

**Witter Bynner Foundation  
Northwest New Mexico Arts Council**

## **Saad ak'e'elchí – Poetry**

As the global community is continually evolving it must be understood that so is the state of many cultural languages. For many indigenous languages this is referred to as “language shift.” It is common in today’s popular culture to hear the younger generations of children speaking with slang and in a sort of pieced together bilingual form. Sometimes this is Navajo or Spanish intermixed with their first languages during their conversations, a trend which some say is negative, but for the children it is their way of perpetuating their mother tongues.

This compilation of original poetry works by 21<sup>st</sup> century culturally diverse children showcases how they, the new generations, see the world. The goal of these writings is to allow readers to tangibly see in word form of how these children hear the language, speak it and write it.

The poetry contained in this selection of showcases how young poets are choosing to express themselves in modern culture. From their homes they bring a mixed bag of dialog, criss-crossing from one language to another. There is no word in the Navajo dialogue for the term “poetry.” The closest translation is literal and would describe the action of poetry using the verb sense. The Navajo term to describe poetry is, “*Saad ak'e'elchí*” which is loosely translated in English to “words or (talk) that is fancy.” When translating Navajo terms into English the expression changes into completely descriptive and does not always give justice to the core meaning or expression of the Navajo phrase.

Venaya J. Yazzie  
Navajo Artist/Poet

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## Haiku Poems

My fav color is blue.  
I like to see animals.  
The birds are singing.

*Yágo ayoo shít nizhon.  
Naaldlooshii shít nizhon.  
Tsídi dahwiitaal.*

By Tashawna

Water has nice waves  
Water has beautiful waves.  
Oceans have water.

*Tó, tó nizhoni.  
Tó nizhoni nizhoni .  
To' tsoh nizhoni.*

By Alanis

Spring brings blue flowers  
The spring brings squirrels and fish.  
Sweet summer is here.

By Autumn

I've been in a storm.  
Cubs snore but they never roar.  
Bears fart but don't bark.

By Xephoniah

Snow is falling on lot  
Flowers and trees are in bloom.  
Clouds in the blue sky.

By Nathaniel

The dog, *lééchaa'í*.  
Waits for morning, *abini*.  
He knows it's morning.

The kids, *álchíní*.  
The kids say it's almost night.  
Let's camp out tonight.

By Kayla

Cold weather goes slow.  
Warm weather goes by so slow.  
But spring goes by fast.

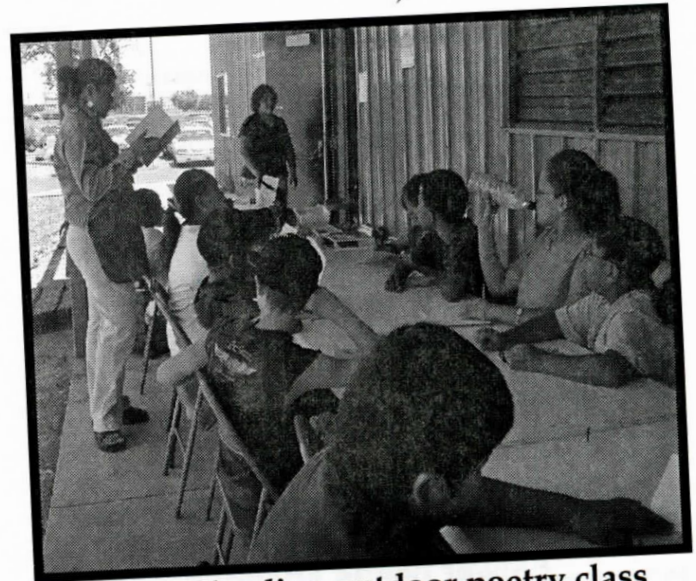
By Adrian

Fishes are sparkly.  
The deep blue sea sparkling.  
Stars twinkle in it.

By Elizabeth

The forest is green.  
Animals are alive here.  
The rain is so wet.

By Colton



Venaya leading outdoor poetry class

Haiku poems  
by Alanis

Eagle, Atsa'

Atsa' is awesome.  
Atsa' can fly in the air.  
It has pointy beak.

Wolf, Ma'ii tsoh

Wolf is a good sneak.  
Wolf can go speedy-fast pace.  
He is gray and white.

Ma'ii tsoh diigis.  
Ma'ii tsoh ayoo yil wod.  
Libaa doo ligai.

Shí flower

Shí flower's pretty.  
Shí flower is a nice thing.  
Flower needs *shándíín*.

Haiku poems  
by Kayla

Mosí, Cat

Cat is beautiful.  
Cat is fun to have around.  
The cat is beautiful.

Haí, Winter

Winter is snowy.  
Winter is fun to play in.  
Winter will freeze you.



Upper Fruitland bilingual poet shares poetry  
pop-up art.

Haiku poems  
by Quinn

Aak'ee, Fall

*Aak'ee nizhoni.*  
The fall is fun to play in.  
*Aak'ee, breathtaking.*

*Aak'ee nizhoni.*  
*Aak'ee ayoo shił nizhón.*  
*Aak'ee nizhoni.*

Yágo dootłiizhíid doo wóláchíí

*Yágo dootłiizhí.*  
*Yágo reflects wóláchíí.*  
*Wóláchíí' love blue.*

The sky.  
Sky reflects the red ants.  
Red ants love blue.

Ch'il na'at'o'ii, Grapes

Grapes are fun to eat.  
Grapes are made into drinks.  
Grapes are really sweet.



Quinn's pop-up poetry art book



A mural on the Navajo reservation

**Sun Poems:**

*Jóhonaa'éei Saad ak'e'elchí*

Sun  
Sunny  
Shiny  
Unique  
Enjoy  
Nice  
Yellow.

By Lacie

Sun  
Warm  
Yellow  
Useful  
Elegant  
Full of gases  
Unusual  
Unique  
Light  
Hot  
Nice  
Quiet.

By Deena C.

Sun  
24 hours  
Shiny  
Gases  
Heat  
Red, yellow, orange  
Ball of fire, hot.

By Patrick H.

*Jóhonaa'éei*  
Black cargo gassy  
Sun  
shine.  
Round, big  
Yellow  
Red  
Bright, fiery hot.

*Jóhonaa'éei*  
*Łizhin*  
*Názbas nímaz*  
*Łitso*  
*Łichíi*  
*Ayoo shandiin.*  
*Ayoo sido.*

By Sheldon

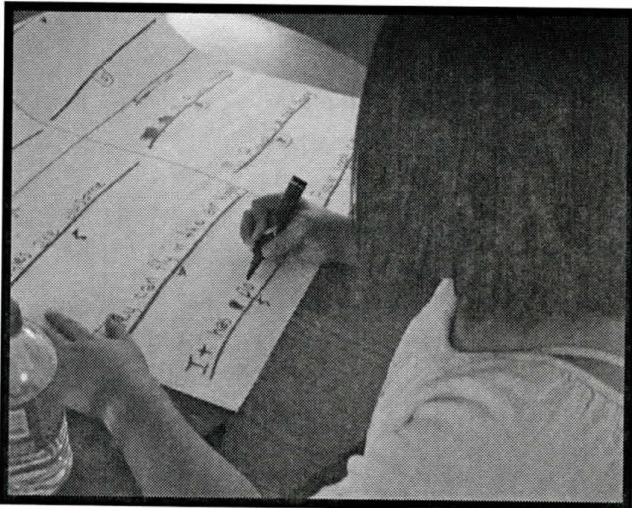
**Moon Poems:**  
*'Ooljée*  
*Saad ak'e'elchí*

**Moon**  
**Mysterious**  
**Shine**  
**Elegant**  
**Round**  
**October**  
**Night.**

**Moon**  
**Moon**  
**Octagon**  
**Round**  
**Enjoy**  
**Night.**

**By Elisabeth J.**

**By Dragen**

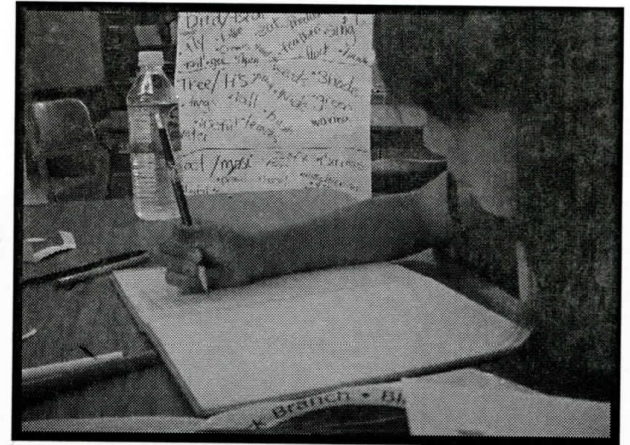


**A young Navajo poet writing Haiku**

**Cinquain Poems**

**Deer**  
**nice, cool**  
**I love strawberries**  
**Deer like strawberries**  
**brown.**

**By Brandi**



**Bilingual poetry writing workshop**

**Moon**  
**red and white**  
**night, too heavy**  
**mad, sad, lonely,**  
**happy shine.**

**By Daniela P.**



Lizard  
yellow, fast  
likes to climb  
big animals hurt him  
animal.

By Delaney W.

Spring  
growing, green  
farms grow corn  
warm, colorful and long  
green.

Black  
not bright  
blind as bats  
scared, lost  
no color.

By Kendra S.

Orange  
orange dot  
eat, peel, squeeze  
soft, squishy  
fruit.

By Lacie P.

Frog  
the frog went jumping at night  
she jumped  
that is right.  
This girl  
jumped out  
she was wearing  
a brown belt.

By Shianne S.

The spider is drinking  
out of the rock.  
The spider is throwing  
a yellow banana  
at the calendar.

By Isiah J.



Children's mural art in Upper Fruitland

Poems by Quinn

Hunting Mosí

The *mosí* is hunting  
she is happy  
and likes  
to sing  
to sing.

The *mosí* is lonely

The *mosí* is lonely.  
He digs in the fridge  
to find a pidge,  
but all he finds is bologna.

Ti's, the Tree

The *ti's* is waving  
it looks like a bush  
and smells like sap.

Dog call

Little dog, little dog where did you go?  
I looked  
far  
and wide.

*Łééchaa'í yazhi, lééchaa'í yazhi*  
*hagoosh nanináa?*  
*Che' hanishtá.*

Cricket

The cricket makes  
beautiful music.  
He sings and dances  
in the night.  
He sometimes makes an awful  
fright.  
There's a picket sign out front  
that says, "Cricket dead or alive!"

Ode to Mt. Everest

*Dzil*  
Mt. Everest  
is breathtaking  
at first seeing of it.  
Mt. Everest  
is tall  
and  
pointy.  
Mt. Everest is far and wide.

**Łééchaa'í**

One day  
there was dog,  
he is called *łééchaa'í*.

*Łééchaa'í* loved adventure.

He saw a mountain, called *dził*.  
He saw a mountain that he never seen.  
So he started to walk towards the mountain.

On his way  
he saw beautiful pink flowers,  
*nizhoni, nizhoni*.

Finally, he made it to the mountain.  
He got excited and started climbing the  
mountain.

When he got to the top of the mountain,  
he saw a jackrabbit, called *gah*.  
He ran after it  
and ran into a river.

*Łééchaa'í* drank out of the river,  
soon he was tired.  
*Łééchaa'í* headed home.

Poems by Taylor M.

**Na'ashó 'iilbáhi, Lizard**

When I see a lizard,  
*na'ashó 'iilbáhi*, lizard run  
I always think it would be fun  
to chase it round and round  
then one time I found  
it was long gone  
I guess it hid in the lawn.

**The deer is near**

*Bíih, bíih.*

I just saw  
a deer  
right here  
on the pier.

What happened to it?  
I hope  
it didn't fall into a pit.

If it should had  
I would  
be terribly sad.

Fawn fun on Mount Taylor

*Bíih yázhí, bíih yázhí*

It is fun to be a fawn  
sometimes I see people pawn.

Right here  
on the sleek grass  
Oh, my I saw a mouse pass!

That is a typical day  
I hope you have another visit  
to pay  
to me again  
Oh, no I see the men!

The mountain

The mountain.  
The mountain.

*Dził.*

The mountain with streams  
makes it look like teams  
who are waiting  
for recruiting,  
while others  
are getting the booting.

*Dził: Ode to Mt. Taylor*

*Dził*  
Large  
astounding.

*Dził*  
Tagged,  
triangle  
angles.

*Dził*  
Trails-  
sharp  
tall  
steep,  
marvelous.

*Dził*  
slender  
slim  
mineral  
shiny.



**My life is going to the dogs!**

Dogs, dogs,  
dogs.  
I just wish  
I could see hogs.

Dogs, dogs,  
dogs.  
Their filing up the room  
I try to yell,  
“Boom!”

I can't even hear my own voice.  
Quick!  
I better make a choice!

**Tsídií, the bird**

The bird  
fluttered away,  
*tsídií, tsídií*  
fluttered away  
to the bay,  
because in his day  
he was married  
to Fay.

**Garfield, the fat cat**

Garfield is  
fat cat.  
He will never  
get a pat.  
He always slacks  
and hurts his back.

**Morning glory**

The cat waits for day  
to slowly  
make its way  
up the hill,  
where he waits  
so still.

Poems by Kayla M.

**The morning grow**

The *ti's* is growing tall, tall.  
It looks like bush  
and smells like  
soap and feet.

The Mosí's day off

The *mosí* is eating  
He is happy, happy and likes to hunt, hunt.

The Dog and Kids

The dog waits for morning  
but, he doesn't know its morning.  
The kids say  
it's almost night to camp  
by the stove  
tonight.

Ode to Mosí on Snoopy Rock

If I fell off it, I would be afraid of heights.  
My mother would be wondering.  
She would look on every mountain she  
sees.

Frog Hop, Frog Low, Cha! Hop, Cha! Low

It's a song for you, *cha!*  
up  
down  
swing  
around.  
Hop a doodle do.  
Hop a doodle do.

Frogs jump out,  
*cha!* jump out.  
Night frogs,  
jump  
out  
at daylight.  
It's a song for you, *cha!*  
up  
down  
swing  
around.  
Hop a doodle do.  
Hop a doodle do

Poems by Kendra S.

Once upon a summer

When we first met  
it was a sunny day  
in June  
at first  
we didn't talk  
then  
somebody  
introduced us  
and we made like that.  
After, we talked like crazy

## Come with me

Here's the 4-1-1.  
The 4-1-1.  
Here's the thing...  
you started  
out nice.  
We could have a conversation  
(real nice)  
no problem.  
Now it's like  
I don't exist to you.  
Can you fool me?

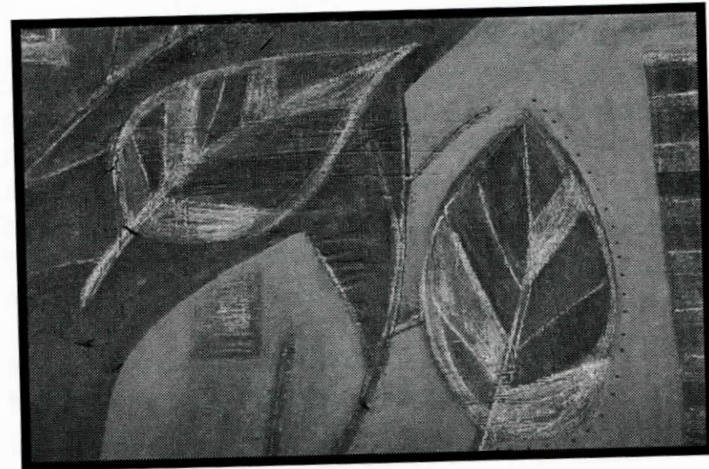
Come with me  
and I'll show you how I live  
knowing you exist in my world.  
Come with me  
and I'll show you what it's like  
knowing we can talk  
really good,  
(real nice).

All I wanted to do  
was  
find out the truth,  
but you pushed  
me  
away.

Come with me  
and I'll show you how I live  
knowing you exist in my world.  
Come with me  
I'll show you what it's like  
knowing we can talk  
really good,  
(real nice).

I just wanted  
to be your friend,  
nothin' more!  
So, believe me  
when I say I like you  
but, I want to start it slow!

Come with me  
to the world  
inside my head.



## Diné'tah

### *Diné'tah* earth

Settles  
in loud creases  
of urban lingo,  
sounds like Navajo some days,  
but like English on Sundays.

### *Diné'tah* earth sand

Lingers  
on ancestral memory  
bedtime stories,  
at Louise and Jim's home,  
of long summer nights-  
when we slept good 'neath  
roaring orange blue flames  
nestle in black stove.

### *Diné'tah* earth moves

Swift  
in swishing blue flow  
deep sacred motion-  
like the Rio Puerco of  
*Shi k'e bi'keyah*.

## *Diné'tah* earth

Settles  
upon crunchy  
parched cottonwood leaves  
and  
settles  
on the rim of soft lips.

By Venaya J. Yazzie

### About the Poet

Venaya J. Yazzie was born in September in Shiprock, NM into the Manyhogans and Bitterwater clans, the Waters Flow Together clan and the Hopi Nation. As a child she grew up seasonally on and off the eastern Navajo reservation at Huerfano, NM in the shadow of *Dziłná'oodilii*. She received a B.A. in English and Communications at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado and is an alumnus of the Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Arts in Santa Fe, NM where she received an Associate of Arts degree in Two-Dimensional Arts. She has studied creative writing at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona. She is currently in the Teacher Education Master's program UNM.

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