Saad ak’e’elchi – 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 21st 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’elchi” 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 shił nizhon.
Naaldlooshii shił nizhon.
Tsídí dahwiítaał.

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, léécha’í.
Waits for morning, abiní.
He knows it’s morning.

The kids, álichíí.
The kids say it’s almost night.
Let’s camp out tonight.

By Kayla

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

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

By Adrian

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 shándiín.

Haiku poems by Kayla

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

Hái, 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 nizhôn.
Aak'ee nizhoni.

Yágo dootleizhíd doo wóláchíí
Yágo dootleizhí.
Yágo reflects wóláchíí.
Wóláchíí’ love blue.

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

Ch’il na’at’ó’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’éí 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’éí
Black cargo gassy
Sun
shine.
Round, big
Yellow
Red
Bright, fiery hot.

Jóhonaa’éí
Ližhin
Názbas nimaz
Litso
Ličíí
Ayoo shandiin.
Ayoo sido.

By Sheldon
Moon Poems:
‘Ooljéé
Saad ak’e’elchí

Moon
Mysterious
Shine
Elegant
Round
October
Night.

By Elisabeth J.

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.

A young Navajo poet writing Haiku

By Dragen
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.

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.

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

By Lacie P.

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

By Isiah J.
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.

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

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

Łééchaa’í yazhi, Łééchaa’í yazhi
hagoosh nanináa?
Che’ hanishtá.
Leecha’i

One day
there was dog,
he is called Leecha’i.

Leecha’i loved adventure.

He saw a mountain, called dzil.
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.

Leecha’i drank out of the river,
soon he was tired.
Leecha’i headed home.

Na’ashó ‘iłbáhi, Lizard

When I see a lizard,
na’ashó ‘iłbáhi, 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

Biih, biih.

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

Bííh yázhí, bííh 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!

---

Tsíidii, the bird
The bird fluttered away, tsíidii, tsíidii
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 Mosi’s day off

The mosi 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 Mosi 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, Chał Hop, Chał Low

It’s a song for you, chał
up
down
swing
around.
Hop a doodle do.
Hop a doodle do.

Frogs jump out,
chał jump out.
Night frogs,
jump
out
at daylight.
It’s a song for you, chał
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
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.

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

Dinétah earth

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

Dinétah 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.

Dinétah earth moves

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

Dinétah 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 Manyhagons 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 Dzilná’oodili. 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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