



A Place to Be Navajo: Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-Determination in Indigenous Schooling (Sociocultural, Political, and Historical Studies in Education)

Teresa L. McCarty

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A Place To Be Navajo is the only book-length ethnographic account of a revolutionary Indigenous self-determination movement that began in 1966 with the Rough Rock Demonstration School. Called *Diné Bi'ólta'*, The People's School, in recognition of its status as the first American Indian community-controlled school, Rough Rock was the first to teach in the Native language and to produce a body of quality children's literature by and about Navajo people. These innovations have positioned the school as a leader in American Indian and bilingual/bicultural education and have enabled school participants to wield considerable influence on national policy. This book is a critical life history of this singular school and community.

McCarty's account grows out of 20 years of ethnographic work by the author with the *Diné* (Navajo) community of Rough Rock. The story is told primarily through written text, but also through the striking black-and-white images of photographer Fred Bia, a member of the Rough Rock community. Unlike most accounts of Indigenous schooling, this study involves the active participation of Navajo community members. Their oral testimony and that of other leaders in Indigenous/Navajo education frame and texture the account.

Informed by critical theories of education, this book is not just the story of a single school and community. It is also an inquiry into the larger struggle for self-determination by Indigenous and other minoritized communities, raising issues of identity, voice, and community empowerment. *A Place To Be Navajo* asks whether school can be a place where children learn, question, and grow in an environment that values and builds upon who they are. The author argues that the questions Rough Rock raises, and the responses they summon, implicate us all.

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