

The original documents are located in Box 3, folder “2/27/75 Reception of Navajo Girl President's Comm. on Mental Retardation” of the Betty Ford White House Papers, 1973-1977 at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MRS. FORD

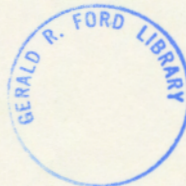
EVENT: Receive rug from 18 year old retarded Navajo girl under auspices of The President's Committee on Mental Retardation (PCMR).

DATE: Thursday, February 27, 1975

TIME: 1:00 p.m.

PLACE: Map Room (greet guest initially, however, in the Diplomatic Reception Room.)

GUESTS: -Miss Viola Hovel, the girl (age 18)
-Mr. and Mrs. Tom Hovel, her parents
-Mrs. Norma Perry, her teacher at Navajo Children's Rehabilitation Center
-Miss Sophie Thompson, Indian social worker
-Mr. Fred Krause, Executive Director, PCMR
-Miss Lorraine Beebe, Vice Chairman, PCMR
-Mrs. Mary Gray, Mr. Krause's secretary, PCMR
-Mr. Robert Collier



SEQUENCE:

1:00 p.m. When your guests have arrived, Susan Porter will phone you that all is ready.

1:01 p.m. After greeting your guests in the Diplomatic Reception Room, you will want to invite them into the Map Room to meet with the press.

1:15 p.m. At the conclusion of the photo session with the press in the Map Room, at your invitation to your guests to have refreshments, the press will leave giving you an opportunity to have a cup of tea privately with your guests.

1:25 p.m. At the conclusion, return to Family Quarters; Susan Porter will bring you pens to give your guests as a memento (autographed photos will be sent later), and your guests will be offered a Special Tour of the White House.

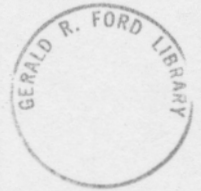
NOTE:

Open press coverage.
White House photographer.

Background information is attached. (PS. WE NEED THE PHOTOS BACK AFTERWARDS.)
THX.
S.

Susan Porter
February 24, 1975

NAVAJO CHILDREN'S REHABILITATION CENTER, INC.
Coyote Canyon Trading Post
Brimhall, New Mexico 87310



February 7, 1975

Miss Viola Hovel is a delightful young 18 year old Navajo woman. Her cheerful disposition and kindness toward others makes her a favorite of students and staff at the Navajo Children's Rehabilitation Center where she attends school.

Viola is a talented athlete who enjoys team games such as basketball and baseball. An excellent dancer she enjoys performing traditional Navajo dances in the beautiful dance costume which she wears when dancing on special occasions. Her love of music is not limited solely to traditional Navajo songs but also extends to the popular music of the day and she knows the words of many of the current hit songs. Another activity at which Viola excels is assembling complex picture puzzles.

Viola is very talented with her hands. She embroiders complex designs and chooses her own colors. Within the last year Viola has developed considerable skill in making Navajo rugs. Her teacher in this demanding art form has been a Navajo woman from the Coyote Canyon community who is a skilled weaver and a member of the Foster Grandparent Program at the school.

Viola's weaving skills will represent an important source of monetary support for her and her family in the future. And weaving is a task at which she can gain great satisfaction for her accomplishments and recognition from her family and her community. Mrs. Norma Perry, Viola's teacher, deserves special thanks for her support and encouragement of Viola in the development of her weaving skills.

The Navajo Children's Rehabilitation Center Inc., located at Coyote Canyon Brimhall New Mexico, the Navajo Nation, began operations in February 1973 and Viola was one of the first students enrolled in the program. A total of 19 mentally handicapped Navajo young people between the ages of 12 and 21 years now attend classes at the Center. These young people are from widely scattered communities in northwestern New Mexico and for most this is the first school program they have attended. At Coyote Canyon the students are provided a warm and secure home away from home while they attend classes at the Center. The hope is that in the next few years there will be classes available for them in their home communities.

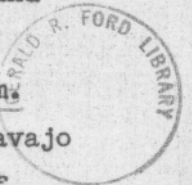
Paved roads are few and far between in this high mountain country near the continental divide and homes may be isolated from the outside world for many days during the sudden intense winter storms that sweep down across this country with little warning. The staff at Coyote Canyon works with the students at the school to prepare them to cope with the harsh realities of life in the isolated rural communities to which many of the students will return.

School curriculum is based on the needs of each student and includes the areas of perceptual-motor skills, body image and self concept, communication skills (Navajo and English), functional academic skills, self care, and economic usefulness. Economic usefulness includes: weaving, carding, and spinning wool, house cleaning and maintenance skills, how to wash dishes with and without running water, basic cooking skills including opening cans, simple sewing and many other areas.

The attempt is to make Navajo culture an intergral part of the program. For example students listen to winter stories, learn to sing and perform Navajo songs and dances, and these young people are counseled in the Navajo Way of doing things.

The Coyote Canyon program is supported through the efforts of many cooperating agencies. The local community with the permission of the Navajo Tribe provides the use of the buildings at no expense to the school. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Branch of Social Services provides financial support for the dormitory program and the B.I.A. Social Services workers provide referral and follow-up service for the school. They also provide transportation to parents who wish to visit the school but have no transportation of their own. The Department of Hospitals and Institutions of the State of New Mexico utilizing Federal IV-A and VI Funds provides a significant amount of financial support for the program in such areas as transportation, administration, evaluation, and pre-vocational training. The Navajo Tribe has supplied funds for the renovation of the buildings at the school. The local school district operates a classroom program at the school. The Public Health service provides the services of a field health nurse to monitor the medical services at the school and nearby health clinics provide free health services to the students. An active and successful Foster GrandParent program is in operation at the school utilizing people from the local community. Through their contacts with these people the students gain respect for and understanding of the rich cultural heritage which is theirs.

For many years Viola's parents, Tom and Thelma Hovel have been vigorously active in the struggle to bring services to the Navajo Nation for handicapped people.



In the past what services did exist, frequently involved placement of the handicapped child in a State Institution, many hundreds of miles from home where the child was cut off from his culture in all its richness. For many families it was an agonizing decision indeed to send their child away where he would be shut out of so much that was beautiful and right in the Navajo way. Many children when they did return home years later were no longer able to speak the Navajo language which meant that they were unable to communicate with other members of their own family.

Mr. Hovel is president of the Hope for Children Association, a group of Navajo Parents of mentally handicapped children. This Association, one of the first such Indian groups in the country, was instrumental through their untiring support, in making the program at Coyote Canyon a reality. The Hovels are also members of the Board of Directors of the Navajo Children's Rehabilitation Center; Mr. Hovel was recently elected vice-president of the corporation. The example of the Hovels in serving their people is a constant source of inspiration to all of us who have had the privilege to work with them.

Mrs. Norma Perry, Viola's teacher, has been with the Coyote Canyon Program since its inception two years ago. Far beyond the call of duty she has given freely of her time and personal resources to make the program a success. Her dedication toward providing the highest quality services to the Navajo people has been apparent throughout her teaching career of many years.





pcmr

February 4, 1975

Presentation of Navajo Rug to Mrs. Ford
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On Thursday, February 27, 1975, at 1 p.m., PCMR will present a Navajo rug to Mrs. Gerald Ford at the White House. The rug was woven by a 16-year-old Navajo girl now attending a school for retarded Indian children at Coyote Canyon, Brimhall, New Mexico, on the Navajo Reservation. The school is called Alchini Ba Lchohoo, or Hope for Children.

The young girl who wove the rug is named Viola Hovel. She will come to Washington for the presentation accompanied by her mother, Mrs. Irene Hovel; Mrs. Norma Perry, her teacher at the school; and Miss Sophie Thompson, a social worker with Indian Health Service. All are Navajo. All speak English.

They will arrive at 2:56 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 26, at National Airport, Flight # 168.

The school at Coyote Canyon was started in 1971 by a white man from Ohio, who saw the great need for a program for retarded Indian children, and the lack of services provided by the State, the Navajo Tribe, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Public Health Service.

He also saw an opportunity to exploit these children. He succeeded in getting sizeable grants from BIA, Vocational Rehabilitation, Kennedy Foundation and others. Within a few months there were 30 Navajo children living at the school, most of them with multiple handicaps. Some had been brought from institutions hundreds of miles away. There were high hopes, based on the promises he had made. Gradually, it became evident that there was no program for the children, there was no education, there wasn't even adequate medical care. Unpaid-for furniture and equipment were repossessed. The utilities companies threatened to cut off heat and light because of unpaid bills.

In 1972, the man visited PCMR offices, ostensibly to get an endorsement of his "program." After he had made the appointment, PCMR staff checked with a Navajo health educator and a Navajo social worker, and with BIA. At that time, the Navajo professionals had serious doubts about the man's honor and his ability to carry out his grandiose plans. BIA was beginning to have some questions, but continued to help support the project. At PCMR, he was confronted with the discrepancies between his claims and reality, and he left, upset, but protesting his innocence.

Shortly after this time, he returned to the Reservation, made a grand gesture of turning over the facility to the Navajo, and took off, leaving the children and over \$65,000 worth of debts. He left in a bus presented to the children by charitable businessmen.

A month after his visit to PCMR, and during the week that he left, two PCMR members and a staff member went to Coyote Canyon and to Tribal Council



offices in Window Rock, Arizona, to explore the situation, and to try and convince the authorities there to salvage what there was left.

Some of the children had been returned to their homes; others remained at the school. The facility was kept going by the dedication of two men: Dr. Steve Poland, a psychologist sent there by Voc. Rehab.; and Arthur Hood, a Navajo artist and craftsman. Both worked without salary for many months. Also very instrumental in the continuation of the school and the encouragement of the parents to become involved was Sophie Thompson, Navajo social worker. The staff of nearby St. Michaels school also assisted.

The New Mexico Association for Retarded Citizens took an active role in rallying the parents, also. A chapter of ARC was formed. PCMR sent a consultant to meet with the parents to help guide them in the reorganization of the school.

Now "Hope for Children" --sometimes called Navajo Children's Rehabilitation Center--is on solid ground. The Board of Directors is all Navajo, and the school is run by trained Navajo professionals and paraprofessionals, plus the psychologist, Dr. Poland, who has remained.

