

AUGUST 2025

FREE

VOLUME 1

ISSUE 7

# NYGREN NEWS

## HOOP'N WITH NY KNICKS' BEAUCHAMP



## FAIR SEASON KICKS OFF ON NAVAJO



## SWEETWATER CELEBRATES COMPLETION OF ROAD PROJECT



## REZ DURO: A RIDE & RUN FOR A HEALTHIER AND HAPPIER LIFE

STAY IN THE KNOW WITH PRESIDENT DR. BUU NYGREN





**CHANGE-MAKER HIGHLIGHT**

# ROCK POINT COWBOY CHASES RODEO DREAMS & EDUCATION

**WINDOW ROCK** — Ral'Shaun Descheny left home with a saddle, a dream, and the courage to ride 14 hours away from Rock Point, Arizona, to Lamar, Colorado. He was chasing something bigger than himself, a future in both rodeo and education.

After earning his associate's degree in Equine Business Management from Lamar Community College, Descheny transferred to Colorado State University in Fort Collins to pursue a bachelor's degree in Equine Science, where he also earned a spot on the CSU Rodeo Team as a team roper, the only Native American rider on the roster.

Descheny is Bit'ahnii, born for Áshjijí, and his roots trace back to the "Circle D Ranch," founded by his great-grandfather in 1963 with just two bulls and three cows. That legacy of grit and perseverance continues to shape his path, both in the arena and in the classroom. Balancing rodeo and academics is no easy feat. Descheny spends most of his days working and practicing with his horses. When he's not roping or riding, he's hitting the books, a commitment to education that matches his commitment to his sport.

"There are no Natives on the team, I am the only one," said Descheny. "But it would be a good goal to get more, they would be able to get their school paid for and compete at a collegiate level."



As Rock Point High School's speaker, Descheny reflected on the journey and encouraged others to follow their own paths, no matter how far from home they may lead.

"If your dreams don't scare you, they're not big enough," said Descheny, adding that he hopes to inspire others to chase their dreams, in the classroom, in the arena, and beyond.

## WHAT IS NYGREN NEWS?

The President proudly distributes "Nygren News" across the Navajo Nation monthly. This **FREE** newsletter is developed and designed to inform the Navajo people about projects the Nygren Administration is working on - to serve and assist the Navajo people.

**The August 2025 issue highlights several stories:**

- A tour of the aftermath of the Oak Ridge Fire that burned 11,000 acres
- President Nygren addresses the State of the Navajo Nation at the NN Council summer session
- Upcoming 2025 fairs and parades
- Celebration of the historic RECA amendments
- Groundbreakings and ribbon cuttings for road projects, and businesses across Navajo
- President Nygren meets with veterans from all five agencies



The newsletter includes a special section by First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren.



The President's media team, consisting of award-winning journalists and editors, ensures informative coverage. Nygren News complements other communication platforms like social media, radio and press releases. Thank you for picking up your free copy of Nygren News at your local gas station, senior center, chapter house, laundromat, or other public gathering space.





## 'THE COFFEE SHIP' CELEBRATES GRAND OPENING IN SHIPROCK

SHIPROCK — A warm cup of coffee is becoming much more than a daily ritual on the reservation—especially in Shiprock, where it now stands as a symbol of Navajo entrepreneurship, family-driven innovation, and community-centered growth.

On July 30, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren joined local leaders and community members to celebrate the official business site lease signing for “The Coffee Ship” a new café and retail venture nestled in east Shiprock. The business operates as a tenant within the Shiprock Windows & Glass complex, a family-owned space developed by Matthew White. The café itself is led by his wife and entrepreneur, Laurel White, whose vision has transformed the spot into a thriving community hub.

“This coffee shop is exactly the kind of homegrown initiative we need to see more of across the Nation,” said President Nygren. “This is proof that when we invest in ourselves, we create real jobs, real spaces, and real momentum for our people.”

The lease, approved in April 2025, grants the Whites long-term use of 1.143 acres of trust land near the former Foutz Trading Company site. What began as a small business that opened in October 2024 has now blossomed into a popular gathering place serving more than 100 customers a day. From locally roasted coffee to blue corn pancakes, Navajo cake, and cinnamon rolls, the café offers both comfort and culture with every order.



## PRESIDENT NYGREN TURNING A PAGE, REINSTATES VICE PRESIDENT MONTOYA TASKS

WINDOW ROCK - On July 22, Navajo Nation President Dr. Buu Nygren and Vice President Richelle Montoya met under good intentions to discuss a reconciliation, **a step toward healing and unifying the Navajo Nation.**

The President and Vice President reminded each other of why they committed to run for the two highest offices on the Navajo Nation, and the dedication they share to serving our people.

They also discussed a few priorities, including health, education, Missing Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR), and animal control, of which the Vice President will spearhead. The President has also asked the Vice-President to step in to attend health-related meetings on his behalf, including those in Washington, D.C.

“I, as the Vice President of the Navajo Nation, take this opportunity to continue to help my Navajo people,” Vice

President Montoya said. “The priorities the Nygren/Montoya team campaigned on are still the priorities of the Navajo Nation Vice President, and I will continue to keep the people first.”

The President has authorized the replacement of the vehicle currently used by the Vice President with a new tribal vehicle. In addition, the Vice President will receive additional staff and the rehire of a staff member to assist the Vice President. “We acknowledged that we will not always agree with each other,” said President Nygren. “Our reconciliation is greater than our personal feelings. It is about the needs of the people and ensuring we continue to focus on the projects that matter to our people.”

**“We have agreed that this reconciliation will take time. We are confident that we will have a successful reconciliation,” President Nygren added. “We thank all of our supporters who have sent us encouraging messages.”**







President Nygren visited ZenniHome workers at the LeChee, AZ plant in March 2024.



## PRESIDENT NYGREN'S STATEMENT ON IDSA, ZENNIHOME

*I issued the following statement on July 22, 2025 regarding the closure of ZenniHome's factory in LeChee, in which over 200 skilled Navajo workers were laid off.*

After spending 7 hours delivering my State of the Nation address and answering questions before the Navajo Nation Council, the session devolved into a political circus — driven by jini, personal attacks, and grandstanding. When I took office, I launched the 1,000 Home Initiative because thousands of Navajo families live in homes that are overcrowded, unsafe, or lack basic utilities.

To help address this crisis, the Nation entered into a contract with Indigenous Design Studio + Architects (IDSA), a Navajo-owned firm. My administration followed all tribal laws and policies, including the 164 review process, which includes the Controller's Office, the Department of Justice, and my legal counsel.

All contracts were vetted and approved in accordance with all applicable laws. Meanwhile, the Council has initiated multiple investigations against the Executive branch — including:

- A legislative investigatory hearing through Legislation No. 0174-25.
- A forensic audit that was requested by Council which directs the Auditor General to complete the audit
- A special prosecutor based on Navajo Nation Council's Press Release dated July 13, 2025.
- A ethics investigation

Despite these ongoing processes, several delegates tried to launch a surprise investigation during summer session Council — based on jini and rumor — risking the Nation's legal position and publicly disrespecting Executive Branch staff. Their questioning was inappropriate and abusive, especially toward female professionals who were doing their jobs.



### "WHERE IS THE \$24 MILLION?"



\$24 million has **NOT** gone missing. The funds have never gone missing as stated by the public and certain delegates.

There are two different pots of money involving ZenniHome. First, in March 2024, ZenniHome was awarded a \$24M grant to expand its manufacturing facility in Page. But because other communities in the Nation objected to this use of these funds, that money was never sent to ZenniHome and the grant was terminated. That \$24M was reallocated to the Navajo Nation's funds. It is, and has always been, safely in the Navajo Nation's accounts. Second, as part of a larger contract awarded to seven different housing vendors, IDSA was hired to build 160 homes for the Nation. Per the contract, IDSA was paid half

up front - approximately \$24.9M. IDSA subcontracted with ZenniHome to build those homes. Among many factors including comments from numerous council delegates, the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development made the decision that it was in the best interest of the Navajo people to cut that order in half - from 160 homes to 80 homes. Based on the contract's payment schedule, Navajo Nation paid 50% at the start, my administration expects IDSA and ZenniHome to deliver the 80 homes. In short, there is no "missing" \$24M, and there never was.



**\$24 million has NOT gone missing.**





## SENATOR HAWLEY, PRESIDENT NYGREN CELEBRATE HISTORIC EXPANSION OF RECA



President Nygren speaks at RECA press conference



HAZELWOOD, Mo. — On July 8th, Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) held a press conference celebrating the recent passage of the largest Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) amendments ever. During this event, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and Diné advocates spoke about the program and its impact on Diné Bikéyah.

Senator Hawley partnered with the Navajo Nation to ensure important amendment were made to RECA. This includes the longstanding priorities to provide coverage for Post-71 miners, increase compensation for recipients, provide coverage for downwinders across Northern Arizona and New Mexico, and the inclusion of new diseases now known to be linked to radiation exposure, such as renal cancer and chronic kidney disease.

President Nygren thanked the numerous advocates and congressional partners that made expansion of RECA a reality. They have worked tirelessly over the many decades. President Nygren honored the many impacted advocates by reminding them that “through this effort, you are not forgotten.”

President Nygren discussed how the nuclear industry has significantly impacted the Navajo Nation. About 4,000 Navajo workers used to work in over 1,000 uranium mines on the reservation. Many of these mines still haven't been cleaned up, with over 500 mines needing to be cleaned up. He also mentioned the 1979 Church Rock spill, which dumped more than 94 million gallons of radioactive waste into the Rio Puerco River. Despite these problems, President Nygren said that the Navajo people have been involved in uranium work and continue to be strong and present in their land.

“The Navajo people have always been there in terms of uranium development,” President Nygren said.

President Nygren shared the devoted duty of the Navajo People. “The Navajo uranium mine workers who fought and worked out there did not ask any questions. They just said, ‘This is for our country. This is for the greater good. I will be there for our nation and went into the mines.’”

Among other advocates who spoke on the importance of the bill was Maggie Billman, a Navajo from Sawmill Chapter. Billman spoke through tears about what this moment meant to her and her family. Many of her family members—including her father, Howard Billman, Jr., a Navajo Code Talker who died of stomach cancer—have suffered from radiation exposure because of the fallout from atmospheric nuclear tests in Nevada and New Mexico.

**Need Help Filing a RECA Claim or Have Questions on Your RECA Claim?**

**Call: 505.368.1260 / 1261 or 505.368.1266**

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P.O. Box 1890  
2644 Yucca Street  
Shiprock, NM 87420



# PRESIDENT NYGREN TOURS AFTERMATH OF OAK RIDGE FIRE, BURNING 11,000 ACRES OF PONDEROSA, PINION AND OAK



SAINT MICHAELS, Ariz. — Standing outside the fire line of the 11,000-acre Oak Ridge Fire burn scar, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren saw the fire's devastating impacts — dead ponderosa, pinion, juniper and oak — on a tour of the fire zone on July 11.

One of the primary objectives of the tour, which included fire and emergency management officials, was to learn about the recovery process from the BIA's Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team.

"Learning of the potential flooding that will likely occur from the fire's impact is a concern," President Nygren said. "I saw the impacts of the fire and the results of the hard work that went into containing the fire by resources we mobilized from our Navajo Nation government with various partnerships, including the BIA, Southwest Complex Incident Management Team 2, and the more than 600 fire personnel assigned to the incident."

On the tour, President Nygren received briefing and learned how strong winds on top of the flat mountaintop come in many directions. He was also briefed on potential impacts of the burned area as the BAER Team continues to identify immediate threats to life, property, and natural resources.

Now that the fire is 100% contained as of July 16, the recovery process begins with the BAER Team's assessment. The BAER Report will advise the Navajo Nation of potential funding sources to assist with addressing risks like soil erosion, flooding, debris flows, and water quality.

Darryl Martinez, post-wildfire recovery coordinator for the BIA BEAR Team, said while the immediate threat from the Oak Ridge Fire has passed, impacted community members need to remain cautious to post-wildfire dangers like falling trees and flash flooding.



President Nygren assesses damage caused by Oak Ridge Fire

Sharen Sandoval, executive director for the Navajo Department of Emergency Management and Oak Ridge Fire Incident Commander, said that post-fire flooding remains a critical concern.

"One of the key things to take away from this disaster is that post-burn areas can still be a threat to the local community," Sandoval said. "It is up to our Navajo Nation Executive Branch Divisions, our Chapters, and leadership to implement the BAER Team's recommendations, and establish a contingency plan. We will continue to update our communities that may be impacted."

**Now that the fire is 100% contained as of July 16, the recovery process begins with the BAER Team's assessment.**





## SHEEP EVACUATED FROM OAK RIDGE FIRE GET SOME TENDER CARE



Volunteers shear Oak Ridge fire sheep evacuees

WINDOW ROCK - Sheep and other livestock took shelter at the Window Rock Fairgrounds following the emergency evacuations that took place caused by the Oak Ridge Fire.

The Navajo Department of Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Wildlife, Navajo park rangers, and Resource Enforcement were on site in Window Rock and actively assisted families who needed their livestock evacuated. The team evacuated and cared for 39 cattle, 236 sheep, 21 goats, 16 horses, 4 hogs, 27 poultry, 2 turkeys, and 7 dogs.

On Fourth of July morning, a group of Diné shepherds stepped up and gathered at the fairgrounds to offer a unique kind of aid — sheep shearing — graciously volunteering to lend a hand in a time of crisis to those in need.

This event was led by Nikyle Begay of Cornfields and Jay Begay, a seasoned shepherd and shearer. The effort was launched after hearing that many of the evacuated sheep had not been sheared. With thick wool and rising summer temperatures, unshorn animals face added stress and potential health issues. The team stepped in to address the need quickly and with compassion.

There were over 236 sheep on-site - many still unshorn. The effort was coordinated with the Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture, which confirmed there were over 236 sheep on-site - many still unshorn.

The shearing efforts not only brought comfort and health to the animals but also provided emotional relief to ranchers who had lost grazing access and been forced to relocate their herds.

"This is one way we can help the people who were displaced by the fire — and it's one less thing for them to worry about," said Nikyle Begay.

The shearing not only helps cool and relieve the animals but also prevents health risks such as overheating, matting, and parasite buildup. It also supports the larger tradition of Diné wool care and textile arts, which begins with respectful, timely shearing.

### We thank all the volunteers!



## OAK RIDGE FIRE ANIMAL EVACUEES RETURN HOME

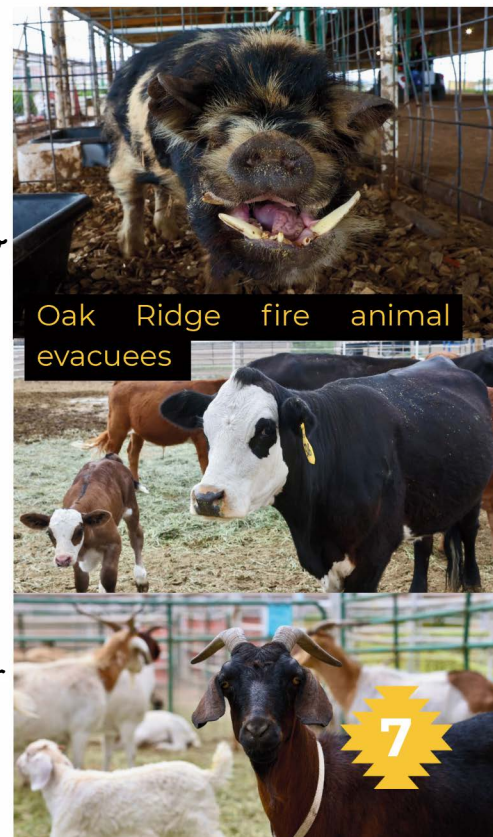
We thank the many Navajo Nation divisions and departments for their efforts to evacuate and care for animals during the Oak Ridge Fire. All animals began evacuation on June 28, when the fire broke out, and were housed at the Window Rock fairgrounds until July 11.

By the extraordinary efforts of volunteers and staff of the Navajo Nation Executive Branch Divisions, Offices, and Departments, over 300 evacuated animals - horses, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and other livestock — were reunited with their owners. There are many helpers to thank for keeping livestock healthy during this emergency from volunteers, first responders, animal control officers, ranch hands, and sheep shearers.

"We'd like to extend our gratitude to the amazing people who donated items to help feed and care for the animals during this tough time," President Nygren said.

### Thank you!

- Department of Agriculture
- Navajo Forestry
- Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Heritage & Historic Preservation
- Navajo Land Department
- Minerals Department
- Navajo Parks & Recreation
- Department of Resource Enforcement
- Department of Water Resources
- NAPI
- And others!



Oak Ridge fire animal evacuees





## 2ND ANNUAL 'WOOL BUY' EVENT HAS STRONG SHOWING

For the Navajo people, raising sheep is more than a tradition. It is a way of life, rooted in cultural identity, family, and resilience. The Navajo-Churro sheep, first introduced by the Spanish in the 1500s, have long provided wool for weaving, meat for ceremonies, and a foundation for trade and self-reliance.

Sheep herding is passed down through generations. Children learn early how to care for animals, respect the land, and understand the sacredness of weaving and shearing. Today, sheep camps remain living classrooms, places where families reconnect with the seasons, the land, and one another.

To honor and revitalize this heritage, the Navajo Nation recently hosted a three-day "Wool and Mohair Buy," organized by the Navajo Department of Agriculture and Diné College. President Buu Nygren reaffirmed his support for the sheep-herding community.

### The turnout was powerful:

On **Day 1** alone, **177 vehicles** arrived with over **44,000 pounds** of wool and mohair. On **Day 2**, **147 vehicles** brought in more than **37,000 pounds**, all purchased directly from Navajo producers.

"I got up at 3 a.m. and came out here by 4:30 from Fort Wingate," said Orville Arviso. "I brought the wool from my 55 sheep. Sheep have been in my family for generations. I just don't want the wool to go to waste. I want it to be used and this is the start of that."

Throughout the event, workshops were held on topics like wool grading, selective breeding, and herd health, equipping families with tools to strengthen their flocks and improve wool quality for future generations.

"Our sheep are more than livestock - they are part of our identity," said President Nygren. "This event is about honoring our past, strengthening our present, and building a future where our people can continue to live from the land and carry on our traditions with pride."



Navajo Nation Wool/Mohair Buy in Window Rock



**75% of Navajo Wool is used for Commercial Production across the U.S.**







## 47TH ANNUAL EASTERN NAVAJO PARADE KICKS OFF FAIR SEASON

CROWNPOINT, N.M. — The 47th Annual Eastern Navajo Fair opened the Navajo Nation fair season. With the theme, “Legends Inspire Youth,” families from across the Eastern Navajo Agency gathered, from infants in strollers to elders eating breakfast burritos and popcorn balls, lined the streets of Crownpoint.

The parade began at the Office of Diné Youth, crossed through downtown, and concluded at the Crownpoint Chapter House, honoring how the legends of the past inspire the future of today. Beyond celebration, the fair reflects a commitment to strengthening Eastern Navajo communities.

In Crownpoint, the Nygren-Montoya Administration has worked on creating new office spaces for five offices to better serve citizens, while work with Church Rock Chapter leaders advances plans for a new chapter house and warehouse. What’s more, Church Rock Chapter recently received a new heavy duty grader for public rental use.

In Ramah, the Ramah Navajo Chapter recently opened its newly renovated chapter, while Mariano Lake has a new multipurpose building under construction. Infrastructure improvements are also underway along Navajo Route 46 and Road 474 in Ojo Encino and Torreon.

“Our administration has staff throughout the Eastern Navajo Agency, connecting people with essential services—bringing government resources directly to their doorsteps,” said President Nygren.

**Beyond celebration, the fair reflects a commitment to strengthening Eastern Navajo communities.**



Eastern Navajo Fair Parade-goers



Families are excited for fair season, candy and T-shirts!

## NAVAJO NATION FAIR SEASON IS HERE!

The most colorful and exciting time of year is here - fair season!

From the stunning high desert landscapes of Tuba City to the vibrant streets of Crownpoint, communities across the Navajo Nation are now ready to welcome the 2025 fair season with parades, dances, rodeo, delicious food, and family-friendly fun. Parade watchers, local royalty, and livestock exhibitors and rodeo-goers get your outfits and regalia ready! Mark your calendars for these estimated fair weekends:

- Central Agency (Chinle, Ariz.): Aug. 11-17, 2025
- Ramah Navajo (Ramah, N.M.): Aug. 22-24, 2025
- Navajo Nation Fair (Window Rock, Ariz.): Sept. 2-7, 2025
- Utah Navajo Fair (Bluff, Utah): Sept. 4-14, 2025
- Alamo Indian Day (Alamo, N.M.): Oct. 11-12, 2025
- Western Navajo Fair (Tuba City, Ariz.): Oct. 16-19, 2025
- Northern Navajo Fair (Shiprock, N.M.): Oct. 2-5, 2025





# SWEETWATER CELEBRATES COMPLETION OF \$21.1 MILLION ROAD PROJECT

SWEETWATER, Ariz. — On July 10, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren celebrated a significant milestone with the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Navajo Route 35 (N35).

The new road features 6.4 miles of paved roadway, striped lines, and guardrails, transforming what was once a dirt road into a safer, more reliable route for residents of the Tólikan (Sweetwater) community. After ending its decades-long relationship with Skanska, one of the largest construction and development companies in the world, NECA proved what we all know - we can do it on our own.

The reconstruction of N35 was a major project aimed at enhancing road safety and driving conditions. President Nygren expressed pride in the milestone, stating, **"This is a milestone that serves as a path towards improved road safety and efficiency."** The project, which began in January 2024, cost approximately \$21.2 million. To commemorate this long-awaited project, a trail ride led by Little Dan Jr. was part of the celebration, culminating in the ribbon-cutting ceremony held at the Sweetwater Chapter House.

The Navajo Engineering & Construction Authority (NECA) served as the main contractor, supported by Dibble Construction Management and Western Technologies Inc. NECA completed key phases including subgrade preparation, culvert installation, base course, prime coat application, paving, guardrails, erosion control, striping, signage, and seeding along the mainline of N35.

Both the First Lady and Miss Navajo Nation, Ranisha Begay, shared their memories of when the road was just a dirt path, emphasizing the importance of this upgrade. The newly paved road will allow residents and school buses to travel safely without the previous worries of washouts or heavy rainfall, which often caused muddy and slick conditions.

**Additionally, access to the chapter house has now been improved with paved roads, facilitating easier and safer transportation for community members.** President Nygren reiterated his commitment to public safety through road improvements, emphasizing collaboration with partners to bring construction projects to fruition.

"We didn't do this alone; it took support from many different people. I just want to say thank you," said Daryl Bradley, Navajo Department of Transportation Principal Civil Engineer.

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***This is the first project undertaken by NECA staff and management. Thank you NECA!***



Ribbon cutting ceremony of N35 road in Sweetwater, AZ



Trail riders, chapter officials and community members with President Nygren





## U.S. DOT ASSISTANT SECRETARY JAMES CRAWFORD VISITS NAVAJO NATION AND TOURS ROADS ON NAVAJO



WINDOW ROCK — President Nygren met with U.S. Department of Transportation Assistant Secretary James Crawford to share insight on roads across the Navajo Nation on July 17. Some of these insights included completed road projects, Navajo Department of Transportation's (NDOT) efforts in improving management structures, access to information on road updates and managing funds that can go toward a faster construction process.

The Navajo Nation spans approximately 27,000 square miles across the southwestern United States, where it faces transportation challenges that limit access to essential services. President Nygren emphasized the importance of ensuring safer roads on Navajo to protect elders, especially because most of the residents that live on Navajo are elderly.

NDOT also provided Crawford a tour of Navajo roads that are mostly dirt roads and provided insight on road conditions during extreme weather. They also shared that road construction in remote areas is costly and can be difficult.

NDOT has been working with Federal Highways, who has helped tremendously in road projects and now NDOT analyses how to move forward with current and future road projects. This includes challenges with slow process of spending funds, the Tribal Transportation Improvement Program, Independent NEPA, and self-governance program.

President Nygren shared the road accomplishments that were completed this year, which included N35 in Sweetwater, AZ.

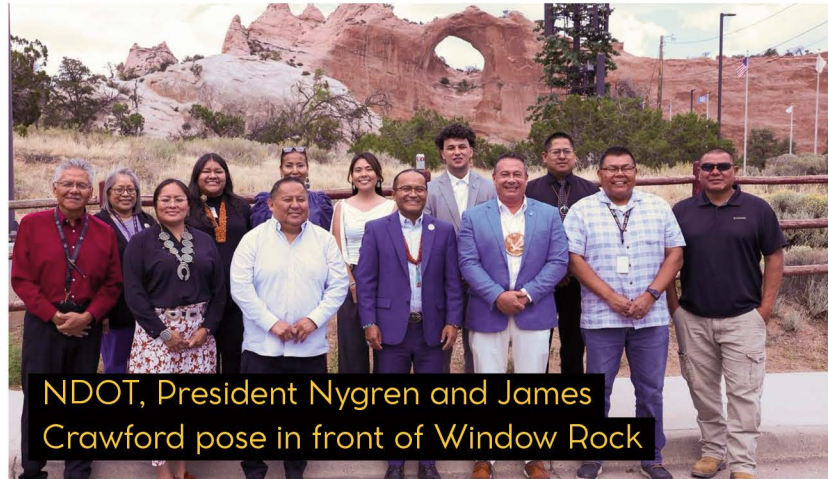
Crawford shared that he wants to ensure road safety for everyone and committed to working together with the Nation on future road projects.

"I look forward to being able to find ways where we can hopefully accomplish some positive things together," James Crawford said. "I promise you that I can be your voice while I'm in this position, I want to hopefully affect change."

He encouraged President Nygren to apply to the self-governance program and in doing so it may help open doors for a strong partnership in building and maintaining roads.

“

**"I promise you that I can be your voice while I'm in this position, I want to hopefully affect change."**



NDOT, President Nygren and James Crawford pose in front of Window Rock



NDOT and James Crawford meet with President Nygren to discuss roads



U.S. Department of Transportation Assistant Secretary James Crawford





Chief Manuelito scholars with President Nygren



## 137 STUDENTS AWARDED THE CHIEF MANUELITO SCHOLARSHIP, A CELEBRATION OF GRIT AND PERSEVERANCE

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz.— In a heartfelt celebration of resilience, culture, and academic excellence, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren joined families, educators, and leaders to honor the 137 recipients of the prestigious Chief Manuelito Scholarship during the 2025 award ceremony.

The students represented the five agencies across the Navajo Nation, urban communities who stood as living proof of cultural strength and educational achievement.

President Nygren opened his remarks by acknowledging the parents, grandparents, and guardians who made the academic journey possible for the high-achieving students.

“These students wouldn’t be where they are now without the love, support, and sacrifices of their families,” he said. President Nygren reflected personally on the words of Chief Manuelito, “My grandchildren, education is a ladder. Tell our people to take it.” He recalled hearing those words as a student, and these words later guided him through his journey to achieve higher education at Arizona State University and the University of Southern California.

“This is personal for me,” President Nygren said. “I grew up near the San Juan River. I carried my culture and language with me as I pursued my education. And I always knew I would return home to lead and to serve.”

The Chief Manuelito Scholarship Program, established in 1980, honors not just academic achievement, but a deep connection to Navajo culture, language, and identity. Students must demonstrate academic excellence as well as proficiency in Navajo language and culture, setting it apart from many other scholarships.

The ceremony concluded with words of gratitude for all those who continue to uphold the spirit of Chief Manuelito’s legacy, a legacy of sovereignty, education, and cultural pride.



Teachers & staff from Pinon with President Nygren

“

**The Chief Manuelito Scholarship Program, established in 1980, honors not just academic achievement, but a deep connection to Navajo culture, language, and identity.**







## PRESIDENT NYGREN, SPEAKER CURLEY, LAW AND ORDER CHAIR ISSUE JOINT LETTER RECOGNIZING SHIRLEY AS INTERIM CHIEF JUSTICE

WINDOW ROCK — Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, 25th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley and Law and Order Committee Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton signed a joint letter on July 3, 2025, recognizing Associate Justice Eleanor Shirley as the Interim Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation.

President Nygren received a letter from the Legislative Branch regarding former Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne, informing him that the Law and Order Committee (LOC) unanimously adopted a resolution to not recommend Jayne for permanent appointment to serve as the Chief Justice, in accordance with the committee's authority under Navajo Nation law.

After consideration, President Nygren did not appoint Chief Justice Jayne for the permanent Chief Justice position. Associate Justice Shirley assumes the role of Interim Chief Justice. The Nation's leaders thank former Chief Justice Jayne for her service and the time she spent as a Probationary Chief Justice for the Navajo Nation.

The Judicial Branch is accepting applications for an Associate Justice position of the Navajo Nation Supreme Court. With the Chief Justice position will soon be available for applications. We encourage all eligible and qualified individuals to apply.



Eleanor Shirley recognized as Interim Chief Justice



“

**Eleanor Shirley assumes Interim  
Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation.**

### TO APPLY:

Position: Chief Justice and Associate Justice of the Navajo Nation Supreme Court  
Call 928-871-7025 or 928-871-6899



## REACH A COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE IN YOUR AGENCY

The Nygren Administration has Community Representatives serving in each of the five Navajo Agencies. For assistance, please reach out to your respective representatives.

CALL US at (928) 871-7000

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# 45TH NARBONA PASS CLASSIC RACE FEATURES STRENGTH, SPIRIT AND COMMUNITY



Winners of their category at Narbona Pass Classic

On July 6, I had the honor of running my first Narbona Pass Classic 10K, and I can honestly say it was one of the most challenging experiences I've faced, both mentally and physically. This isn't a race you take on lightly, and I'm incredibly grateful for the time I've spent staying active every day. That preparation helped carry me up the mountain, one step at a time.

What touched me most was seeing people of all ages, our little ones and elders, out on the course, pushing through together. There's something powerful about witnessing the strength of our community moving as one, drawing on shared determination and the beauty of our sacred lands.

I'm especially proud of the First Lady, Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren, who placed third in her age category, her strength continues to inspire me. I also want to recognize our top finishers: Kameron Eustace, who took first in the 10K with a time of 38 minutes and 56 seconds, and Sage Livingston, who took first in the 5K with a time of 45 minutes and 47 seconds. Your hard work and endurance are truly commendable.

Congratulations to everyone who laced up and showed up for the 45th Annual Narbona Pass Classic. Whether you ran, walked, or cheered from the sidelines, your presence made it unforgettable. Together, we're not just building strength and muscle, we're building unity, tradition, and a healthier future for our people.

“**Together, we're not just building strength and muscle, we're building unity, tradition, and a healthier future for our people.**”



First Lady and President Nygren with a runner



Runners during and after Narbona Pass Classic







## SHIPROCK WASTEWATER PLANT EXPANSION SIGNALS GROWTH & PROGRESS

SHIPROCK — A major infrastructure upgrade is taking shape in Shiprock — a \$67 million ARPA-funded wastewater treatment plant is currently under construction. This will double capacity and support generations of growth tied to newly secured Navajo - New Mexico water settlements.

The new facility, designed to handle up to 2 million gallons of wastewater per day — an increase from the previous 1 million — aims to serve a growing population and increasing development made possible by expanded access to clean water.

"This is one big step towards accomplishing Navajo sovereignty," said Rayni F. Nelson, Associate DGM from NTUA. "The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority has a long range global plan to address the acquired Navajo water rights across all of Navajo to make use of the substantially expanded Navajo water availability."

On July 30, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren toured the construction site to witness the progress with construction crews and NTUA representatives. He reflected on the importance of investing in infrastructure that supports both the people and the land.

"This plant is more than concrete and steel. This is about protecting our water, our future, and our children," President Nygren said. "It represents my commitment to our communities which will no longer be left behind with decades-old infrastructure."

NTUA officials, which is leading the project, said the new facility includes upgraded infrastructure such as headworks, an influent pump station, extended aeration systems, a blower building, sludge dewatering, administration offices, and renovations to existing crew facilities. The old plant will be decommissioned and demolished once the new one is operational.

Built to last over 50 years, the plant features a scalable "treatment train" design, allowing it to grow with the community's needs down the line.

The project is part of NTUA's broader plan to address wastewater infrastructure across the Nation, with plants also underway in Kayenta and Chinle, and designs in progress for Tuba City, Ganado and Coalmine Canyon.

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**This is about protecting our water, our future, and our children.**



President Nygren with construction crew



President Nygren tours old and new wastewater treatment plant





# PRIORITIZING WELLNESS

This summer, I took part in a few inspiring events that reminded me how important it is to prioritize our health and well-being: the Asaayi Bike Race near Lake Asaayi, and the Narbona Pass Classic 10K in the Chuska Mountains and a few Just Move It events.

As a mother and someone who juggles work, family, and community responsibilities, I know how easy it is to neglect self-care. Participating in these races was a much-needed reset, a chance to breathe, reflect, and reconnect with my own wellness journey. Movement has become a powerful way for me to manage stress and stay grounded, both mentally and physically.

It was so motivating to see so many strong-minded athletes including fellow moms and caretakers out on the courses. I'm proud to share that I finished at the top of my age group in the Asaayi Bike Race and placed 3rd in my category in the Narbona Pass Classic, two personal milestones I'll never forget.

Thank you to Navajo YES and the many volunteers who make these events possible. Your efforts are helping to build a healthier, stronger Navajo Nation.

Upcoming events include the Navajo Code Talker 10K on September 7 in Window Rock, AZ, and the Chuska Challenge Mountain Bike Race on September 20. Visit [navajoyes.org](http://navajoyes.org) for details.

To all the moms, caretakers, and leaders: take time for yourselves. Our strength as a Nation begins with the wellness of each individual.







## CELEBRATING LANGUAGE WITH MISS NAVAJO

Miss Navajo, Ranisha Begay, and I had the wonderful opportunity to co-host a special book reading at the Navajo Nation Library. We read Jóhonaa'í: Bringer of Dawn, a beautiful children's book provided by the Navajo Division of Child and Family Services. I read the English portions, while Miss Navajo brought the Navajo language to life.

Books like Jóhonaa'í play a huge role in sparking our children's interest in learning our language and culture. Because the story centered around the sun, we also led a fun craft activity where the children made bright, cheerful paper sun fans to take home.

It was uplifting to see the excitement and curiosity in the children's faces as they listened and created. Events like this remind us of the power of storytelling and the importance of keeping our language alive for our kids.



I look forward to continuing this collaboration with First Things First and the Navajo Nation Library to host more reading events. Let's continue to read to our children so we can learn and grow in the language together.

## + CELEBRATING REZBALL AT NABI +

NABI is the largest and most prestigious all-Native American high school basketball event in North America, bringing together student-athletes from across the continent and opening doors of opportunity.

NABI offers our young people the chance to compete at a high level, while also encouraging them to pursue education, leadership, and lifelong success. Beyond the games, student-athletes take part in educational summits, college and career fairs, and scholarship opportunities through the NABI College Scholarship Fund. These experiences plant the seeds of hope and direction, reminding our youth that their dreams are valid.

NABI holds the spirit of "rezball" and we live for it. It was incredible to watch so many talented athletes take the court, especially seeing familiar faces from the regular season join forces with new teammates, even school rivals.

Congratulations to the Rezbombers, the Young Gunz, and every team that stepped onto the court this year. Every player is out there representing their families, communities and tribal nations on a national stage. We see you and we believe in you.

Thank you to everyone who makes NABI a huge success. Everyone involved is helping shape the champions of today and the leaders of tomorrow.







President Nygren presents his State of the Navajo Nation to Council during the summer session



## PRESIDENT NYGREN DELIVERS SUMMER QUARTERLY REPORT

We are more than two years into our terms as elected leaders of the Navajo Nation. A lot has happened in the last quarter.

**Oak Ridge Fire and Other Fires:** While we are happy about the containment of the Oak Ridge Fire, there is concern now in the aftermath of the fire with flooding. Just like the Council here, we are briefed daily from the BIA about the ongoing findings of the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team, who will inform us as leaders of the best course of action to mitigate flooding in our impacted communities and to prevent any future natural disaster post-fire.

**Change Labs, SSBCI:** We finalized contracts with the U.S. Treasury and received the first tranche of \$26 million of State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) funds. Our Navajo Division of Economic Development (DED) applied for federal funding as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. We finalized a contract with Change Labs, disbursed the initial \$7 million, and will add more funds for disbursement as they successfully launch their programs.

Our first loans have already started being issued through Change Labs, and we have increased their maximum lending limit to \$5 million. We also approved Change Labs to conduct lending through eight banks, and DED has signed up three banks to participate in the upcoming loan programs. Our goal is to provide 80% of the first tranche by July 2026.

**Local Businesses:** DED has also made significant strides in supporting Navajo businesses. One of the proudest achievements of the third quarter was the award of the first business loan to a Navajo entrepreneur. This is a milestone because we are creating valuable opportunities for our small business owners.

We also celebrated the grand opening of the Shiprock E-Hub, a venture of the nonprofit Change Labs, which is designed to open more doors for our artists, food vendors, tradespeople, and tech builders to access support, capital, and community resources.

Another achievement I am proud of is the recent ribbon cutting and grand reopening of the Lukachukai Speedway. It has been nearly two years in the making to get this store open for our community members who live in this region of the Navajo Nation. Our Central Agency Representative dedicated much of her time to ensuring the re-opening of this store. Through the advocacy of my office and the community, we celebrated a July 11 ceremony with Council Delegates Carl Slater and Lester Yazzie, and local leadership. It cost about \$1.5 million to reopen this store with new pumps. This store services about 800 to 900 customers.

**Hotels:** The Shiprock Hotel, currently under construction, is a major addition to the region's tourism and economic landscape. The project is a collaborative effort between the Navajo Hospitality Enterprise and DED, with an expected completion date set for Spring 2026.

Meanwhile, the Shonto Hotel is entering an exciting new phase. Active collaborations are underway between the Navajo Nation, the Shonto Chapter, and the Navajo Department of Justice is working to resolve the complexities surrounding the business site lease agreement. Negotiations with the hotel management company are nearing completion, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Attorney General Heather Clah's team and local Chapter leadership.

In addition, DED and the Shonto Chapter are working together to establish a dedicated administrative office through a Memorandum of Understanding.



## HOUSING, ROADS & VETERAN AFFAIRS REMAIN MY TOP PRIORITY

This office will ensure proper governance, transparency, and alignment with Navajo Nation standards—serving as a vital component for the community's vision for sustainable growth and development of the property.

**Hotels:** In Crownpoint, the hotel project has reached a critical milestone. The Business Site Lease packet is now 98% through DOJ's review process following a resubmission. Once approved, it will proceed to the Approving Committee and the Office of the President and Vice President for final approval. The project, led by Senior Economic Development Specialist Stephany K. Skeets, promises to be transformative for Crownpoint—bringing opportunities for job creation, tourism expansion, and infrastructure enhancement.

**1,000 Home Initiative:** Housing access and availability remain a top priority of my Administration. To date, we have delivered 170 homes between the Division of Community Development, our Veterans Administration, and the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission to date. Every time I think of housing for our people, we are improving the health outcomes of our people along with economic returns. Under the 1,000 Home Initiative, the goal is plain and simple — get shelter to our relatives.

- **Navajo Nation Veterans Administration:** There are 25 in construction (in progress) and 13 turnkey ceremonies that have been held to date, with 5 of the 13 occurring in the third quarter.
- **Navajo-Hopi Land Commission:** The first work order is expected to drop 84 homes. Of the 84, 35 homes were delivered in third quarter.
- **Division of Community Development:** HIP - Out of 76 homes, 30 total homes have been installed. CHID - Out of 360 homes contracted, 92 total have been installed to date.

As you know with the Council, we are working to bring more homes to the people using the American Rescue Plan Act funds through the Navajo Division of Community Development (DCD). Under its funding mechanism, DCD was allocated approximately \$100 million and has spent approximately \$47 million to provide long-term housing security. The project continues to see challenges, particularly concerning the funding and logistical complexities of utility connections. Because of the way this was legislated by the 24th Navajo Nation Council, we are now dealing with the utility infrastructure challenges.

As a result, some programs include utility costs while others did not. In addition, the expenditure plan for CHID homes does not clearly allow ARPA funding to be used for utility connections.

In spite of this, we are actively coordinating to address utilities to homes. We have project managers currently on-site, conducting feasibility assessments and sharing their findings with the utility companies. While the exact costs for this scope are still being determined, CHID is exploring all possible funding sources. We ask that recipients of ARPA CHID homes take the lead in obtaining service accounts with your utility providers. I continue to work closely with DCD and Navajo Tribal Utility Authority to address this issue.

**Roads:** Director Tom Platero has worked hard over the last year to build capacity with his team at the Navajo Department of Transportation (NDOT). He has been working hard to get the right management team in place to ensure our goals become a reality. We are starting to see returns on Director Platero's hard work to build the right team at NDOT.

As a result of this capacity-building, many road projects are happening across the Navajo Nation. Some are groundbreaking and ribbon cuttings, including:

- \$14.6 million approved to improve 2.78 miles of N5001 between Toadlena and Two Grey Hills
- \$377,000 contract with DJOE Construction to improve two miles of Burnt Corn Road in Iyanbito, N.M.
- \$30 million contract to improve 7.2 miles of Navajo Route 12 near Wheatfields Lake
- Completion of the \$21.2 million Navajo Route 35 in Sweetwater, Ariz., which will make commutes shorter, efficient and safer for our people.

My administration will continue to make housing, roads and Veterans a top priority.







## PRESIDENT NYGREN MEETS WITH FIVE VETERAN AGENCY ORGANIZATIONS

WINDOW ROCK – On July 7, President Nygren met with the five veteran organizations from each agency including the Fort Defiance Veterans Agency to discuss key items – the Navajo Nation housing program, the Navajo Veteran Trust Fund, staffing at the Veteran Administration and Supplemental Chapter 16 Funds. Commanders from the different chapters of the Fort Defiance Agency were able to meet with President Nygren and to voice their concerns and seek answers to those concerns.

Division Director for the Navajo Veterans Administration Bobbie Ann Baldwin helped assist in leading the discussion of the four key items. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that President Nygren is fulfilling his commitment of supporting Navajo veterans.

One major concern shared was housing delays that prevent veterans who are eligible from obtaining housing within a timely manner. This has led advocates to urge the full implementation of the Veterans Housing Program Policy, which was adopted in September 2021, which would prioritize the veterans with the most need.

Director Baldwin shared that the housing specialist meets at the first of every month and provide a housing review to help determine eligibility and highest priority needs. The priority focus is on veterans who are homeless or who are unable to find shelter. Other concerns include internal government processes and construction infrastructure policy.

Director Baldwin committed to checking applications and communicating with housing specialists who can provide updates on applications, construction and overall progress.

The Oak Springs organization shared they are seeking funding to finalize the Oak Springs Veterans Park's development.

Related to the, Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund, legislation is currently being drafted to increase from 4% to 8%. Director Baldwin encouraged veterans to participate in the legislative process by providing public comment during the five-day comment period.

Each veterans group received a written briefing of the discussions and responses to their concerns on Friday, July 11.



Fort Defiance Agency (top) and Central Agency (bottom) veterans meet with President Nygren



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**The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that President Nygren is fulfilling his commitment of supporting Navajo veterans.**





## FOUR WOMEN COMPETE FOR THE COVETED MISS NAVAJO CROWN



President Nygren, Miss Navajo Ranisha Begay and Miss Navajo contestants

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — With a few more weeks to go until a new Miss Navajo Nation is crowned, four Diné women have officially entered the 73rd Annual Miss Navajo Nation Pageant. On July 11, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, 2024–2025 Miss Navajo Nation Ranisha Begay, and the Office of Miss Navajo Nation proudly introduced the 2025–2026 contestants:

- Cora Hubbard, Contestant #1, from Kinlichee, Ariz., Fort Defiance Agency
- Eriona Tapahe, Contestant #2, from Fort Defiance, Ariz., Fort Defiance Agency
- Camille Uentillie, Contestant #3, from Ganado, Ariz., Fort Defiance Agency
- Taneesha Francis, Contestant #4, from Fish Point, Ariz., Central Agency

Each contestant embarks on a journey that celebrates Diné womanhood, values, and culture. More than a competition, the Miss Navajo Nation Pageant is a sacred space that honors the teachings of First Woman, White Shell Woman,

and Changing Woman — matriarchs who continue to shape Diné identity.

Candidates are expected to demonstrate fluency in Diné Bizaad, knowledge of Navajo governance and history, and the ability to perform traditional tasks such as sheep butchering and cultural teachings. These elements reflect the strength and responsibility carried by Navajo women as caretakers of language, land, and tradition.

"This is a teaching moment in their lives," said President Nygren. "It takes courage to step forward, represent your family, and embody the values passed down through generations."

The 2025 Miss Navajo Nation Pageant will take place during the Navajo Nation Fair in September. Families, elders, and community members are encouraged to attend and support these young women as they carry the sacred role of Miss Navajo into the future.



President Nygren welcomes Miss Navajo contestants and shares words of encouragement



# **'Azhe'é Bidziil' Promotes Strong and Healthy Diné Fathers**

WINDOW ROCK — As Chad Myron, a program research assistant, spoke about the hope and healing that the Azhe'é Bidziil (Strong Fathers) program brings to Native fathers, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren reflected on the kind of father he strives to be — one who is grounded in culture, strong in spirit, and committed to raising a healthy family.

On July 24, President Nygren signed a letter of support for the Azhe'é Bidziil program to acknowledge and recognize how being a healthy parent and father is challenging, especially when positive examples are rarely seen or shown across the Navajo Nation.

Associated with the Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health, Azhe'é Bidziil is an evidenced-base program tasked with improving outcomes among rural Native fathers and their families. Brent Crowe, research program supervisor for Strong Fathers, said the program as a culturally rooted, evidence-based initiative supporting Native fathers and families in Chinle, Fort Defiance and Tuba City.

"Over 80% of our participants stick with our program through completion. Those are the numbers you don't 'get to see a whole of in research,'" said Crowe. "We are proud of them. We want to help them seek healthy relationships, become a positive parent or co-parent, that's what we're all about."

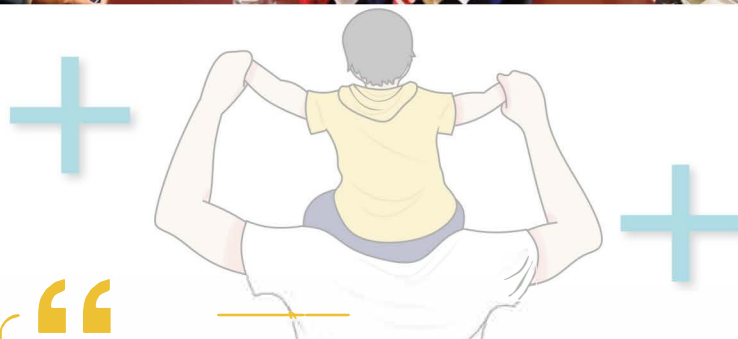
Developed through a tribal-academic partnership between the Navajo Nation, White Mountain Apache Tribe and Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health, Azhe'é Bidziil combines two proven models: Respecting the Circle of Life and Arrowhead Business Group, both of which build parenting skills, foster healthy relationships and promote economic stability through entrepreneurship education.

"Many Navajo men are raised to believe that being strong means staying silent and pushing through pain, often at the cost of their mental, emotional and spiritual well-being", Myron said. Azhe'é Bidziil works to shift that mindset, helping men heal and redefine what it means to be a strong, healthy father.

"A lot of Navajo fathers are out there listening to you guys," said President Nygren. "It's important we continue to have programs like this - programs that teach our Navajo men to be protectors, to be healthy in their relationships and even with themselves, and to become healthy fathers. Because that's how we raise healthier generations."



President Nygren and the Azhe'é Bidziil (Strong Fathers) program



**“Azhe'é Bidziil works to shift that mindset, helping men heal and redefine what it means to be a strong, healthy father.”**





# RECLAMATION: A SIDE OF SURFACE COAL MINING OFTEN FORGOTTEN



GILLETTE, Wyo. — When Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren toured the Cordero Rojo Mine site, an antelope calmly hopped along the mine's reclaimed land — its home.

On July 15, President Nygren, along with Navajo Transitional Energy Company's (NTEC) CEO, Vern Lund, Cordero Mine Site Manager, Kyle Colby, and other NTEC officials, toured the active mine operations on the west side of the 23,000-acre mine. President Nygren also saw and experienced the extensive reclamation accomplishments at the Cordero Rojo Mine in Wyoming.

Colby said many people do not understand that coal is a natural resource, and there are federal and state laws and regulations that require surface coal mines to reclaim the lands during the post-coal mining operations. NTEC has been awarded and recognized for its reclamation efforts at all of its four coal mine sites.

"The reclamation process is key to how NTEC continues its operations," said President Nygren. "NTEC is a huge Navajo partnership, and it's because they understand the values of who we are as Navajo people, which is protecting the land not just for us now but for our future. It's a blessing to see wildlife on the reclaimed areas because it proves this is a success."

On the reclaimed mine areas, there was not only growing Native plants, but also built "rabbitats," which Colby explained as being a refuge for small animals to hide from predators. Through this partnership, NTEC has built nests for two golden eagles who frequent the site.

However, the mine site is not just making strides in their reclamation efforts to properly restore the land; they continue to keep their employees safe as one of the leading coal producers in the United States. The Cordero Rojo Mine produces an average of about 12 million tons of coal each year, with 234 full-time employees. The coal extracted from the Cordero Rojo Mine gets shipped out by United Pacific Railroad and Burlington Northern Santa Fe trains to locations along the U.S. and Canadian border, as well as designated locations overseas.

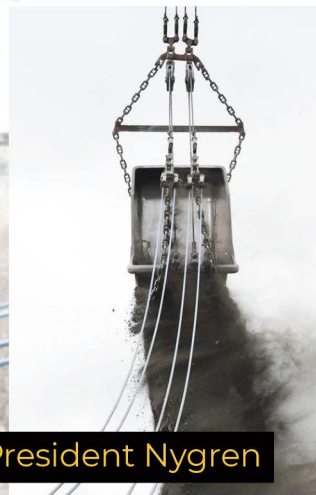
What we want people to understand (is) that it's (coal mining) a necessity for electrical generation," said Colby. "The other thing is that the reclamation is top-notch. We don't leave it poorly when we're done because we're all outdoor people, so we want it back to where it was or better—people forget that."

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**It's a blessing to see wildlife on the reclaimed areas because it proves this is a success.**



CEO of NTEC Vern Lund and President Nygren



Reclaimed lands after coal mining operations



View of Cordero Rojo coal mine site



# OVER TWO YEARS LATER, LUKACHUKAI SPEEDWAY IS BACK IN BUSINESS

LUKACHUKAI, Ariz.— Marlene Tom, the general manager for the Lukachukai Speedway, has returned home thanks to the reopening of the local gas and convenience store.

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren signed the business-site lease for the store in 2024. The store was reconstructed following a February 2023 fire that destroyed the previous store and gas station. The store had been closed for over two years after the store caught fire and finally reopened in June.

A formal grand re-opening and ribbon cutting celebration was held with community members and Navajo officials on July 11. The \$1.5 million was the total cost of the store's reconstruction as well as pumps and new system.

"This is my home store and after the fire and this place burned down, my staff and I went to nearby stores," said Tom. "Coming back to an actual store is great but I missed the people we saw every day – the bus drivers, the community. I'm happy to be home again."

The store generally services about 800 to 900 customers a day.

Crystlynn Lansing serves as an area leader managing eight of the fourteen 7/11 and Speedway stores across the Navajo Nation. These stores are crucial for residents, providing not just snacks but also gas and medicines. The store, in partnership with Blue Mountain Meat Company, offers high-quality local meats and fresh produce, critical in a region where the nearest full-grocery store is over an hour away.

Located along scenic Navajo Route 12, the store not only supports eight local jobs but also plans to expand with fishing supplies, a fryer for local favorites, and bulk propane to better serve the community's needs.

**President Nygren celebrated the Lukachukai Speedway's re-opening as it is just more than gas station and convenience store – it is a one stop shop for necessities near home.**

"I met with families from here and I heard their struggles about access to something as simple as sandwich meat," said President Nygren. "It was also shocking to hear about how families needed medicine and went without it because they couldn't make it that far. This store is providing security and comfort and much needed assistance to the local community."



**"Coming back to an actual store is great but I missed the people we saw every day – the bus drivers, the community. I'm happy to be home again."**

**Ribbon cutting of Speedway grand reopening**



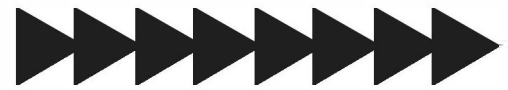
**President Nygren assists with registration**







## NAHAT'A DZIIL BREAKS GROUND ON SANDERS FUEL CENTER



President Nygren joins Sanders community for groundbreaking



Sanders Fuel Center Blueprint

SANDERS, Ariz. — Right off I-40 in front of Bashes, community members, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, Council Delegates Otto Tso and Arbin Mitchell celebrated the start of something new.

The \$7 million Sanders Fuel Center project includes a Marathon gas station with eight fuel pumps and a Sonic drive thru which will provide jobs for 25-30 people.

The entire project is funded by the Navajo Nation Hospitality Enterprise (NNHE) where they expect to generate \$6 million in annual revenue. The income will go back into operations and aiding other NNHE aging projects across the Nation.

The lease for the project is for an initial 25 years with annual rental payments beginning in year five. These rental payments will be deposited into the Diné Relocatee Fund, which provides support to families impacted by the 1974 Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act.

"This is more than a project," said President Nygren. "This is for the people, the community and our little ones to not only provide a gas station and food, but give back to those who were relocated to live here. By investing in this project, we're investing in our people and generations to come."

As the fuel center general manager, Herlinda Etsitty, held a teal shovel marking groundbreaking day on July 18, she reminisced on her own family as they were relocated to the Sanders area following the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act in 1974.

"I relocated here in 1987 with my late parents during the summer of my 6th grade year," said Etsitty. "When we first came out here, there was hardly anything and over time with the community and planning of everything this is what we're creating- the Bashes and now the fuel center- it's going to benefit a lot, new jobs for the community, opportunities, it's exciting."

The project is expected to be completed by spring 2026 welcoming locals and tourists alike taking a pit stop off I-40.

"This was really driven by the community," said Donovan Hanley, NNHE Chairman. "The community came to the chapter, the chapter came to the division of economic development and said, 'We really want something here.'"



**By investing in this project, we're investing in our people and generations to come.**





President Nygren and utility crew members assisting with Light Up Navajo initiative

## LIGHT UP NAVAJO VI BRINGS HOPE, POWER TO FAMILIES IN CAMERON

CAMERON, Ariz. — Under a relentless sun and a temperature of 100 degrees, a team of linemen works with one mission - to bring light and power to families who have lived decades without it.

Now in its sixth phase, the Light Up Navajo initiative began in 2019, uniting utility workers from across the country to connect homes on the Navajo Nation to electricity, many for the very first time.

In Cameron, the Cameron North Phase 1 project will span 13 miles and bring electricity to 50 families who have waited 20 to 30 years. For Bryan English, a foreman from Trico Electric Cooperative in Marana, Arizona, this isn't just a job.

"If I can have electricity, so should these people up here," said English.

English's team, Joe Tsethlikai (Navajo), Troy Mead, and Dustin Boyce, have already framed and set 59 poles.

As of July 29, they've completed two miles of the 13-mile route along Highway 89. The project has been years in the making, with help by Navajo Tribal Utility Authority's Tuba City District team, including Alicia Richards and Gyalda Tso. Each connection brings joy. English recalls one elder excited just to watch TV. Mead remembers a woman thrilled to receive her first toaster.

"To be a part of history, help my own people out, that is just something that I am fully on board with," said Tsethlikai. "You can't just sit home and not do something about this."

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren visited the crew to thank them for their dedication.

"This work is life-changing," said Nygren. "When you bring power to a home, you bring opportunity, dignity, and hope. That's what building the Nation looks like."



President Nygren greets utility crew members

**This work is life-changing. When you bring power to a home, you bring opportunity, dignity, and hope. That's what building the Nation looks like.**





## BENNETT FREEZE FAMILY CELEBRATES NEW BEGINNING WITH ARRIVAL OF LONG-AWAITED HOME



President Nygren with the Benally's new home



BODAWAY/GAP, Ariz. — Tucked between the towering red rocks of Bodaway/Gap, Guy and Mary Benally sat quietly under the shade of their new home, a Clayton modular home that now stands as a symbol of perseverance, love, and dignity.

For decades, the Benallys endured harsh conditions due to a 43-year development ban by the federal government known as the Bennett Freeze, which began in 1966 and left more than 10,000 Navajo people without the right to repair, rebuild, or improve their homes.

The ban was lifted in 2009, but the effects linger to this day.

For the Benally's, that meant living in a hogan with dirt floors, cracked walls patched with cardboard, and a leaking roof held together with tires, among other infrastructural challenges.

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren visited the Benallys to celebrate the delivery of their new home, built in Albuquerque and brought to the community as part of a broader effort to get homes to the neediest and most vulnerable Navajos.

President Nygren was joined by Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Office Director Sarah Slim, Bodaway/Gap Chapter President LeShawn Larry Hanks, former Chapter President Dorothy Lee, and Chapter Manager Andrea Daws.

"When they (NHLCO) told me that they were awarding Guy the trailer ... Oh my gosh, I was so happy," said Daws. "It was a good day being able to just come here when the trailer was parked-for him. It's been something he's been working toward since the 70s."

The Benallys were one of the highest-priority families identified for housing relief. Their decades of quiet endurance and unwavering advocacy now stand tall in the form of a home they can finally call their own.

NHLCO has helped 34 other families who were impacted by the Bennett Freeze. The goal is for NHLCO to deliver 84 homes in total and as of July 29. Director Slim said they are at 41 percent completion with the total of 35 families now having a new modular home.

"This isn't just a house, it's justice long overdue," said President Nygren. "Mr. and Mrs. Benally waited far too long for something so basic, a safe, warm place to call home."



Guy and Mary Benally with President Nygren







Change Labs team members

Fabulous Lemonade business awardee

## NEW CHANGE LABS E-SHIP HUB OPENS IN SHIPROCK

SHIPROCK, N.M. — On July 18, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren celebrated the grand opening of the Shiprock E-ship Hub, a brand-new space in the heart of Shiprock where local entrepreneurs, artists, and change makers can gather, get support, and grow their ideas into thriving businesses, which is located within the Tse' Bit' A'i Shopping Center Plaza.

"Today is not just about the opening of the building, it's about the beginning of something bold, something visionary," said President Nygren. "It's about unlocking the dreams of our people and fulfilling the future of Navajo entrepreneurs."

Shiprock is a place full of strength, culture, and opportunity, so it was logical for Change Labs to open a second location here and in Tuba City, its original footprint bringing economic opportunities to Navajo and Hopi communities. With Change Labs' original launch in 2014, this hub has been a long time coming and has successfully secured a space where business occurs daily.

The architectural and design work of this space began in Summer 2024 and included work on the Tuba City location for a total of over \$100,000 in shared costs. Additionally, the tenant improvement began in February 2025 and costed about \$285,074, with the entire space measuring 2,000 square feet.

Prior to the grand opening celebration, a 'Pitch Your Hustle' event took place as an opportunity for pitch participants to share with the audience their vision of a business plan in seven minutes. A panel of judges awarded \$ 25,000 in cash prizes to 10 participants.

"We're here to support the small business community," said Heather Fleming, Executive Director of Change Labs. "We have so much knowledge that we would love to share with entrepreneurs, with change makers and with artisans, our doors are open to you all."

## LONG-PLANNED C-STORE PROJECT BREAKS GROUND IN INDIAN WELLS

INDIAN WELLS, Ariz. — After more than two decades of planning and delays, a new convenience store is finally moving forward in Indian Wells.

On Friday, July 25, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren signed a contract with Keyah Construction to carry out the construction of the project. Originally proposed in 2005 as part of a 25-acre community development plan, the project was delayed for years by funding complications, planning challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Indian Wells Chapter officials, working with the Navajo Division of Economic Development and the Small Business Development Department, reignited the effort, using local chapter funds to complete power infrastructure needs and push the project forward.

The \$3.6 million convenience store, funded by the Navajo Nation Permanent Fund, will include a deli, post office, and gas station operated under Red Mesa Trading.



President Nygren signs contract with Keyah Construction

It is expected to create five permanent jobs and generate \$450,000 annually in tax revenue for the Navajo Nation. Community members said the project will serve not only Indian Wells but also the many travelers who pass through daily. It is expected to create five permanent jobs and generate \$450,000 annually in tax revenue for the Navajo Nation.





Echo Cliffs Health Center



President Nygren with Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation and construction crew



## FROM SACRED LAND TO HEALING HANDS: A VISION OF CARE COMES TO FRUITION IN ECHO CLIFFS COMMUNITY



COPPERMINE, Ariz. — Beneath the red rocks and mesas of the Echo Cliffs community, a long-awaited dream is rising.

On July 29, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren visited the site of the future Echo Cliffs Health Center, where he was welcomed and guided by Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation's Chief Executive Officer Joette Walters and Chief Operating Officer Julius Young II. The facility represents more than infrastructure — it reflects the determination of elders, families, and leaders who envisioned accessible healthcare for generations to come.

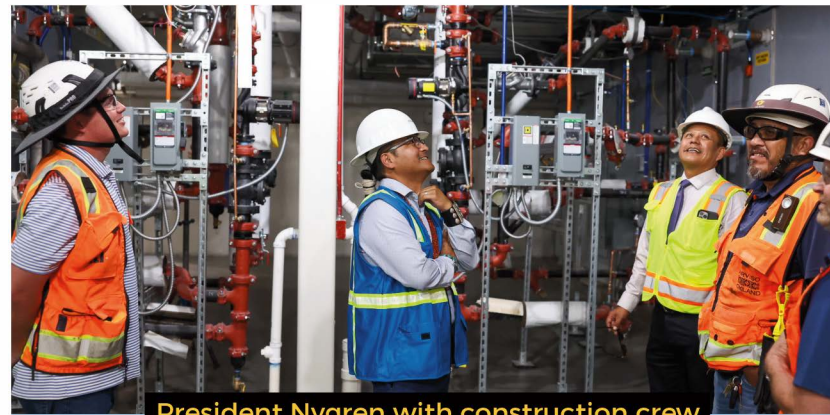
"This was something the community asked for, for many, many years," said Walters. "It's finally come to fruition. The groundbreaking started back in February 2024, and now the building is taking shape."

The project stems from a resolution brought forward by local elders decades ago, many of whom are no longer alive. Director of the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Office Sarah Slim reflected on their lasting legacy.

"They never stopped advocating for this center, and today we see the result of their hope," said Director Slim.

TCRHCC's broader plan includes replacing its aging 1975 hospital with a modern facility designed to serve 59,000 residents across Navajo, Hopi, and Southern Paiute lands. The \$136 million campus, funded by Indian Health Services, will include expanded emergency, specialty, and public health services, with completion anticipated in Fall 2026.

"We are not just building a hospital," said President Nygren. "We are honoring the vision of our elders and creating a space where our people can heal with dignity, close to home and on our sacred land."



President Nygren with construction crew



**We are honoring the vision of our elders and creating a space where our people can heal with dignity, close to home and on our sacred land.**





## RUNNING AND RIDING REZ ROADS

On Thursday, July 24, I had the honor of joining Council Delegate Germaine Simonson, Silver Stallion and Rezduro for their annual Rez Duro community races in Hard Rock, Ariz., the heart of the Navajo Nation.

While the mountain bike race wasn't held this year, the spirit of the event remained strong, bringing families together and getting hearts moving across our beautiful homeland.

I arrived just as the youngest riders were getting ready to take off for their one-mile bike ride and run. The excitement on their faces reminded me of why events like this matter. It's not just about competition, it's about community, health, and pride in our youth.

There was also a 5K and when the race began, I was quickly left behind in the dust! But it made me proud to see our young ones giving it their all, pushing through the miles under the hot sun with determination in their hearts.



## Participants of Rezduro

What stood out most was the unity and encouragement shared among parents, volunteers, and runners of all ages. It's moments like these that help build stronger, healthier Navajo communities, where wellness is rooted in culture and shared values.

Events like Rezduro don't happen without hard work and heart. I want to thank Rezduro, the Chinle Office of Diné Youth, and Silver Stallion for making this gathering possible. Your commitment to uplifting our people through movement and culture is something we all can be proud of.

This is what it looks like when we ride on rez roads with rez hearts. Let's keep moving forward together.



**It's moments like these that help build stronger, healthier Navajo communities, where wellness is rooted in culture and shared values.**

## BODAWAY/GAP CELEBRATES RED MESA TRADING LEASE RENEWAL



## President Nygren signs renewal of Business Site Lease

BODAWAY/GAP, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, Division of Economic Development Director, Tony Skrelunas and Tuba City Regional Business Development Office Program Manager II Edbert Little, and roughly 30 community members came together on July 30 to witness the renewal of the 25-year Business Site Lease (BSL) between the Navajo Nation and Red Mesa Trading Company.

At the busy intersection of Highway 89, Red Mesa Trading has long served as a vital pit stop for both residents and the thousands of tourists who pass through the area each year.



"This renewal and expansion at Bodaway Gap represents more than just business growth, it's a deep commitment to serving the essential needs of this remote community," said Skrelunas. "We're particularly excited about their pledge to bring more grocery items and healthier food choices to the area."

The lease renewal ensures that this local business, providing fuel, groceries, laundry, and community gathering space, will continue and expand to meet growing needs.

Plans include a new grocery store, an expanded gas station, upgrades to the laundromat and an emphasis on healthier food options, addressing both immediate and long-term needs of Western Navajo.



**This renewal and expansion at Bodaway-Gap represents more than just business growth. It's a deep commitment to serving the essential needs of this remote community**





# KNICKS PLAYER INSPIRES, HOOPS IT UP WITH NAVAJO YOUTH

TUBA CITY — New York Knicks forward MarJon Beauchamp brought his love for basketball and mentorship to the Navajo Nation, co-hosting a two-day youth basketball camp at Tuba City High School on July 28–29.

Over 300 youth participated in the camp, which was a collaboration between Beauchamp, Navajo sports event coordinator Lynette Lewis, and Native Lands Insurance. The camp marked a first-of-its-kind event in Tuba City, driven by a shared vision to uplift Native youth through sports and community.

Beauchamp, a descendant of the Mission Indians and the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians, connected deeply with the youth, many of whom come from small towns like his own in Yakima, Washington.

"I've been doing this since I joined the league," said Beauchamp. "You know, this is my passion, and I feel like God put me here to do this and be an inspiration for these kids. I come from a place with no hope, and I know how it feels—I think it's important to reach out to the youth."

Lewis, who also organizes the Native American Basketball Invitational (NABI), partnered with Beauchamp through his work as an official NABI ambassador and the MarJon Beauchamp Foundation.

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren joined the final day of the camp, recognizing the power of sports in motivating the next generation.

"Seeing our youth train with someone like MarJon Beauchamp, who comes from humble beginnings and made it to the NBA, proves that dreams are within reach," said Nygren.



MarJon Beauchamp with youth basketball camp participants



MarJon Beauchamp and President Nygren shooting basketball hoops



## BACK TO SCHOOL MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT NYGREN



As you all gather once more for another exciting school year, I want you to take a moment to reflect on your educational journey. Each hour spent in the classroom, even in subjects that seemed meaningless at the time, contributed to my growth and understanding. I came to realize that education is not just about acquiring knowledge; it's about empowering ourselves to make a positive impact in our communities and families. The first step in helping others is ensuring we can help ourselves.

This year, I encourage each of you to embrace your school experience with an open heart and mind.

Approach each day with the mindset that you are capable of mastering patience, discipline, responsibility, honesty, and perseverance. Most importantly, develop courage. As the famous poet Dr. Maya Angelou wisely said, "Courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage, you can't practice any other virtue consistently."

So, embark on this journey, equipped with the courage to tackle challenges and the determination to make this year truly transformative. Here's to a year filled with growth, inspiration, and endless possibilities!





**Tune-In Thursdays @ 1:00 & 5:30 PM**

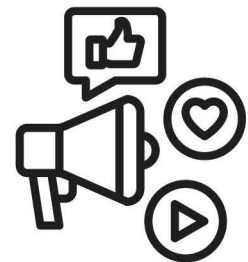
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