Commencement 2013—Educational Studies


Good afternoon, friends and families. My name is Amber Frommherz. I am of the Towering House clan, born for the Many Goats clan. My maternal grandfather is of the Red Cheek clan and my paternal grandfather is of the Red-Running-into-the-Water clan. This is how I identify as a Diné woman.

It has been said by a Diné másaní, which was recorded in the the Journal of Navajo Education, that wearing traditional ’éé reminds us of Diné Bizaad, our Navajo language. She said, “If you speak your language, a person would not become stranded because you have your prayers and your songs, which the Creator will hear. When you lose your language, you can become stranded.”

In spite of the fact that I was educated for nineteen years in English, I am honored to represent my peers and celebrate this event in shiDiné Bizaad, English, y Español. As I wear shié’ée, I also remember the importance of the “language of power” that Educational Studies has nurtured in all of us.

On Grandparents’ Day, in third grade, at Desert View Elementary School—a border town school attended by Navajo and White students—I proudly wore attire much like I am wearing today. I remember getting ready an hour earlier than usual, hearing my mom’s warnings to be careful with our jewelry, and also being nervous about the day’s events because shinálí was coming to shi’oltá with me. When we arrived, I noticed that the White students were not dressed up at all, they were wearing their everyday clothes. I noticed that my class did not have a Navajo
translator available for Navajo speaking grandparents. I remember being disappointed that the cafeteria served Navajo Tacos for lunch rather than 'atoo’—a more respectable meal for Diné elders. I remember my heavy squash blossom snagging my satin blouse as my classmates and I “fancy danced” to powwow music on stage in that afternoon’s “performance”. And, I remember specifically looking out into the audience toward my family and seeing shináli. Her expression confirmed my uneasiness. In my family, no one powwow danced, and for certain occasions, we do ceremony.

Through my first Ed Studies course, Sociology of the School, I initiated a complicated understanding of the school’s power to interpret and dictate the appropriate language, meal, and performance for all the grandparents.

As graduates of Ed. Studies, we have contributed to a transformational, scholarly conversation through our reach. We have mapped the mechanisms of power within school and society, as we consider the intersecting forces of race, gender, language, sexuality, and so on.

Our scholarly endeavors could not have been without the help from our advisors and professors. Professor Sabina Vaught, Professor Freeden Oeur, and Dean Karen Gould, ahéhee’ for your commitment to this program, na'nitinigii, a’dóó your support. In addition, Carla Walsh, Patricia Romeo, Chris Wright, Brian Wright, James Jennings, and many others, you have made this day possible. A’dóó shináai, who could not be here today and whom I dedicate shi’ołta nahnish, ahéhee’.

To my peers, as you wear nié’ė, always remember we are not stranded in our work. T’áá hó ’ájit’éego t’éiyá. Ahé’hee’ a’dóó hágoónee’.