

APRIL 2025

FREE

VOLUME 1

ISSUE 3

# NYGREN NEWS

STAY IN THE KNOW WITH THE PRESIDENT

**Keeping the Legacy of our Veterans Alive**



Thomas H. Begay, 98, is one of two remaining Navajo Code Talkers



**REBUILDING & RENOVATING  
CHAPTER HOUSES**

**CELEBRATING OUR NAVAJO STUDENTS  
& ENTREPRENEURS**

**IMPROVING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &  
PUBLIC SAFETY**





## WHAT IS NYGREN NEWS?

The Office of the President proudly distributes "Nygren News" across the Navajo Nation every month. This FREE newsletter is designed to keep the Navajo people informed on all the projects the Nygren Administration is working on that benefit the Navajo people.

This newsletter is created in-house by staffers and features stories that celebrate our Navajo people and shares important updates. Up to now, we have published two newsletters and we are eagerly looking forward for this April issue to reach our readers.

### The April 2025 issue highlights several stories:

- Various veterans stories, like a feature on Lori Piestewa, the efforts to restore the Navajo Code Talkers back into the federal record, and key turning ceremonies for Navajo veterans.
- Rez Ball: New Mexico Activities Association State Basketball coverage of the 3A Navajo Prep Lady Eagles, 4A Gallup Lady Bengals and 5A Sandia Lady Matadors winning their state titles.
- Chapter government renovations and new builds for the St. Michaels and Oaks Springs Chapters.
- Shiprock Incident Command Center, with opening scheduled for October 2025.
- 2025 RES Economic Summit and 40 under 40 Awards.

Additionally, the newsletter includes public health alerts, job openings, and scholarship opportunities to support the Navajo community, and much more.

A special section by First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren offers her insights on community initiatives.

The President's media team, consisting of former award-winning journalists and editors, ensures balanced and informative coverage. Nygren News complements other communication platforms like social media, radio and press releases.

**Pick up your free copy at local gas stations, senior centers, chapter houses, laundromats, and other public gathering spaces to:**

**Stay in the Know with the President.**





LORI PIESTEWA WAS THE FIRST NATIVE AMERICAN WOMAN TO BE KILLED IN COMBAT AFTER BEING DEPLOYED TO IRAQ IN 2003



## LORI PIESTEWA: A MATRIARCH'S LEGACY OF COURAGE, SACRIFICE, & BRAVERY

It is with deep respect and gratitude that we honor the life and sacrifice of Lori Piestewa, a proud Hopi woman from Tuba City, Arizona.

On March 23, we remembered Lori, who was just 23 years old when she gave everything for our country in Iraq. Her bravery, her strength, and her unwavering commitment to duty have forever etched her name in our hearts and history. She departed our world on March 23, 2003.

Lori joined the U.S. Army in 2001. As a mother of two, Lori carried not only the strength of a soldier but also the love and protection of a matriarch. Her sacrifice was not just as a warrior, but as a woman who showed the world the deep courage Native women possess. Lori embodied the very spirit of selflessness, and her sacrifice represents the dedication of all Native Veterans who have given so much to protect this land and its people.

Her legacy is not only her service but the path she laid for other Native women, showing them they too can serve with pride, courage, and strength. Lori's life reminds us that each of us, regardless of gender or background, has the power to make a difference.

**To Lori's family, I offer my heartfelt condolences and gratitude for raising such an extraordinary woman. Lori's leadership, her strength, and her love will live on in all of us. May the Holy People continue to watch over you and bring comfort to your hearts today.**



# NAVAJO CODE TALKERS LEGACY RESTORED AFTER WEBSITE REMOVAL MISHAP

On March 18, President Buu Nygren formally requested clarification from the U.S. Army and the Department of Defense regarding the removal of articles related to the Navajo Code Talkers from official websites.

Soon after the letter was sent, it was confirmed by Pentagon officials that the Department of Defense will restore materials related to the Navajo Code Talkers on its website.

Additionally, White House officials reached out to President Nygren's staff and confirmed that removal of "Navajo" from the agency websites was a result of an error caused by Artificial Intelligence (AI) automated review process associated with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

The removal of content related to the Navajo Code Talkers occurred as part of an automated review process associated with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives according to several news articles.

"Recognizing the work of the Navajo Code Talkers is profoundly significant to the Navajo Nation," President Nygren stated in his March 18 letter. "During World War II, the Navajo Code Talkers made indispensable contributions to American military successes in the Pacific theater."

The Navajo Code Talkers created a military code using the sacred Diné language, significantly influencing the outcomes of key battles in the Pacific theater.

Their remarkable service was honored by the awarding of Congressional Gold Medals in 2000.

President Nygren told White House officials that tribal nations, including the Navajo Nation, are distinct sovereign entities with their own governments and rights. Currently, U.S. Marine Corps, Air Force, and Navy websites continue to host articles featuring the Navajo Code Talkers.

President Nygren highlighted the importance of preserving public awareness about the contributions of the Navajo Code Talkers to ensure future generations remain informed.

"I am pleased to share this update, made possible through the dedicated advocacy of the Navajo Nation Washington Office and our letter to the Department of Defense," President Nygren said. "I want to assure the Navajo people that we remain in close communication with federal officials to ensure the legacy of our cherished Navajo Code Talkers is never erased from American and Navajo history."

**As sovereign nations, we are not defined by DEI classifications. We are political sovereigns with treaties and a long-standing relationship with the U.S. government.**





# NAPI Food Boxes Help Families in Need Due to Inflation Price Hikes Across the Country

Earlier this month, I signed an agreement with the Navajo Agricultural Products Industry (NAPI) to distribute 49,333 food boxes to our Diné people, an effort to address food insecurity across the Navajo Nation.

The Office of the President helped unload the food boxes in Upper Fruitland and Tolani Lake. We have distribution events scheduled throughout the months of March, April, and May across the Navajo Nation.

These food items included 50 lb. bags of potatoes, 20 lb. bags of beans, 25 lb. bags of flour, and 10 lb. bags of blue, yellow and white cornmeal.

These select food items are connected to our cultural foods that helped sustain our people for generations, and they come with nutrient density to promote our health.

I am grateful for these food boxes, which is made possible through a \$5.5 million grant the Navajo Nation Washington Office applied for on behalf of the Navajo Nation.

Thank you to my staff, volunteers, Chapters, NAPI - Navajo Pride, the Navajo Department of Agriculture, USDA's Local Food Purchase Program, and the Navajo Division of Children and Family Services.

We are also working with our local chapters and Community Health Representatives to identify homebound elders who would benefit the most from these food boxes. Please contact your local chapter for distribution dates in your area.

**Let us continue to work hard and combat food insecurity so that our Diné families have the support they need to provide for their loved ones and continue using resources from the Navajo Nation.**



**THE PRESIDENT & COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS LOAD N.A.P.I. FOOD ITEMS FOR HUNDREDS OF FAMILIES**





GANADO VETERAN'S THREE-BEDROOM HOME



HUERFANO VETERAN'S THREE BEDROOM HOME



## HONORING HEROES: KEY TURNING CEREMONIES FOR VETERANS IN GANADO AND HUERFANO

Honoring and taking care of our Navajo Veterans is one of my key priorities as Navajo Nation President. The Nygren Administration works diligently to ensure that our most neediest and most vulnerable veterans are taken care of and are provided with a sustainable home.

After a long-awaited process, I am pleased to share that we helped two of our neediest veterans from the Ganado and Huerfano communities. These key turning ceremonies occurred earlier this year.

Our Ganado veteran, who served in the United States Marine Corps as a cook pastry chef for two years and 11 months, was granted a home on January 24 by the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration.

This veteran's home is a three-bedroom house with ADA accessibility and functionality, completed with ramps, a roll-in shower and a wood stove. These services will provide support to help our veteran thrive in their day-to-day life.

Additionally, we were able to celebrate another key turning ceremony for our veteran from Huerfano.

This veteran served in the United States Army, serving three years as an engineer missile equipment repairman.

He received his home on February 3 by the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration. During the early process of the building plan, the NNVA helped this veteran, and his family receive a new home.

These homes not only ensure a better living environment, but it brings our families closer together to honor our veterans who served the Navajo Nation. It is an honor to provide our assistance as a nation to help our fellow veterans who served and I commend their bravery.

I would like to thank the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration and the following team: Senior Housing Specialist William Nez, Housing Specialist Alvira Teller, Taryn Nofchissey, and Executive Director Bobbie Ann Baldwin for their efforts to make this possible for our veterans.

**These homes not only ensure a better living environment, but it brings our families closer together to honor our veterans who served the Navajo Nation.**



## HONORING OUR VIETNAM VETERANS & THEIR FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN AGENCY

A heartfelt gratitude to our Diné Vietnam Veterans who have selflessly served our country and the Navajo Nation. Roughly 42,000 Native Americans served in the Vietnam war, which includes about 4,500 of our fearless Diné.

Their courage, sacrifice, and service were acknowledged on Saturday, March 29 at the Northern Navajo Agency: 8th Annual Vietnam Veterans Day in Shiprock and at the 16th Annual Honor Walk in Upper Fruitland. Both community-led events honored our Vietnam Veterans.

I had the honor of speaking at both events, and I thanked our veterans who are still with us today, while acknowledging the lives that were lost.

I recognized and expressed my deepest appreciation to our Vietnam Veterans for their unwavering service and their contributions which shall never be forgotten.

In addition to expressing our appreciation, we also must acknowledge the challenges our veterans face and do our best to support them. I am determined to continue advocating for our veteran needs and assistance to receive benefits that will help them with their day-to-day lives.

Under the Nygren Administration, we are working continuously to take care of our veterans by improving healthcare, housing and job opportunities for our veterans. We hear you and we see you.

**To our Vietnam Veterans,  
thank you for your service &  
sacrifice for our Nation. Your  
stories of bravery will never  
be forgotten.**



16TH ANNUAL VIETNAM VETERANS HONOR  
WALK IN UPPER FRUITLAND



8TH ANNUAL NATIONAL VIETNAM WAR  
VETERANS DAY IN SHIPROCK





THE NAVAJO NATION RECOGNIZES MARCH 20TH AS DINÉ WOMEN VETERANS DAY



## FLAGS OF SOVEREIGNTY - A CALL TO RESTORE TRIBAL REPRESENTATION AT PHOENIX V.A. HOSPITAL

Through social media and advocacy posts of our sister tribes like the Gila River Indian Community, we discovered that multiple tribal nations' flags were reportedly removed from the Phoenix Veterans Affairs Hospital. This included the flag of the Navajo Nation, which was completely disheartening to hear. It is important to honor our veterans always, and to be careful not to take actions that disrespect warriors who fought on behalf of Americans.

Native Americans and Alaska Natives are proud members of the military, enlisting at higher rates than other nationalities, often inspired by patriotism, cultural values and the desire to protect their homelands.

What's more, March 20th is widely known as Navajo Women Veterans Day. This observed day across the Navajo Nation celebrates the military achievements of our matriarchs.

Like with the Navajo Code Talkers, we will work with federal officials in Arizona such as Rep. Eli Crane to resolve this ongoing issue. Crane is an ally to the Navajo Nation, and we ask him and the rest of Arizona to restore our tribal flags in their rightful place as sovereign nations.

Although the VA has implemented a new policy to limit flag displays at its facilities, it is essential that the sovereignty of tribes continues to be represented.

As always, we will continue to advocate to fund the Navajo Veteran's Nursing Home and to ask for additional support to meet the medical needs of our veterans.

The Nygren Administration, along with the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration and our hundreds of Navajo veterans, are working jointly to have a centralized VA hospital on the Navajo Nation. We can only do this through advocacy with our federal partners.



## GANADO LADY HORNETS & CHINLE LADY WILDCATS SHOW INCREDIBLE HEART IN ARIZONA 3A STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

During the Arizona 3A Girls Basketball Championships on February 28th, two Diné teams—the Lady Hornets and Lady Wildcats—gave unforgettable performances. The Lady Hornets faced the Snowflake Lobos, while the Lady Wildcats played the Payson Longhorns, both teams displaying incredible determination and energy throughout the games.

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren congratulated the teams for their perseverance, acknowledging the tough results but praising the effort put forth by every player. "The energy and passion displayed by our Navajo student-athletes were beyond anything I've experienced," President Nygren said. "Though the results were tough, I know each player gave their absolute best, and our families were there every step of the way to support them."

Though both teams came up short, President Nygren emphasized the invaluable lessons sports teach. "Our teams showed incredible strength, and that's something we, as parents and guardians, can't always teach—but sports do," he explained.

President Nygren encouraged the athletes to see the experience as an opportunity for growth. "Every setback is simply a setup for a stronger comeback," he said. "Let this drive you even harder to push forward and give your best next time."

The strong playoff run by both teams was a proud moment for the Navajo Nation. "To all the teams continuing their journey, and to every student-athlete who played with heart and determination—well done. You've made us proud, and we're excited to see where your hard work takes you next!"

**Through this experience, our students have learned humility, discipline, and perseverance.**



LADY HORNETS & LADY WILDCATS AT THE 3A STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS





# NAVAJO PREP LADY EAGLES DEFEND STATE TITLE, BACK-TO-BACK NMAA 3A CHAMPIONS

Navajo Prep Lady Eagles triumphed in the 2025 NMAA 3A State Championship, securing a hard-earned 52-43 victory over the West Las Vegas Lady Dons on March 14.

The back-to-back win cemented their dominance in Class 3A basketball in New Mexico, while collecting their ninth state championship.

The atmosphere at The Pit was electric, with thousands of Navajo fans passionately supporting the Lady Eagles. Their victory highlights not only the team's skill and determination but also their ability to perform under pressure.

Over the past two years, the Lady Eagles have proven themselves as a force to be reckoned with in the state. President Buu Nygren congratulates the team on their outstanding achievement.

**I am incredibly proud of the Lady Eagles for defending their title and securing this well-deserved victory. This championship is a testament to their hard work, discipline, and dedication. Navajo Prep continues to set the standard for excellence, both academically and athletically, and this win is a shining example of that commitment.**

Head Coach Rainy Crisp and her team's leadership and resilience were key to the victory, and the Lady Eagles continue to make their mark as a powerhouse in New Mexico basketball in Class 3A.





## NO. 2 GALLUP LADY LADY BENGALS CLINCH CLASS 4A NEW MEXICO STATE TITLE AFTER IMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE OVER NO. 1 KIRTLAND CENTRAL

The No. 2 seed Gallup Lady Bengals triumphed over the No. 1 seed Kirtland Central Lady Broncos with a hard-fought 51-41 win. The atmosphere at The Pit in Albuquerque was LOUD, as both fan bases created a deafening environment that reflected their passion for the game.

With this win, the Gallup Lady Bengals capped off an extraordinary season, finishing with a remarkable 30-2 record and securing the coveted Blue Trophy.

President Nygren also took a moment to recognize Head Coach Todd McBroom for adding another state title to his legacy, as well as Rylie Whitehair, who will continue her basketball career at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley at the Division I level.

"Both Gallup and Kirtland Central have storied programs, and every matchup between them is a battle," President Nygren said. "This victory marks the fourth time these two teams have faced off this season, further demonstrating the strength of basketball in our region."

Acknowledging the rivalry between Gallup and Kirtland Central, President Nygren expressed his pride in both teams: "As President of the Navajo Nation, I can say it's never easy to root for just one team when both represent our people with such heart and determination."

**Both Gallup and Kirtland Central have storied programs and every matchup between them is a battle. The Navajo people are proud of both teams for their hard work, resilience, and sportsmanship.**





# INVESTING IN OUR CHAPTERS: ST. MICHAELS RENOVATION MOVING FORWARD



I am excited to share the progress on renovations to the St. Michaels Chapter House, a project that highlights the Nation's ongoing commitment to strengthening communities and improving services for its people.

I visited the construction site on March 5 to see the progress being made in the amount of nearly \$7.5 million, and it's evident how close the building is to completion.

Located in St. Michaels, the renovation and expansion of the 8,500-square-foot building is being led by Buffalo Design Architects from Albuquerque. Although the original completion date was set for March 2023, some delays have moved the projected finish date to July 2025.

The 20-acre site will feature a modern steel structure, including a striking steel canopy and beautiful salvaged sandstone on the exterior, blending contemporary design with traditional elements.

Inside, the space will be transformed to include an open office area, a larger kitchen, and a spacious meeting room with high ceilings—designed to foster collaboration and support local governance.



**ST. MICHAELS CHAPTER HOUSE RENOVATIONS  
ARE ONGOING INTO 2025**

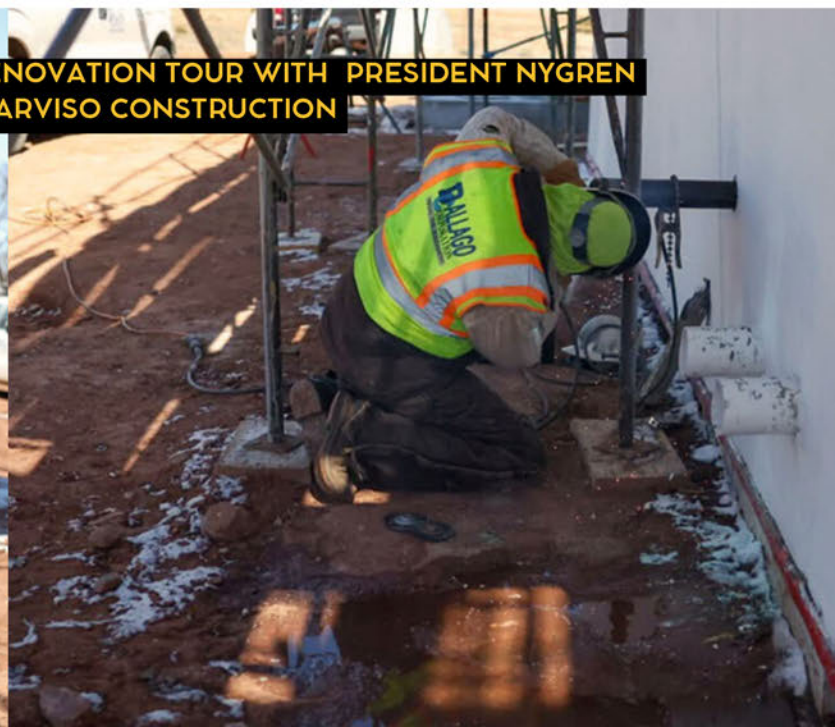
The project is funded through a combination of Sihasin, ARPA, and Navajo Nation resources.

Arviso Construction is diligently working to ensure the timely completion of this important project for the St. Michaels community.

As we move forward with this renovation, it's a testament to our commitment to creating the infrastructure our chapters need to better serve our people. I appreciate the leadership and dedication of our Division of Community Development's Capital Project Management Department, this long-awaited project is finally becoming a reality—for the benefit of our people today and for generations to come.



**RENOVATION TOUR WITH PRESIDENT NYGREN  
& ARVISO CONSTRUCTION**





## OAK SPRINGS CHAPTER BUILDS FOR THE FUTURE WITH \$3.4 MILLION RENOVATION



Oak Springs Chapter is setting a strong example of what's possible when we invest in our communities.

For years, the chapter leadership has pushed for a modern, functional space to serve their growing population. Now, with the help of Dyron Murphy Architects, we're making that vision a reality with the renovation of a 6,323 square-foot facility on 12 acres of land.

This project is about more than just a building. It's about creating a welcoming, accessible space where the people of Oak Springs can gather, plan, and grow. The design includes ADA-compliant pathways and entrances, improved parking areas, and proper drainage systems to protect the site during heavy rains.

Inside, the chapter house will feature an expanded kitchen, a new break area, and a flexible assembly space for meetings, ceremonies, and events. We're also adding overflow parking to handle larger crowds as the community continues to thrive.

With an investment of \$3.48 million, and Loren Miller of LAM Corp. leading construction, Oak Springs is creating a chapter house that meets the needs of today while preparing for the future.

A special thanks to the Navajo Division of Community Development, who oversees our chapter government systems, for their dedication and support in making this project possible. I am proud of the leadership and dedication this community has shown. This renovation is a promise kept—delivering the services, space, and respect our people deserve.

Together, we are building more than infrastructure. We are building a future for the Navajo people.

**This project is about more than just a building. It's about creating a welcoming, accessible space where the people of Oak Springs can gather, plan, and grow.**



OAK SPRINGS CHAPTER RENOVATION PROJECT IS ONGOING THROUGH 2025



PRESIDENT NYGREN IS JOINED BY COUNCIL DELEGATE BRENDA JESUS





**THE PRESIDENT VISITS CHILCHINBETO CHAPTER & MEETS WITH CHAPTER OFFICIALS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS**



## NYGREN ADMINISTRATION PRIORITIZES ROAD REPAIRS IN CHILCHINBETO CHAPTER

On March 20, my team and I traveled to Chilchimbeto Chapter to meet with local officials and community members to listen to their concerns directly. Engaging with the people we serve is crucial, and the Nygren Administration is committed to taking immediate action by visiting as many of the 110 chapters in 2025.

In Chilchimbeto, the major concern is the safety and accessibility of bus routes for our Navajo students.

Eugene Bedonie, manager for Chilchimbeto Chapter, said road conditions in this community raise safety concerns, especially on bus routes that many residents and family rely on to take their students to school.

Chapter President Robert Singer, Vice President Thomas Bradley, Secretary/Treasurer Virginia White and Navajo Nation Council Delegate Shaandiin Parrish were involved in these community discussions.

Some road concerns include urgent repairs because washes here are prone to water runoff that causes flooding hazards. This then results in school buses either stopping at further distances or taking longer, alternative routes to avoid severe dirt road conditions.

As it's difficult to fully grasp the severity of these concerns, by visiting our chapters I'm seeing the plight of our communities with solutions coming from Navajo Department of Transportation.

Shortly after, I had the opportunity to attend an official Chilchimbeto Chapter House meeting, where I introduced my staff who are actively involved in addressing these road concerns.

Please know that my administration works tirelessly to improve the lives of our people and address the issues that matter most to them. Our results speak volume.



**DINÉ NURSING STUDENTS PLEDGING THEIR ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES AS NEW INCOMING HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS**



## CELEBRATING NAVAJO NURSING STUDENTS AT THE 2025 UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO NURSING PLEDGE CEREMONY

Congratulations to the 140 nursing students, a handful who are Diné, for pledging to be future nurses at their Spring 2025 Nursing Pledge Ceremony! Held downtown at the Kiva Auditorium in Albuquerque, this rite of passage marked the beginning of the nursing school journey for these students at the University of New Mexico's (UNM) College of Nursing.

On March 13, we celebrated our Diné nursing students, who are entering their first year of their Bachelor of Science in Nursing. The pledge ceremony marked their official welcome to the nursing community, followed by the taking of an oath that acknowledges the responsibilities of a healthcare provider.

This Nursing Pledge Ceremony is designed for first year nursing students, serving as an introduction to their journey as nurses and providing them with the essential tools needed to practice healthcare. Pursuing higher education comes with obstacles, especially in the medical profession.

Our cultural teachings of caring for our Diné relatives is part of who we are, and I am confident that our Diné students including Autiaunna Aragon, Tamar Baloo, and Geraldine Tsosie, will apply these values to provide the best care to their patients.

It was an honor to witness our Diné nursing students on stage being coated their scrub jackets. The smile of pride and excitement shows they are capable of the next step as nurse providers of the Navajo Nation.

We need more Diné healthcare professionals to help our healthcare systems thrive and to continue services to the Navajo Nation and Diné people.

**Thank you to UNM College of Nursing for acknowledging our Diné students during their new life chapter, and to our families supporting their children as they study to become nurses.**



## SUPPORTING STUDENTS PURSUING A HIGHER EDUCATION

Leaving home in pursuit of higher education is full of opportunity, but it can also be overwhelming being the first in our families, our communities, and our Nation to step into these spaces. I encourage our youth to pursue higher education and to make their presence known in institutions that were never built for us, but now hold space because of us.

During our visit to New York University's Center for Collaborative Indigenous Research with Communities and Lands (CIRCL) and Columbia University's Indigihouse, we met incredible Indigenous students who are doing just that, carving out paths, building community, and showing the world that we belong in these spaces.

To our Indigenous students everywhere: you are doing amazing things. Keep pushing forward, keep holding your ground, and know that I support you, always.



## + NEW MEXICO STUDENT-ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT



**SYDNEY BENALLY**  
SANDIA HIGH SCHOOL



**RYLIE WHITEHAIR**  
GALLUP HIGH SCHOOL



**LAILAH MCGARY**  
NAVAJO PREPARATORY SCHOOL



**ALLYSON TSOSIE**  
KIRTLAND CENTRAL



**KAIYAH BENALLY**  
SANDIA HIGH SCHOOL



## CELEBRATING NAVAJO TALENT & LAW ENFORCEMENT

The highly anticipated third season of Dark Winds is here. This series, based on Tony Hillerman's iconic novels, continues to shine a spotlight on Navajo law enforcement and the strength of our people to the screen.

An incredible cast, including talented Navajo actors, Dark Winds brings our stories to life in a way that honors part of our history and language. Let's support our actors and celebrate the impact of this series, showing the world the power of Navajo storytelling and the bravery of those who protect our communities.



## MISS NAVAJO NATION STEM-SATION

Miss Navajo Nation Ranisha Begay and Navajo Transitional Energy Company hosted the annual STEM-sation at Rock Point Community School for students in grades K-12. This hands-on event introduced students to the exciting world of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, encouraging them to explore the possibilities that these fields offer.

STEM education is vital in preparing the next generation for careers that drive innovation, sustainability, and economic growth. By investing in STEM programs, we empower Navajo youth with the skills and knowledge needed to pursue high-demand careers, contribute to their communities, and lead advancements that benefit the Navajo Nation. This event was an important step in promoting curiosity for future success.



## + 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL WELCOME BABY CELEBRATION

Naaki Góne' Awéé' Baa Hózhó Bil Hwíil'aah

**++ Nihi'awéé' ++**  
**Baa Nihił Dahózhó dóó**  
**Baa Ahééh Daniidzin**

For all Navajo Babies born from April 2024 to April 2025



Register today at:  
[opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/welcome-baby](https://opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/welcome-baby)

**SATURDAY**  
**APRIL 19, 2025**  
**9 AM**



**THE NASH CENTER**  
**KAYENTA, AZ**

This Celebration offers families of Navajo babies valuable education and resources to help the babies they love grow into healthy, successful individuals.

This event will feature special guests, speakers, presentations, information booths, and resources to support baby's connection to the land and community.

In partnership with the Navajo Division for Children & Family Services and First Things First, I proudly invite all Navajo babies born between April 2024 and April 2025 to the 2nd Annual Welcome Baby Celebration.

This year's event will take place on Saturday, April 19, 2025, at 9:00 AM at The Nash Center in Kayenta, Arizona. As we build upon the success of last year's inaugural celebration, this annual tradition continues to honor our newest generation while ensuring families have access to essential education, resources, and support to nurture their child's health, development, and connection to our land and community.

Parents, caregivers and families will receive valuable support, educational resources, and inspiration to help them create a nurturing environment for their child. The event will feature special guest speakers, interactive presentations, and informational booths designed to provide guidance and assistance for parents, caregivers, and families.

The first 250 babies who complete registration will receive exclusive giveaway items at the event. Registration is available at:

[opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/welcome-baby](https://opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/welcome-baby)



OFFICE OF THE FIRST LADY, JASMINE BLACKWATER-NYGREN  
NAVAJO DIVISION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES  
FIRST THINGS FIRST





"YOUNG OPTIMISTS UNITED TOWARDS HÓZHÓ"



CHRISTOPHER WERITO (LEFT)  
AND ETHAN STEVENSON (RIGHT)

NORTHERN AGENCY SPELLING BEE CONTESTANTS



## BEE-ING BRILLIANT: TSAILE STUDENT WINS 2025 NAVAJO NATION SPELLING BEE, SETS SIGHT ON NATIONALS

### NAVAJO NATION SPELLING BEE

Congratulations to all of our young Navajo students who participated in the agency spelling bees. I would like to send a special congratulations to Christopher Werito, an 8th grader from Tsaile Public Schools in the Chinle Agency, who will represent the Navajo Nation at the prestigious National Scripps Spelling Bee at National Harbor, Maryland, on May 27-29.

Both Christopher and Ethan Stevenson, an 8th grader from Kirtland Middle School, who placed second, were the top finishers at the Navajo Nation Spelling Bee on March 20 in Crownpoint.

These young men are true reflections of the bright future that awaits our young people on the national level of competition.

### NORTHERN AGENCY SPELLING BEE

Northern Agency also held its spelling bee on March 6 in Shiprock, and featured 64 students, ranging from 4th to 8th grade who came from twelve schools - Judy Nelson Elementary School, Kirtland Elementary School, Kirtland Middle School, Nizhoni Elementary School, Tse'Bit'Ai' Middle School, Newcomb Elementary School, TiisNazbas Community School, Red Mesa Elementary School, Red Mesa Junior High School, Red Rock Day School, Atsa Biyaazh Elementary School, and Northwest Middle School.

First- and second-place winners in each grade category competed in the Navajo Nation Spelling Bee.

"The Spelling Bee builds students' confidence in communication, language and critical thinking skills," said Malinda Notah from ODY. "It also boosts their confidence and adds fun and provides an example of healthy competition among their peers."

**These young men are true reflections of the bright future that awaits our young people on the national level of competition.**

### Special Congratulations to the Northern Agency Winners:

- 4th Grade Champion - Marie Multine (Newcomb Elementary) with "Token."
- 5th Grade Champion - Skylar Begay (Red Rock Day School) with "Sword."
- 6th Grade Champion - Keira Oliver (Judy Nelson Elementary) with "Dawdle."
- 7th Grade Champion - Bennett Weber (Tse'Bit'Ai' Middle School) with "Backgammon."
- 8th Grade Champion - Ethan Stevenson (Kirtland Middle School) with "Unilaterally."

All students advanced to the Navajo Nation Spelling Bee.



THE 2025 RESERVATION ECONOMIC SUMMIT WITH NAVAJO ENTREPRENEURS ACROSS THE COUNTRY



FORMER NAVAJO UFC CHAMPION NICCO MONTANO



## EMPOWERING FUTURE ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY, 40 UNDER 40 RECOGNITION AT THE RESERVATION ECONOMIC SUMMIT

On March 12, I spoke on a panel discussion alongside fellow tribal leaders: Jarred-Michael Erickson, chairman of the Colville Business Council, Mark N. Fox, chairman of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nations, Stephen Lewis, governor of the Gila River Indian Community, and John Morseau, tribal councilman of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi at the 2025 Reservation Economic Summit (RES) in Las Vegas.

Introduced by Derrick Watchman, chairman of the Board of Directors for National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development, we shared our achievements and goals on how we plan to build a thriving economy for our communities.

As President, I spoke on our evolving Navajo economy, and some of the accomplishments we have achieved for the nation and our people. I proudly shared with hundreds of RES attendees that the Navajo Nation attracts over 2 million visitors and that we collected about \$140 million in our own tribal taxes.

On this panel, we also talked about how sovereignty is important to building our respective tribal economies and that we must adapt to the federal changes of this current administration that affect both the Navajo Nation and our fellow sister tribes. In doing so, this reminded us that we are still here.

Attending RES not only reflected my commitment to the Navajo people, but showed the strength of our tribal sovereignty in thinking for the future.

I would also like to congratulate Navajos who were honored at the 40 Under 40 celebration, including Navajo attorneys Colin Bradley and Candace French, and artist Adrian Standing-Elk Pinnecoose.

This event celebrated inspiring individuals who were recognized for their contributions and hard work as role models that will pave a bright future for the Navajo Nation.

**Sovereignty is important to building our respective tribal economies ...**

## HONORING TRADITION, INSPIRING THE FUTURE: THE RISE OF NAVAJO YOUTH AT THE 67TH ANNUAL HEARD INDIAN FAIR AND MARKET

For centuries, the Diné people have held a profound tradition of art, weaving together stories, culture, and history through the power of creative expression. Our art has long been shared, traded, and celebrated, standing as a testament to the strength and resilience of our community.

A new generation of Navajo artists are rising! They're carrying the torch of our ancestors and breathing new life into this enduring legacy. The Heard Indian Market offers these young artists an invaluable opportunity to both learn and share with neighboring tribal communities a market space for growth, collaboration, and cultural exchange.

Artists such as Avery Hubbell, Abbygail Etsitty, Karyn Woody, Taylor Begay, Desiree Yazzie, Miley Tsosie, and Sydney Velma White are among the many whose work reflects a deep connection to their heritage, while also embracing the unique perspectives of contemporary life.

Kee Tom III, Ariana Johnson, Sierra Frank, Tirzarina Verdugo, and others represent a bright future for Navajo art - one filled with pride, passion, and purpose.

The Heard Indian Market is not merely a space for art—it is a celebration of who we are as Native people, and a place where young artists like April Taylor, Xemira Oliver, Rober Lee III, Javena Stash, Maleah Butler, Shannon Paul, Jalen Taho, Amelise Barney, and Mary Helen Brown can proudly showcase their talents.

The Indian Fair and Market at the Heard Museum every beginning of March is a reminder of what our elders share culturally, and their wisdom now fosters our young people to carry their teachings forward. In doing so, they are enriching the world with their voices, their visions, and their expression.

**(Art) is a celebration of who we are as Native people.**

20



**OVER 20 DINÉ YOUTH PARTICIPATED IN 67TH ANNUAL HEARD INDIAN FAIR & MARKET**



**A YOUNG DINÉ ARTIST LIVE PAINTS ONE OF HIS MANY UNIQUE PIECES WHICH INCLUDES PAINTING OVER NEWSPAPERS**





## NEW MEXICO GOVERNOR MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM COMMENDED BY THE NAVAJO NATION FOR PROTECTING STUDENT TRADITIONAL REGALIA

It is with absolute joy that I thank Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham for signing Senate Bill 163, a bill that protects our Native American graduates.

When our Diné students receive their diplomas, they proudly wear their tsiyeels, beaded caps, and eagle plumes. With the passage of the tribal regalia bill by the New Mexico Legislature, they will no longer fear being asked to remove these symbols of identity.

This bill follows years of advocacy by Native Americans and aligns with the executive order I signed last spring, requiring school districts serving Navajo students to permit traditional regalia at graduations. Our students represent the resilience and strength of our ancestors. Graduation is a moment for them to stand proudly in cultural attire that reflects who they are and where they come from.

For too long, Native students were denied this right. The passage of SB163 is a milestone that affirms the freedom of all Native American students in New Mexico to celebrate their heritage without restriction.

Regalia is more than clothing; it carries the prayers, blessings, and protection of our Holy People. Each piece tells a story of resilience. Wearing regalia at graduation is not only personal but a powerful statement of cultural pride.

**As we celebrate the accomplishments of our Navajo and Indigenous graduates, we honor both their academic success and the heritage that shapes them. This new law ensures that Native students can express their identities without fear of humiliation. Their success is our collective success, and their pride will continue to shine brightly.**



**GENESIS WHITE BULL HAD A TRADITIONAL PLUME CUT FROM HER GRADUATION CAP & GIVEN A NEW CAP THAT WAS PLAIN BECAUSE THE SCHOOL HANDBOOK STATED CAPS MUST NOT BE ALTERED**



# NAVAJO NATION SECURES \$9.5 MILLION FOR RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITY IN PHOENIX

Located in downtown Phoenix, the Yideeskáqdi Hózhóǫ́jí Iná Center is set to provide culturally relevant substance use treatment specifically for members of the Navajo Nation. The center will expand its facilities to meet the needs of the community. A ribbon-cutting ceremony held on Thursday, March 27, marked the celebration of this achievement.

**This project was made possible through the collective efforts of the following:**

- Sherylene Yazzie, the Executive Director of the Navajo Department of Health
- Thomas Cody, Executive Director of the Navajo Division for Children & Family Services
- Michael Anderson, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Division for Public Safety
- Speaker Crystalyne Curley and Navajo Nation Council Delegates Germaine Simonson, Curtis Yanito, George Tolth, and Vince James.
- Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne
- Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego

The Yideeskáqdi Hózhóǫ́jí Iná Center represents a holistic approach to healing, blending cultural practices such as smudging ceremonies and talking circles with trauma-informed care. The center addresses intergenerational trauma through programs developed by White Bison, combined with evidence-based practices.

The center will offer residential treatment for up to 92 adults and their families, with childcare services for children under five. For further access, shuttle services will be available.

The facility spans 37,000 square feet and was acquired for \$9.5 million. It includes patient rooms and is located near major medical centers, enhancing its ability to provide comprehensive care.

The center is expected to open by mid-summer 2025. This initiative aligns with the vision for the Navajo Nation, addressing critical social issues while creating more than 60 new jobs.

The Yideeskáqdi Hózhóǫ́jí Iná Center is more than just a treatment facility—it is a testament to the strength of our community and our ability to create solutions rooted in our culture, while also embracing the advancements of modern science.

**This center is a testament to the strength of our community and our ability to create solutions rooted in our culture, while also embracing the advancements of modern science.**





## SAME LAKE, NEW FACILITIES: WHEATFIELDS LAKE RECREATION AREA TO GET NEW BUILDING ADDITIONS

With the Ch'óshgai (Chuska Mountains) wrapped around and a lake that has been a part of countless family favorite stories, Wheatfields Lake is ready to be shown some love.

Wheatfields Lake, one of the Navajo Nation's most popular outdoor destinations, is set for major improvements thanks to the \$530,300 investment from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The funding will support the creation of two new day-use areas, two campgrounds, and significant road upgrades aimed at improving access to the lake.

This initiative is part of a broader effort to enhance the outdoor experience for visitors and future generations.

I recently signed a contract to begin the design phase of the project, marking an integral step in a long-term development plan for Wheatfields Lake.

Jeffrey Cole, Navajo Nation Fish and Wildlife Manager, highlighted that the roads in the area have not been properly engineered, with road work being the most costly aspect of the project. One of the recent upgrades included new restrooms, but the existing day-use areas are in need of urgent renovation.

"We're not expecting all the funding in one round, but we'll continue to make improvements as funding becomes available," Cole said.

Wheatfields Lake and the Chuska Mountains are part of our tradition. We need to protect them not just because they're given to us by those before us, but also for the future generations so they can create their own memories.

**With these critical upgrades, Wheatfields Lake is set to remain a key recreational hub for the Navajo Nation, providing enhanced amenities for visitors in the years to come.**



## 50-MILE MAKEOVER NEAR MANY FARMS & ROUGH ROCK

Navajo Routes 64 and 12 near Many Farms, Ariz. will receive a makeover ensuring that our people are safe on the highways.

President Buu Nygren signed a \$999,580 service contract in CARES Act funding to re-stripe 50 miles of Navajo roads, a priority of the Nygren Administration. Navajo Department of Transportation selected CB Emulsion LLC to carry out the striping.

Faint lines lead to dangerous driving conditions for our people. This project ensures that our people remain safe while driving.

Our elders deserve proper roadways, and our Navajo drivers deserve safe and reliable roads. Thanks to NDOT and the roadwork crew for their great work keeping our travelers safe.

**WHEATFIELDS LAKE SITS AT THE BASE OF THE CH'ÓSHAGI MOUNTAINS**



**IN APRIL 2024, THE TSÍDÍ' TÓ'ÍI COMMUNITY CELEBRATED A NEW PAVED ROAD**





## HOGBACK CHAPTER'S NEW PUMP SYSTEM TO PROTECT ENDANGERED FISH

The Hogback irrigation system has long supported Navajo farmers, but it has also posed a threat to endangered fish in the San Juan River.

To help our aquatic relatives, I signed a \$648,735 service contract last month with Aquatic Consultants Inc., to replace an irrigation sluice gate with a new pump system. The funding for this contract comes from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and will balance agricultural needs with wildlife protection.

While we often think about economics as the main driver to life, we sometimes forget the wellbeing of our land and animals, including endangered fish. This contract helps our communities thrive but also our wildlife such as the fish that live in the San Juan River.

The irrigation system in Hogback Chapter diverts water from the San Juan River to farmers, but its sluice gate and pumps have been a hazard to endangered fish, according to Jeffrey Cole, manager for the Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife (NNDFW).

As the old pumps start, fish are sucked into the canal, often killing or trapping them, Cole said. The new system, funded through this BIA contract, will feature a large screen gate designed to keep fish out and a new pumping system to prevent harm.

The sluice gate will be replaced in the coming weeks, while the pump system will be updated in the winter.

With the new system, NNDFW will continue its successful fish tagging program. Each year, NNDFW raises and tags 6,000 fish before releasing them into the river at their fish hatchery. The antennas along the San Juan River track these fish, and the NNDFW continues to lead in its efforts, proving the fish are thriving in the wild.

"The farmers should expect better water delivery," Cole said. "And the tribe receives recognition for projects like this because they are doing things to mitigate endangered species while keeping the farms going."

**While we often think about economics as the main driver to life, we sometimes forget the wellbeing of our land and animals, including endangered fish.**



**THE SAN JUAN RIVER IS HOME TO NUMEROUS ENDANGERED FISH SPECIES THAT END UP BEING KILLED DUE TO WATER INFRASTRUCTURE**





## EMPOWERING NAVAJO FAMILIES ACROSS NEW MEXICO: ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

At the 20th Annual Family Leadership Conference, I delivered a keynote address on preserving our Navajo families through teachings of kinship and advocacy, particularly for children with disabilities and complex medical needs.

Every child, regardless of their abilities, deserves the chance to reach their full potential. It's crucial that we provide these children with the tools and resources necessary to thrive.

I was honored to meet Native families from Alamo Navajo and Laguna, who reinforced the need to create supportive spaces for our children. That's why I signed a contract enabling Diné families to receive training and direct services—an opportunity to enhance our knowledge and support for children at this annual conference.

The conference is a vital space for learning, connection, and shared experiences. PRO (Parents Reaching Out) focuses on empowering families with the knowledge and resources they need to advocate for their children with disabilities and complex medical needs. According to PRO, there are 13 recognized disabilities and medical needs.

I want our children and families to know that I see you and hear your needs. With every piece of legislation or executive order I sign, you are at the forefront of my mind. Let us continue celebrating our Native youth and work towards a future that is inclusive, diverse, and filled with possibilities for all.

Thank you to our organizers—PRO, the Navajo Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department, the New Mexico Public Education Department, the Health Care Authority, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Mexico, among others.

### TO LEARN MORE OR NEED ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CONTACT THE FOLLOWING:

#### Parents Reaching Out

(505) 247-0192

(800) 524-5176

#### Navajo Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services

- Window Rock Agency: 928-871-6338 (Note: Ask to be Transferred to Window Rock OSERS Agency)
- Crownpoint Agency: 505-786-2259
- Gallup Agency: 505-722-9289
- Chinle Agency: 928-674-2132
- Kayenta Agency: 928-697-5685

**Every child, regardless of  
their abilities, deserves the  
chance to reach their full  
potential.**



**THE NAVAJO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE TAKE AERIAL SURVEYS OF WILDLIFE FOR RESEARCH AND HUNTING PERMIT APPLICATIONS**



## FLYING HIGH FOR WILDLIFE: HELICOPTER SURVEY TO DETERMINE HUNTING PERMITS ON THE NAVAJO NATION

The Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is partnering with Southwest Heliservices, LLC again for an aerial survey that will track deer and elk populations across the Navajo Nation.

I signed a \$57,310 service contract that will provide vital data to guide hunting permit decisions for the 2025 season.

By signing this contract, we are taking a critical step to maintain sustainable herd management of our deer and elk populations. Protecting our lands, wildlife, and cultural practices is what we hold deeply as Diné people.

The aerial surveys, which have since become a key part of the Nation's hunting plan to help monitor wildlife health. It also informs how many hunting permits will be issued during the hunting season.

Jeffrey Cole, manager for the Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife, said that the data collected from the aerial surveys allow for decisions to maintain a balanced ecosystem. Part of what helps Cole decide on hunting permits comes down to simple ratios among the bulls, cows, does, calves and fawns.

"If the population is healthy, we might increase permits," he said. "If it's not, we might decrease permits."

For 2024, Cole said that the wildlife population was stable. There was a positive increase in fawns — a hopeful sign after years of drought, he said.

The surveys mark the beginning of a process that could track over 35,000 deer and elk across the Navajo Nation. 2025 could be no different as another big year for hunters who draw for hunting permits.

**Protecting our lands, wildlife, and cultural practices is what we hold deeply as Diné people.**





EVERY YEAR, THE AMÁ DÓO ALCHÍNÍ BÍGHAN INC. HOSTS A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONFERENCE WHERE THEY SHARE THE RESOURCES THEY HAVE AVAILABLE TO THOSE IN NEED



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTERS ON THE NAVAJO NATION TO RECEIVE \$1.27 MILLION IN CONTRACT EXTENSIONS

According to a 2016 report by the Navajo Epidemiology Center, domestic violence and physical abuse was the second leading cause of injuries on the Navajo Nation.

In response to this public health crisis, I signed contracts to ensure vital shelter services for families impacted by domestic violence. The contracts will keep shelters open through 2025.

These contracts are not new to us. I signed similar agreements earlier in 2024 so that essential services like shelters remain open without interruption. There was no hesitation to extend these contracts. Keeping shelters open are critical for the safety and well-being of our people.

- \$664,000 contract with Victim Witness Services in Coconino County.
- \$356,000 agreement with Roberta's Place in Grants, N.M., to extend services to domestic violence victims, including emergency shelter and immediate support.
- \$250,000 agreement with Tohdenasshai Committee Against Family Abuse in Kayenta, Ariz.

These contracts are funded by the Family Violence Prevention Services Act American Rescue Plan and will remain in effect until August 2025.

Yolanda Azua, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Liaison within the Office of the President, said seven major shelters in and around the Navajo Nation serve the Navajo people.

"All seven shelters are at full capacity," said Azua, noting that most DV cases go unreported.

**We use 'Preserving Navajo Families' as our foundation to promote community healing. The domestic violence funds we get are used to assist families in need of services from domestic violence.**

~ DCFS DIRECTOR THOMAS CODY

FOR ANYONE IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE DUE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PLEASE REACH OUT TO THE FOLLOWING:

### Victim Witness Services

- Navajo Nation Crisis Line (833) 842-8460
- Flagstaff - (928) 856-7676

### Roberta's Place, Grants, New Mexico:

(505) 287-7724  
(800) 799-SAFE

### Tohdenasshai Committee Against Family Abuse:

(928) 697-3635



## EMPOWERING OUR NAVAJO STUDENTS THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

On March 26, I had the honor of speaking to about 40 of our exemplary Diné students at the University of Arizona.

We started with a blessing by Dr. Alberta Arviso, a clinical psychologist who serves as the senior engagement officer in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) at College of Veterinary Medicine.

As Navajo Nation President, I value higher education, and I acknowledged the strength and determination that each of our Diné students must execute to excel in their studies while being far from home.

Everyone's journey is different and after sharing my experiences, I reassured our students that they too will obtain their degrees no matter their background or struggles.

As Diné people, we must remember to reflect on our cultural teachings and values to help us continue to move forward in our lives. Let's continue to support our Diné students by encouraging them and remind them how proud we are as families, clans and as a nation.

During the questionnaire session, a few students acknowledged my efforts of visiting with them and asked how I can help them elevate their voices while providing sound advice on their academic journeys.

On that note, I am working diligently with the federal government on addressing the DEI concerns that impact our Diné students' future by making sure their voices are heard and standing in our power.

Ahéhee' to the Office of Native American Advance & Tribal Engagement for inviting me to speak with our future leaders.

Our students are creating a bright future for themselves as citizens of the Navajo Nation, and I am confident that they will be successful role models within their communities and at U of A. Let's 'Bear Down!'

**I acknowledged the strength and determination that each of our Diné students must execute to excel in their studies while being far from home.**



**PRESIDENT NYGREN CONNECTS WITH UA STUDENTS IN TUCSON TO ADDRESS DEI CONCERNS THAT IMPACT NATIVE STUDENTS**





## BUILDING SOLUTIONS TOGETHER: PRESIDENT NYGREN VISITS DENNEHOTSO CHAPTER

In an effort to bring the Navajo government to the people, I visited the Dennehotso Chapter House on March 20. I brought with me various Navajo Nation Divisions and Departments, who addressed questions from the community.

In Dennehotso, like many rural chapters, infrastructure remains a major concern. Roads, housing, and utilities are critical needs. Even so, I am encouraged by the chapter's housing committee. It selected the families who received the eight homes, officially delivered under the Nygren Administration's "1,000 Home Initiative."

Through ARPA funds, the Navajo Division of Community Development's (DCD) Community Housing and Infrastructure Department (CHID) and the chapter's housing committee, we are changing lives.

Community members also raised concerns about utility line clearances, septic tank maintenance, lagoon projects, and the need for stronger enforcement on environmental and land use issues. Improved customer service from employees and providers was also highlighted.

Dennehotso envisions a veteran's park, youth programs, and increased funding for health, transportation, and housing. With leaders like Council Delegate Shaandiin Parrish, I believe these goals are achievable through collaboration.

Additionally, concerns about uranium contamination, land rights, and natural gas projects were raised, emphasizing the need for stronger community representation in negotiations.

I thank Dennehotso Chapter, its leadership including Vice President Kevin Johnson and Council Delegate Parrish for welcoming me into their community. I recognize the need for major repairs and investments in infrastructure.

By making these in-person visits in our communities, I reaffirm my administration's commitment to addressing these challenges with solutions.

**With leaders like Council Delegate Shaandiin Parrish, I believe these goals are achievable through collaboration.**



THE NYGREN ADMINISTRATION PLANS TO VISIT AS MANY OF THE 110 CHAPTERS TO HEAR DIRECTLY FROM NAVAJO VOTERS ABOUT THEIR CONCERNS AND PROVIDE THEM WITH SOLUTIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL





# CHICHILTAH COMMUNITY BREAKS GROUND ON VANDERWAGON WATER WELL TO BRING WATER TO HUNDREDS OF FAMILIES

On March 26, my team and I traveled to Chichiltah to break ground on Phase 2 of the three-phase Vanderwagon Water Systems Project, where the community will receive their water from seven recently drilled wells.

When completed, it will bring safe and sustainable water for up to 137 families who are currently hauling water.

Water holds a deep cultural and spiritual significance for our Navajo people and the land. It is not only essential for our survival, but it also represents life in our traditions and ceremonies.

As Navajo Nation President, I want to ensure the completion of projects like this. They will allow our communities to receive running water for many Navajo homes.

The total cost for all three phases of the project is approximately \$12 million. The first phase was drilling the seven initial wells. We broke ground on Phase 2 in front of well No. 6. Phase 2 is connecting the seven wells to a tank that is being constructed. The tank will hold 225,000 gallons. Phase 2 will be completed by the end of this year. Phase 3 has been funded and is scheduled to start construction next year in 2026 and is expected to be completed in 2027. The 137 families will be served in Phase 3.

This project would not have been possible without the support of community members, as well as the collaboration of the Department of Water Resources, the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, Dooley Construction Solutions and Souder Miller Associates.

Remarks were made at the groundbreaking event by the Chapter's Community Service Coordinator Roselyn John. A blessing was also provided giving gratitude for our "tó" (water) by Sunny Dooley, Hózhóójí Hane' Teller, Shaylyn Shenoa, Shyrán Nelson and Zaiden Begay. Also in attendance was Seth Damon, New Mexico Deputy Secretary of Indian Affairs.

**When completed, it will bring safe and sustainable water for up to 137 families.**



GRATITUDE BLESSING FOR "TÓ" (WATER)



MAKING HISTORY BY BREAKING GROUND





## NATAANI NEZ RESTAURANT OPENS NEW DOORS IN SHIPROCK

One of my favorite dishes to eat at the Nataani Nez Restaurant in Shiprock is the beef ribs made by Simon Cai. And there was no better time to enjoy them again than at the March 26 ribbon-cutting and grand opening of the Nataani Nez Restaurant at its new location off Highway 491.

Mr. Cai and his family have been dedicated business owners in Shiprock since 2012, contributing to our Navajo economy as private entrepreneurs. In a remarkable effort, Mr. Cai transformed a vacant auto parts store and former dance hall into a beautiful establishment with a \$600,000 investment. With its doors officially open, the restaurant now employs 20 Navajo employees and two managers.

The opening of Nataani Nez Restaurant at its new location is a key achievement aligned with the Nygren Administration's and the Navajo Department of Economic Development's (DED) efforts to keep approximately \$880 million in Navajo dollars circulating within our Nation.

This success story was made possible through the collaborative efforts of several partners, including the Shiprock Chapter, the Shiprock Regional Business Development Office (RBDO), and Navajo DED.

Their guidance and support helped Mr. Cai bring his vision to life. Additionally, we are further investing in the business by supporting a \$75,000 gas line project and expanding the parking lot to accommodate more customers.

Nataani Nez Restaurant is now open daily from 6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Menu items include lamb stew, Navajo tacos, roast beef sandwiches and more. Congratulations to the Shiprock community on gaining another fantastic dining option.

**It's staggering that such a large amount of our hard-earned money leaves our homelands. Supporting small businesses like Nataani Nez Restaurant is an essential step toward strengthening the regional economy of the Northern Navajo Agency.**





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(928) 871-7000

