniversary, and in the many national and international Indian education conferences the Center has hosted over the years.

Each CIE director has taken up this charge in distinct but complementary ways. Dr. George Gill (Omaha), who followed Roessel, emphasized American Indian leadership development as a pathway to self-determination. Dr. John Tippeconnic III (Comanche), CIE’s fourth director, expanded American Indian leadership development into the area of American Indian bilingual education, as CIE became home to a federal Bilingual Education Service Center (BESC). When John Tippeconnic stepped down to assume a national leadership position, BESC’s work was continued by Dr. John Redhorse (Cherokee) and the BESC evolved into the National Indian Bilingual Center (NIBC), serving Native language programs throughout the country. In 1988, Dr. Karen Gayton Swisher (Standing Rock Sioux, now Karen Comeau), who had also directed NIBC until it ended in 1986, was appointed CIE director, renewing its commitment to leading-edge research on American Indian education. Reflecting her multinational heritage, Dr. Octaviana Trujillo (Yoeme) subsequently brought transborder programs to the Center. Dr. Denis Viri, who served as acting director and director, brought
Figure 1. Robert and Ruth Roessel at Low Mountain, AZ, 1957, two years after they were married (photograph courtesy of Monty Roessel)

Figure 2. CIE’s first class of American Indian education students, 1961 (L-R), Peterson Zah, Ellen Hull, Rozalind Begay, Frank Blythe, Patricia Thompson, Bennie Robbins (photograph from CIE archives)
Figure 3. CIE’s second director, George Gill (L) with Will Rogers, Jr. at the 8th Annual Indian Education Conference, ASU, 1967 (photograph from CIE archives)

Figure 4. CIE’s fourth Director, John W. Tippeconnic III, late 1970s (photograph from CIE archives)
Figure 5. Announcement of Karen Gayton Swisher’s (Comeau’s) appointment as CIE’s sixth (and first female) director, 1988 (newspaper clipping from CIE archives)

Figure 6. CIE’s seventh director, Octaviana Trujillo, 1997 (photograph from CIE archives/Indigenous Advisory Circle)
Figure 7. CIE’s eighth director, Denis Viri, 2002 (photograph from ASU directory profile)

Figure 8. CIE’s ninth director, David Beaulieu, 2004 (photograph from ASU directory profile)
renewed emphasis on Indigenous teacher preparation and environmental and cultural sustainability. Finally, our direct predecessor, Dr. David Beaulieu (White Earth Chippewa), provided needed leadership in educational language policy and culturally responsive schooling.

This leads to our own vision of the Center and its future direction. We have six primary goals, all rooted in Robert Roessel’s call for Native education control. First, we aim for the Center for Indian Education to develop into the nation’s leading producer and repository of research on Indigenous education. To this end, we are seeking external grant funding to engage in ongoing research in Native language revitalization, the preparation of Indigenous educators (including both teachers and principals), issues of sustainability and stewardship, and community development and capacity building. The Journal’s associate editor, Larisa Warhol, is developing a repository of information on language planning resources for those interested in this line of research. The Journal's archives are being updated and we will continue to become a vital resource for scholarship in the field of Indigenous education.

According to Brayboy, Castagno, and Fann (in preparation), if 100 American Indians/Alaska Natives start ninth grade, 60 will graduate from high school.

Figure 9. The late Laura Williams, who served 9 CIE directors over nearly 30 years, in her office (note copies of JAIE overhead; photograph courtesy of David Beaulieu)
school. Of these 60, 20 will attend some form of postsecondary education. Of those 20, two will graduate with a four-year degree sometime in the following six years. It requires approximately 2,500 American Indians/Alaska Natives for one master’s degree and almost 11,000 for a doctoral degree. We understand that there is a need for more Indigenous people to find success in the schooling process at every level and our work highlights the entirety of the system. Our second goal, however, focuses on the preparation of Indigenous scholars. We are committed to making the Center and ASU one of the most significant sites for the preparation of scholars who, in 10 years, will be placed across the globe, engaged in rigorous scholarly research that serves their communities and the world.

Inherently, the Center’s work is globally minded; it is also locally rooted. Our third goal is to engage the 22 Indigenous nations in Arizona and assist them in addressing significant local issues. We are developing an Indigenous advisory board to steer these efforts and are working closely with a number of tribal nations on community-based projects. Our philosophy is to apply the Center’s research expertise to assist Indigenous community experts — tribal members who “live” their expertise in the daily life of their communities.

Figure 10. JAIE Review Panel on the eve of the journal’s 40th year; Memorial Union, ASU, ca. 2000. Front row (L-R): Karen Cockrell, Marigold Linton, Lillian Tom-Orme, Octaviana Trujillo, Marilyn J. Watt; middle row (L-R): Karen Gayton Swisher (Comeau), Shirley Hendricks, J. Anne Calhoun, Teresa McCarty, Alyse Neundorf; back row (L-R): David Beaulieu, Denis Viri, Pete Coser, Michael Pavel (photograph from CIE archives)
Our fourth goal recognizes that there is considerable knowledge both across ASU’s campus and throughout the world. The Center’s work will benefit from building our capacity to prepare Indigenous education leaders and practitioners through intra- and inter-campus collaborations and partnerships with Native nations and other institutions. To assist our efforts in preparing leaders and educators who understand the connections between American Indian Studies, education, and legal aspects of sovereignty and self-determination, the Center has partnerships with ASU’s American Indian Studies Program and the Indian Legal Program in the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law. We have also begun to explore connections with our colleagues in Hawai’i, and the Center has a formal agreement with the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Our fifth area of focus is for the Center to serve as a central player in Indigenous research, policy, and practice in the world by: (1) hosting conferences, institutes, leadership academies, and policy forums; (2) connecting research
projects; and (3) coordinating research and advocacy efforts locally, nationally, and internationally. To this end, in partnership with the American Educational Research Association, the Center hosted an international conference on Indigenous education in February 2010 and recently co-hosted, along with the University of Alaska’s School of Education and the University of Hawai‘i’s Ho’okulāwi Center, an international gathering of scholars from Australia, New Zealand, and the United States to address the relevance of research among Indigenous peoples.

Finally (and it is appropriate for us to end here), we believe that JAIE can and should be a world-class journal addressing Indigenous research, practice, and policy. To assist us in making this goal a reality, we welcome your submissions of scholarly research.

Although the Center is now well into its 52nd year, we have not lost sight of our primary purpose: to serve Indigenous communities and peoples, supporting them in achieving self-determination through self-education. We invite you to join us in this important work.

— Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy and Teresa L. McCarty, JAIE co-editors

Figure 12. CIE Co-directors Teresa McCarty and Bryan Brayboy thanking ASU American Indian Student Support Services Director Michael Begaye (L) for blessing the CIE’s next 50 years; West Hall, ASU, May 6, 2011 (photograph by Jeston Morris)
Acknowledgements

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References


