



Highlighting Muted Narratives

Insights from Indigenous School Leaders

A muted narrative is not the absence of voice — it is the presence of power deciding which voices are amplified and which are quietly absorbed into the margins.



The Native American Community Academy was recognized as the New Mexico Public Charter School of the Year in 2025.

Last October, 4DL hosted a Leadership Journey to the NACA-inspired indigenous schools of New Mexico where we learned from educators who are part of a movement in education to teach their tribal languages and land-based practices in education. **What we witnessed was not simply a curriculum—it was a worldview.**

We saw how learning rooted in relationship to land, ancestors, storytelling, and community can nurture identity, belonging, and reclamation of language.

We saw classrooms where young people were not asked to leave parts of themselves at the door, but invited to bring their whole selves into the learning space.

And we saw, most powerfully, what it looks like when a school does not merely “include” culture, but is built from culture.

These visits reminded us why our work matters. If we want children to experience equitable access to opportunity—not just academically, but spiritually, culturally, and emotionally—we must rethink the enabling conditions in our schools. We must create environments where students see themselves reflected, affirmed, and empowered. Where teachers are equipped and supported to teach in ways that honor identity. Where leadership does not replicate harm, but models healing.

And so, 4DL was honored this month to host leaders from three of the New Mexico schools we visited as part of our Equity Practitioner Program (EPP) Muted Narratives session.

Our time with them was a reminder that structural change is not only a policy challenge—it is a relational one. Transformation begins with listening. With humility. With honoring the knowledge already present in communities. With recognizing that some of the most effective, resilient, and visionary practices are ones Indigenous peoples have carried for centuries.



Children and teachers at Dream Dine Charter School in Shiprock, New Mexico, led by Nadine Chatto (far left, back row)

EPP COHORT 12 MUTED NARRATIVES | OUR GUEST SPEAKERS



Dr. Porter Swentzell

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