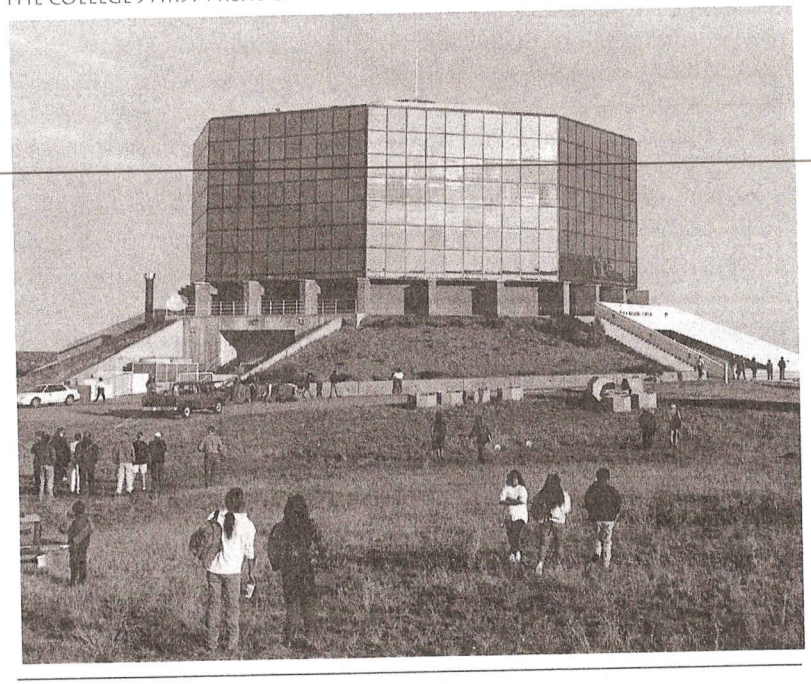
FOUNDED BY THE NAVAJO TRIBAL COUNCIL IN 1968, THE NAVAJO COMMUNITY COLLEGE AT TSAILE, ARIZONA, WAS THE NATION'S FIRST INDIAN-CONTROLLED COLLEGE. SHOWN HERE IS THE NED A. HATATHLI CULTURE CENTER, NAMED FOR THE COLLEGE'S FIRST PRESIDENT.



included academic courses for students intending to transfer to four-year colleges or universities, as well as vocational courses in such fields as commercial art, drafting, nursing, welding, and auto mechanics. The core of the curriculum, however, was the Navajo Studies program that offered courses in tribal history and culture. Included were courses in the Navajo language, contemporary tribal issues, and the history of Indian-white relations taught from an Indian perspective. For use in the classroom and beyond, the college press began publishing works in tribal history by Navajo writers. As Raymond Brown, student body president in 1971, observed, "NCC . . . teaches our young people to become leaders among our own people . . . it teaches what we, the American Indian, want to learn."

Federal support for the college was put on a permanent basis in 1971 when Congress passed the Navajo Community College Act.

Construction began the following year on a new campus at Tsaile, Arizona, on the eastern edge of scenic Canyon de Chelly. Control of NCC rested with an all-Navajo Board of Regents and an All-Indian Council composed of faculty, students, and administrators. Non-Indian faculty were excluded from participating in the decision-making process, a policy that was criticized by some as "reverse discrimination." Ned Hatathli, Navajo president of the college, responded: "This is an Indian owned and an Indian operated institution, and we certainly don't want any people other than Indian to dictate to us what is good for us."

Increased financial aid from the federal government in the 1960s and 1970s led to a significant growth in the number of Indians attending college. Enrollment steadily increased at Indian-controlled colleges—such as those newly established at Standing Rock, North Dakota, and Sinte Gleska, South Dakota—as well as at non-Indian colleges and universities. As their numbers on campus increased, Indian students began to organize and push for the establishment of Indian Studies programs just as African American students were organizing simultaneously to demand programs of Black Studies. At the University of Minnesota, for instance, only five Indian students were enrolled in 1960, whereas 45 were enrolled eight years later. The American Indian Students Association at the university successfully campaigned in 1968 for the inclusion in the curriculum of courses in the Chippewa language, as well as classes in Minnesota Indian history and contemporary Indian affairs. "We never resorted to threats of violence or intimidation," the leader of the Indian students later explained. "We pushed hard, we demanded to be heard, and we were careful to act in a gentlemanly manner so as not to alienate anyone who could help us." By 1970 forty-eight American colleges and universities—most notably in Arizona, California, Montana, Oklahoma, and Washington—were offering Indian Studies programs. The following year, a unique Native American institution of higher learning opened its doors in Davis, California. D-Q University, drawing "upon the strength of Native American culture," offered a full range of academic courses on campus and provided educational programs on reservations throughout the state.

National attention was focused on the issue of Indian education in the late 1960s by the widely publicized findings of the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Education. The subcommittee began its investigation in 1967 under the chairmanship of Democratic Senator Robert

Kennedy of New York, a presidential aspirant who described the condition of American Indians as "a national tragedy and a national disgrace." The subcommittee conducted extensive hearings, interviewing scores of Native Americans and other expert witnesses across the country. Following the assassination of Robert Kennedy in 1968, the chairmanship passed to his brother Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts who issued the subcommittee's final report, *Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge* (1969). The Kennedy Report, as it was commonly known, presented a scathing indictment of federal Indian policy and portrayed the condition of American Indians as virtually unchanged from the time of the Meriam Report forty years earlier. It called for a dramatic increase in funding for Indian education at all levels and the adoption of a new national policy for Indian education. The recommendations emphasized the importance of including courses in Native American culture, history, and language in schools where Indian children were in attendance; and of giving tribal leaders and Indian parents a greater role in the local educational process. "The Federal Government must commit itself to a national policy of educational excellence for Indian children," the report concluded, "[with] maximum participation and control by Indian adults and communities."

Native people were particularly encouraged by the Kennedy Report's endorsement of the principle of self-determination. Within a month of the report's publication, in November 1969, Indian educators convened the first meeting of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA). As historian Margaret Connell Szasz pointed out, the NIEA was "the educators' equivalent of the National Congress of American Indians." It was, in other words, a powerful defender of the interests of Native Americans whenever and wherever they might be threatened. The directors of the NIEA described themselves simply as an organization "*by* Indian people *for* Indian people." During the early 1970s, the NIEA became the chief proponent of Indian self-determination in federal education policy.

Leaders of the National Indian Education Association worked closely with members of Congress in drafting what became the Indian Education Act of 1972, an important step toward realizing the goal of self-determination. The act required the participation of parents and tribal leaders in the administration of funds available to public school districts under the "federally impacted" legislation of the 1950s. This important reform was intended to prevent districts from accepting

such funds without providing programs and services specifically designed for Indian students. The act also provided funds to states and local districts for the development of courses in Native American history and culture. Additional funding was available for the establishment of community-run schools and adult-education projects. All programs established under the act were to be administered by an Office of Indian Education, controlled by an (all-Indian) National Advisory Council on Indian Education. Herschel Sahmaunt (Kiowa), president of the NIEA, praised the Indian Education Act as the first law ever to give "Indian people on reservations, in rural settings, and in the cities control over their own education."

An even more impressive victory for the forces of self-determination came in 1975 when Congress passed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. Incorporating language drafted by Native American leaders, the act placed additional control over Indian education in the hands of the Indians themselves. Specifically, the act required all states accepting funds under the Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1934 to use those funds exclusively for programs to benefit Indian students. To guarantee that compliance, the act authorized school boards controlled by Native Americans to contract directly for Johnson-O'Malley funds, and it required other districts receiving such funds to consult a local Indian Parents Committee on all decisions affecting Indian students. This act had a major impact on Indian education since the vast majority of Indian children were enrolled in districts receiving Johnson-O'Malley funds. By the end of the 1970s, fewer than 44,000 Indian students were enrolled in schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, whereas more than 171,000 were attending Johnson-O'Malley–funded public schools.

Even within the schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the move toward self-determination was having a profound effect. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the BIA closed several of its off-reservation boarding schools and opened additional day schools in cooperation with local tribal leaders. On the college level, the Bureau of Indian Affairs increased its support of institutions like Navajo Community College under the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978. By 1984 more than 3,300 Indian students were enrolled in nineteen such community colleges. Grants from the BIA also provided aid to two tribally controlled four-year institutions in South Dakota, Sinte Gleska College and Oglala Lakota College. The BIA continued to upgrade its own post-secondary schools as well,