



The Navajo Nation **DR. BUU NYGREN** *PRESIDENT*

Yideeskáadi Nitsáhákees | *Think for the Future*



# CHINLE AGENCY COUNCIL MEETING



Prepared by  
The Office of the President  
April 5, 2025



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# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chinle Agency Representative Updates.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Administration Updates.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Baca/Prewitt families to finally gain access to water after a decade of waiting .....	6
Crafting homes, empowering communities with the ‘hooghan zhóni’ project.....	6
White Cone veterans celebrate repurposed building after years of advocacy.....	6
NAPI food boxes in Upper Fruitland Chapter helps families in need.....	7
Honoring our Vietnam veterans in Northern Navajo Agency .....	7
Breaking barriers: paving the way for diné law students at the University of Arizona.....	8
Navajos healing Navajos through the Yideeskáai Hózhóójí liná Center, a residential treatment facility .....	8
Nataaní Nez Restaurant opens new doors in Shiprock, NM .....	9
Shiprock Incident Command Center: 45% complete and on track for October 2025 opening .....	9
Chichiltah community breaks ground on the Vanderwagon Community Water System Project.....	10
Healing the land: Navajo Nation starts cleanup of ‘many devils wash’ after gold king spill.....	10
University of Arizona welcomes 23rd president, celebrating leadership and empowering student success .....	11
Hogback Chapter’s new pump system to protect endangered fish .....	12
Flying high for wildlife: \$57,310 helicopter survey will determine hunting permits on the Navajo Nation ..	12
Building solutions together: President Nygren visits Dennehotso Chapter.....	13
Empowering our diné students through higher education at the University of Arizona .....	13
50 miles road near Many Farms, Rough Rock to receive a makeover .....	14
Domestic violence shelters on the Navajo Nation get \$1.27 million in contract extensions.....	14
Being a naat’aanii is a rough road our chapter officials persevere through for their communities .....	15
Nygren Administration prioritizes road repairs in Chilchinbeto chapter .....	15
Flags of sovereignty: a call to restore tribal representation at the Phoenix VA Hospital.....	16
Christopher werito wins 2025 Navajo Nation Spelling Bee, qualifies for the National Scripps Spelling Bee! Yéégo nihilchini yéégo!.....	16
Thank you, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, for your signature, protecting native graduates across New Mexico! .....	16
Navajo code talkers’ legacy restored after website removal mishap .....	17
Celebrating diné nursing students at the University of New Mexico’s 2025 nursing pledge ceremony.....	17
President Nygren signs \$500 million-plus comprehensive budget .....	18
President Nygren requests clarification on the removal of Navajo Code Talker content.....	19

## Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025

<b>Empowering Navajo families across New Mexico: advocating for children with disabilities .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Same lake, new facilities: Wheatfields Lake recreation area to get new additions.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Congratulations to the Page girls for advancing to the 2025 AIA copper championship, and to the Chinle and Ganado girls for reaching the 2025 AIA 3A final four in Phoenix, AZ.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Navajo Nation celebrates Future Farmers of America Day, honoring youth leaders in agriculture .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Congratulations to Mary West of Navajo Gaming for being “Chamber Champion of the Year” by the Greater Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Over \$400 million in road projects to break ground with on-call engineering firms .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Protecting our livelihoods: cattle theft on the Navajo Nation.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Exploring innovative solutions with SpaceX and Starlink .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Congratulations to “rockisaan” and “rez kidz” on advancing to the first tech challenge world championships!.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Four corners dialysis clinic in chinle, ariz., gets 25-year lease extension .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Building the future: groundbreaking for the \$6.2 million San Juan Lateral Waterline in Naschitti, NM .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Good luck to our 3a north teams competing in the 2025 AIA 3A and copper brackets.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Preserving diné bizaad: empowering our children through literacy and community support .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>This President’s Day, we honor our tribal presidents and chairmen and acknowledge the sovereignty of the Navajo Nation government.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Expanding broadband Internet access in Ramah Navajo.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Update: protecting essential federal positions serving the Navajo Nation.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Over \$1 billion dollars in new construction for BIE schools .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>PSAP project to ensure quicker response times in cases of 911 emergencies .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Navajo Nation celebrates \$3.5 million revenue sharing payment from Goulding’s Lodge .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Protecting essential federal positions serving the Navajo Nation .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>\$80 million new school groundbreaking in Chi Chil’tah Jones Ranch community .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>600 Diné Bizaad books gifted to Diné children at Gallup v. Kirtland Central girls basketball game .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Closing the digital divide: Permanent Internet now serving Low Mountain .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Chinle Wildcats dominate 3a north – onward to the AIA playoffs .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>President Nygren addresses the New Mexico House of Representatives .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Celebrating 50 years of self-determination at 2025 New Mexico American Indian Legislative Day .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Haskell vs. NTU games showcase native athletes’ heart and determination.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>President Nygren encourages n.m. governor to appoint a Diné citizen to house district 6 .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Navajo Nation expresses needs with NM governor.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>President Nygren fights for the Navajo Nation in Washington .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>That’s a burger’ secures 25-year lease renewal.....</b>	<b>43</b>



<b>Diné bizaad literacy at the red mesa and rock point basketball game .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Long-awaited Pueblo Pintado Health Center nears groundbreaking in Eastern Navajo Agency .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Investing in ourselves: wood delivery for red valley and the path to \$1 billion for navajo communities .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>600 diné bizaad children’s book given to children at the page v. Chinle basketball game .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Acoma, diné relatives build homes for the 1,000 home initiative .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Sharing Navajo government lessons with students from Albuquerque Public Schools .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>OMB memo pausing federal funds has been rescinded.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Statement from Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren on freeze of federal funds, grants.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>41 volunteers help the foster grandparent program shine .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Prayer of k’e and healing disregarded as two delegates interrupt State of the Navajo Nation Address during the winter session .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Congratulations to Speaker Curley on re-election .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>New electric line installation, enhancing power supply and efficiency for the Huerfano chapter .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>President Nygren shares Navajo priorities with NM state leaders .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Sonsela Butte Wildfire is officially contained after burning 133 acres.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>National Cheii Day.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>President Nygren urges New Mexico leaders to fund the Shiprock First Responder Substation.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>\$118 million approved for nine solar and batter storage projects across Arizona and New Mexico .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Crystal, NM fire chars at least 133 acres .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Navajo Nation leaders advocate for water rights and economic development at inaugural ball .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Navajo Department of Workforce Development: unlocking training for lasting employment.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Navajo Nation celebrates trump administration at inaugural reception for the 47th President of the United States .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>The late rev. Dr. Martin luther king sought peace, balance, beauty, harmony for the world .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>President Nygren announces groundbreaking partnership for Ne’zaad Solar Project .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Public Safety at the forefront of Navajo Nation and state leadership .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>President Nygren relieves Olin Kieyoomia of his duties as Veterans Administrator and wishes him well... </b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Diné bizaad is the official language of the navajo nation ... so let’s practice every day .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Four leaders, same goal— better life for the Navajo people.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>A prayer for our NTUA linemen who are traveling to Los Angeles, CA to restore power .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Thank you, Gerald Keetso, for your 12 years of service as Tuba City Chapter President.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>President Nygren presents People’s State of the Navajo Nation: key accomplishments in housing, water rights, tourism and taxation .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Navajo Nation connects the unreached: starlink pilot program brings broadband to remote chapters .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Wishing the 36th WINGS national team success at the USA cross country championships .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Building bridges to the future: Navajo Nation broadband office expands digital access, connectivity .....</b>	<b>59</b>

## Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025

Seven new homes delivered: a step toward the 1,000 home initiative .....	59
Prayers to our brave Navajos who are on their way to California to fight wildfires .....	60
Navajo Nation acts against environmental damage: \$4.9 million contract to plug orphaned wells .....	60
Witnessing the oath: a new chapter for our communities in Chinle Agency.....	61
One step at a time, new Office of the President Legal Counsel made her way home .....	61
President Nygren unveils \$31 million ERP system to modernize government response to the Navajo people .....	62
The nations fight for broadband equality .....	62
Ring in the new year with new officials in Eastern Navajo Agency .....	63
Diné College President Dr. Charles “Monty” Roessel passes after long illness.....	64
From the Navajo Nation to phoenix: Dragon, a golden eagle’s journey .....	64
New executive director of the Division of Community Development brings a ‘go get ‘em and get it done attitude’ .....	64
Preparing for winter: emergency support for navajo elders in crystal and sawmill chapters.....	65
Navajo Nation animal control officers push for education on animal care to aid in stray animal problem .	65



# Chinle Agency Representative Updates

## **Youth Complexes in Chinle and Tuba City**

On December 12, 2024, a land withdrawal for the Chinle Youth Complex was approved by the Navajo Land Department for 30 acres to build a youth complex south of the Chinle Catholic church. The next steps that were completed during this quarter is the submittal of the Multi-Purpose building application with the Capital Programs Management Department (CPMD) to start the engineering and design process.

## **Many Farms Irrigation Building**

The Many Farms Irrigation Building has been connected to electricity by NTUA on December 31, 2024. On March 25, 2025, the Irrigation Department staff moved into the building, and they are continuing to work on minor connections such as the office partitions and water heater.

## **Lukachukai Speedway Convenience Store**

The Lukachukai Speedway Convenience Store is in the process of final inspection from the Health Department. At the end of March, the fuel line electricity was being repaired after discovery that the electrical lines were burned in the fire. The estimate repair timeline is two weeks.

## **NAPI Food Distribution**

The Department of Agriculture and Navajo Agricultural Products Industry will be distributing potatoes, beans, and corn to the Chinle Agency Chapters in the months of May and June. The Chapters will have to solicit volunteers to assist with the distribution.

Ahéheé,



Vikki Shirley

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# Administration Updates

## **Baca/Prewitt families to finally gain access to water after a decade of waiting**

**April 2, 2025** – Thirty families from here will soon get access to clean drinking water, thanks in large part to Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and partners like the Navajo Division of Natural Resources and Souder, Miller & Associates.

These 30 families will have water supplies through the Baca/Prewitt Water System Development Project, \$150,000 projected funded with New Mexico state funds.

“These waterlines are for people who’ve been without water,” said Lucinda Davis, senior contract analyst with the Navajo Nation Water Management Branch. “We’re trying to reach as many people as possible.”

The project, which began in 2014, is a two-mile waterline. Earlier this winter, President Nygren signed this water contract, allowing for engineering planning with Souder, Miller & Associates to design the waterline. Davis said that residents who requested assistance from the Baca/Prewitt Chapter are prioritized for the project.

The chapter worked with Navajo Nation Water Management Branch to get funding, even securing private sources to expedite the project.

“It takes time and a lot of work to get water to certain areas,” Davis said. “We ask people to be patient as we continue our efforts. The project is currently in the planning phase, and we hope to see construction start within the next couple years.”

During a visit to the Baca/Prewitt Chapter in the fall, President Nygren heard about the lack of water infrastructure in the area and acknowledged the challenge it will take to get the community water access.

## **Crafting homes, empowering communities with the ‘hooghan zhóni’ project**

**April 1, 2025** - The construction of three-bedroom homes by our Navajo people at the ZenniHome factory in LeChee, Ariz., is a vision that has become a reality. This week marks the delivery of the first home, part of a commitment to build 160 durable homes designed to last over 100 years.

Funded by a \$50 million contract awarded to IDS+A in partnership with ZenniHome, these high-quality homes, known as Hooghan Zhóni, are built for our most vulnerable relatives identified through the Navajo Division of Community Development. This effort aligns with the Nygren Administration's “1,000 Home Initiative” to tackle the critical housing crisis within our Nation.

During a tour on Monday, I witnessed the remarkable craftsmanship and manufacturing of these homes – on Navajo, by Navajo, for Navajo. Designed with ADA compliance, they are built to withstand extreme weather conditions like our intense windstorms, drought and unpredictable monsoons.

ZenniHome is also innovating the building process by employing a trained Navajo workforce, many of whom previously worked at the Navajo Generating Station. Construction efforts of these 160 units will continue throughout spring and summer, providing essential housing for our most vulnerable community members. Although these homes may be slightly more expensive, their exceptional quality is evident. I encourage everyone to visit [www.navajohomes.com](http://www.navajohomes.com) for more information and to view the beautiful homes we are constructing. Together, we are making a lasting positive impact for generations to come.

## **White Cone veterans celebrate repurposed building after years of advocacy**

**March 31, 2025** - In a small building across from the local gas station, Navajo commanders and veterans gathered March 27 to celebrate the dedication of the White Cone Veterans Center. For this small community, the repurposed building space marks a significant achievement for its veterans.

Some community members joined the celebration outside the building due to having full capacity, a prideful moment reflecting the power of grassroots advocacy and the values of “T’áá hwó’ ají t’éeego.”

For years, community organizing has been the driving force behind securing a dedicated space for veterans in White Cone.



“Not many veterans organizations have their own buildings to call home, so this building is significant,” said White Cone Veterans Commander John Wilson. “We do what we can here to make this place feel like a home away from home.”

The White Cone Veterans Organization began its advocacy efforts five years ago, pursuing the use of a former head start facility owned by Navajo Head Start. Through determination, they mobilized support, passed local resolutions for chapter approval, and ultimately secured the building.

After receiving the keys, they collected donations for furniture, basic necessities, and repairs. To sustain the facility, the organization raises funds through bingos, raffles, and other community events, covering costs like electricity, water, and minor repairs.

The Office of the President contributed to the celebration on March 27 by donating food items, recognizing the dedication and warrior spirits of White Cone’s veterans.

Under the Nygren Administration, we will continue to support community organizations that serve our veterans. Their contributions and sacrifices deserve recognition and tangible support. Together, we honor every service member and remain committed to addressing the challenges they face daily.

### **NAPI food boxes in Upper Fruitland Chapter helps families in need**

**March 31, 2025** - 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.

On Saturday, March 29, the Office of the President helped unload the food boxes in Upper Fruitland Chapter to community members in need. 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 that our Navajo Nation Washington Office applied for on behalf of our people.

In Upper Fruitland, a long line of cars waited to be loaded with these nourishing food items. With the help of the Office of the President, it filled me with gratitude that our Diné people are using the resources we worked hard to secure for them to benefit.

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

### **Honoring our Vietnam veterans in Northern Navajo Agency**

**March 30, 2025** - I extend my 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 this past weekend in Northern Navajo Agency: 8th Annual Vietnam Veterans Day in Shiprock and at the 16th Annual Honor Walk in Upper Fruitland on March 29. Both community-led events honor our Vietnam Veterans.

I had the honor of speaking at both and 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.

On this day of March 29, we not only honor those who served, but we must acknowledge the challenges our veterans face with lack of support and resources that they need.

As Navajo Nation President, I am determined to continue advocating for our veteran needs and assistance to receive benefits that will help them with their day-to-day life.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

Under the Nygren Administration, we are working continuously to improve healthcare, housing and job opportunities for our veterans. We hear you and we see you.

We are taking care of our people, and I want to ensure that we work with our Navajo Nation Washington Office to protect our language and advocate for our veterans to provide them with homes and resources. To our Vietnam Veterans, thank you for your service. You're not forgotten and, as always, welcome home! Ahéhee'

### **Breaking barriers: paving the way for Diné law students at the University of Arizona**

**March 29, 2025** - I am always impressed with our Diné students' grit to pursue law, as it will benefit the Navajo Nation with more legal minds to protect our tribal sovereignty. On Tuesday, March 25, I met with Diné law students who currently attend the University of Arizona. They shared their stories and the outstanding work they are doing for our people.

"There is a demonstrated commitment here at the University of Arizona for the Navajo Nation to continue to train and build a legal culture," said Keith Richotte Jr., Director of the Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy Program and Professor of Law.

Our law students have the potential to shape our political leadership and expand advocacy for our people. Having students from the Navajo Nation understand law is one step closer to justice and maintaining our tribal sovereignty.

It gives me grace that our own Diné are pursuing higher education in law, and I am confident they are going to be the next set of champions that will be needed in the future.

"We would love to continue this partnership and would love the support of the nation to keep it going," Richotte, Jr. said.

The University of Arizona has a partnership with the Navajo Nation that allows our Diné students to receive funding and work opportunities. An MOU I signed with the law school will be renewed next year to help our Diné students continue their studies as law students and receive the best education with the UA's mission to promote student excellence.

It is vital that our trained lawyers - an investment by the Navajo Nation - are solutions-oriented, adapted, and innovative; thus, putting our nation at the forefront to be the best.

Thank you for studying law, continue to fight for our Diné people, and may the Holy People guide our students' law journey.

### **Navajos healing Navajos through the Yideeskáai Hózhóójí Iná Center, a residential treatment facility**

**March 29, 2025** - Located in downtown Phoenix, the Yideeskáadi Hózhóójí Iná Center will provide culturally relevant substance use treatment specifically for members of the Navajo Nation, while strategically expanding our facilities to meet community needs. We celebrated this wholistic achievement at a ribbon cutting on Thursday, March 27.

I want to acknowledge all those who made this vision a reality, including:

- Navajo Department of Health – Sherylene Yazzie, Executive Director
- Navajo Division of Behavioral & Mental Health Services – Vera John & Tanya Shepherd
- Navajo Division for Children & Family Services – Thomas Cody, Executive Director
- Navajo Nation Division for Public Safety – Michael Anderson, Executive Director
- Department of Emergency Medical Services – Chris Kescoli, Department Manager
- Speaker Crystalyne Curley, 25th Navajo Nation Council and Health, Human Services Committee Members Vince R. James, Germaine Simonson, Curtis Yanito, George Tolth
- Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne of the Judicial Branch of the Navajo Nation, including Navajo Nation Probation Services
- City of Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego, who was instrumental in our efforts



- Axiom Care – Vern Johnson, Founder
- Maria Cohen, MC Dream Builders Realty, LLC
- And our urban Diné relatives and our people back in Dinétah

The Yideeskáadi Hózhóǫ́jí Iiná Center represents holistic healing for all of us. Our approach is unique, incorporating cultural healing practices like smudging ceremonies and talking circles into the treatment experience. We are committed to a trauma-informed model that addresses intergenerational trauma through programs developed by White Bison and evidence-based practices.

The Yideeskáadi Hózhóǫ́jí Iiná Center will offer residential treatment for 92 adults and their families, including childcare for children under five, ensuring families stay together during treatment. Shuttle services will eliminate transportation barriers.

I am thrilled about our 37,000 square foot facility, acquired for \$9.5 million, which features patient rooms and is near major medical centers, enhancing our care capacity.

Anticipated opening for this residential treatment center is by midsummer 2025.

This initiative supports my vision for the Navajo Nation, tackling critical social issues while creating over 60 jobs, demonstrating how traditional practices and modern science can work together for our community's long-term prosperity

### **Nataaní Nez Restaurant opens new doors in Shiprock, NM**

**March 28, 2025** - One of my favorite dishes to eat at the Nataaní 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 Nataaní 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 Nataaní 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.

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

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.

Nataaní Nez Restaurant is now open daily from 6:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. If you haven't tried their dishes yet, I highly recommend it. Congratulations to the Shiprock community on gaining another fantastic dining option!

### **Shiprock Incident Command Center: 45% complete and on track for October 2025 opening**

**March 28, 2025** - As one of the largest and busiest towns on the Navajo Nation, Shiprock has experienced both growth and challenges, including natural disasters and emergencies.

Last summer's floods brought FEMA to the region for damage assessments, and every fall, the Northern Navajo Fair draws thousands of Diné, friends, and in-laws.

To meet the increasing demands of the Northern Navajo Agency, a community-led solution is taking shape - the Shiprock Incident Command Center. This \$19 million facility will provide essential support for our emergency first responders, ensuring quicker deployment of resources and aid when it's needed most.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

Located across the street from the newly opened Nataani Nez Restaurant, the command center is approximately 45% complete. The 25,500-square-foot facility sits on 1.8 acres along U.S. Highway 491. It will include a small kitchen, rest areas, and exercise facilities for our first responders. This initiative has been entrusted to Dr. Delores Greyeyes, a dedicated leader who has significantly contributed to improving our criminal justice system with the development of new jails and justice centers. Arviso Construction is managing the build, and seeing the progress firsthand has been a powerful reminder of how critical infrastructure like this will benefit thousands of Diné through enhanced public safety. I extend my sincere gratitude to the New Mexico Legislature, especially former Representative Anthony Allison who has advocated years to get funding for this project. I also thank Representative Joseph Hernandez for continuing this work securing \$1.2 million in state funds to help address the facility's \$3.7 million shortfall. More support from New Mexico is anticipated in the near future. I also thank Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. Despite political challenges, this project stands as a testament to the successful collaboration of tribal, state, and federal funding. My visit on March 26 confirmed that the Shiprock Incident Command Center is on track to open its doors in October 2025.

### **Chichiltah community breaks ground on the Vanderwagon Community Water System Project**

**March 28, 2025** - On March 26, my team and I traveled to Chichiltah to break ground on Phase 2 of the 3-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 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. Their words and demonstration acknowledge that we are thinking for the future. Also in attendance was Seth Damon, New Mexico Deputy Secretary of Indian Affairs.

### **Healing the land: Navajo Nation starts cleanup of 'many devils wash' after gold king spill**

**March 27, 2025** — A decade after the Gold King Mine spill contaminated the Animas River, a 2022 settlement and grant are funding various cleanup efforts. On March 5, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren signed a \$36,737 service contract with Iina' Ba' Inc., funded by the Gold King Mine Spill settlement, to begin phase one—assessment—of the Many Devils Wash cleanup.



Patrick Antonio, from the Navajo Environmental Protection Agency, said the project is expected to be completed by September 2027, though the work will be done before then. The cleanup team is awaiting final documentation to proceed.

Iina' Ba' is ready to start work, but the contract processing time is uncertain. Once assessment is finalized, a coordination meeting will be held within a week with Iina' Ba', the Navajo EPA-WQ/NPDES Program—helps address water pollution by regulating point sources that discharge pollutants to waters of the United States—and stakeholders. A site visit will follow within another week, and within one more week, Iina' Ba' will submit a plan of action.

"The Many Devils Wash trash dumps pose a threat to humans, livestock, and the San Juan River," Antonio said. "Cleanup will address these risks and ensure compliance with Navajo Nation Surface Water Quality Standards."

The cleanup will remove debris, transport non-hazardous waste to a certified landfill, and properly dispose of hazardous waste. Efforts will also try to restore the banks of the washes.

"A lot was harmed due to the Gold King Mine spill, and it can't be undone," President Nygren said. "The settlement can't fix everything, but I am committed to working with NEPA to clean up our land."

### **Navajo business reception: building a thriving future together with diné entrepreneurs at RES 2025**

**March 13, 2025** - At the Navajo Business Reception during the 2025 Reservation Economic Summit in Las Vegas, I felt excitement talking about our Navajo economy and its expanding footprint with hundreds of Diné entrepreneurs. This event wasn't just a reception; it was a celebration of our Diné entrepreneurs and a testament to our shared strength and resilience.

I spotted familiar faces from the Diné Development Corporation (DDC) and many of our tribal enterprises like Navajo Nation Hospitality Enterprise and the Navajo Times, and their dedication to uplifting our people through their line of work and services. Engaging with fellow entrepreneurs, hearing their stories, and sharing hopes for the future is vital to our tribal sovereignty.

This reception was also the launch of the United Dineh Ventures (UDV), which is an effort to unify our tribal enterprises to expand our global footprint. The goal of UDV is for our larger enterprises like DDC, Navajo Agricultural Products Industry, Navajo Times, Navajo Arts and Crafts Enterprise and Navajo Nation Hospitality Enterprise, among others, to mentor small businesses to help them grow and expand.

For instance, enterprises like the Diné Development Corporation, which has contributed nearly \$22 million to our community, is a success story with its global information technology sector. I called on our guests to share their own stories of success, knowing their experiences could motivate others to pursue their dreams, and to network to find solutions.

While I acknowledged the challenges we face, particularly with budget shortfalls ahead, I urged everyone to unite in finding solutions. Together, I know we can navigate these obstacles. I envision a thriving future where our Navajo businesses succeed through collaboration, innovation, and community support.

### **University of Arizona welcomes 23rd president, celebrating leadership and empowering student success**

**March 27, 2025** - Congratulations to Suresh Garimella, who was celebrated as the University of Arizona's 23rd President!

An installation procession and ceremony, held in Tucson, included the presentation of colors from the U of A Joint ROTC Color Guard, National Anthem by the Pride of Arizona Trumpet and Drum Corps, a blessing by Associate Dean for Indigenous Affairs in the College of Health Sciences Carlos Gonzales, and greetings from the Arizona cheerleaders, mascots and Pride of Arizona Marching Band.

"As Arizona's land grant university, U of A was established with the purpose of removing barriers to higher education and offering a path forward for everyone in Arizona," said Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

Garimella was the previous president of the University of Vermont from 2019-2024. He also holds an appointment as University Distinguished Professor in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering.

Based on Garimella's experience in higher education, I am confident that his leadership will continue to drive innovation for UA students, including our Navajo students, and their future careers.

His vision for success will provide students with the best possible education they need to thrive both academically and professionally.

"Together let us help this wonderful place as a true force for good," President Suresh Garimella said. I extend my heartfelt gratitude for Garimella's leadership and commitment to promote student excellence within their learning experiences. It was an honorable moment to sit alongside fellow scholars as we witnessed Garimella's installation as the 23rd President.

### **Hogback Chapter's new pump system to protect endangered fish**

**March 26, 2025** – 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 animal relatives, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren recently signed a \$648,735 service contract 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," President Nygren said. "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."

### **Flying high for wildlife: \$57,310 helicopter survey will determine hunting permits on the Navajo Nation**

**March 26, 2025** – 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.

The \$57,310 service contract, signed by Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, 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," President Nygren said. "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, 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 hunt permits.

### **Building solutions together: President Nygren visits Dennehotso Chapter**

**March 25, 2025** - While traveling through the Western Navajo Agency, I visited the Dennehotso Chapter House on March 20 to bring our government directly to the people with various Navajo Nation Divisions and Departments.

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 Community Housing and Infrastructure Department 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.

### **Empowering our diné students through higher education at the University of Arizona**

**March 25, 2025** - This morning, I had the honor of speaking with about 40 of our Diné students at the University of Arizona, who are all exemplary students.

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.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

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 here today 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!'

### **50 miles road near Many Farms, Rough Rock to receive a makeover**

**March 24, 2025** – Long stretches of faint road lines on Navajo Routes 64 and 12 near Many Farms, Ariz. led to community members concerned about driving.

On Feb. 4, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren signed a \$999,580 service contract that comes from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act to continue one of his administration's priorities, improving Navajo roads.

The Navajo Department of Transportation selected CB Emulsion LLC to carry out the striping after NDOT received numerous calls with concerns on not being able to see the faint lines that lead to dangerous driving conditions.

"We're doing our due diligence for the community," said Shelia Clyde with NDOT. "People need to see the road especially at night, it can be dangerous. It's like this in a lot of places but we're doing this one step at a time." CB Emulsion will re-stripe left and right shoulder white stripes and yellow centerline. It is advised to be cautious when driving in the area during the striping process.

"It may seem like a small road improvement but hearing that our elders are worried to drive in those areas because the road lines create unsafe driving conditions, the striping will make a good impact," said President Nygren. "Our elders deserve proper roadways, our Navajo drivers deserve safe and reliable roads and that's what myself, NDOT and the roadwork crew are doing."

### **Domestic violence shelters on the Navajo Nation get \$1.27 million in contract extensions**

**March 24, 2025** – 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, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren has 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," President Nygren said.

"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," said Thomas Cody, director for the Navajo Division of Children and Family Services. "The domestic violence funds we get are used to assist families in need of services from domestic violence."

**14 Navajo Nation Office of the President**



If anyone is in need of assistance due to domestic violence please reach out to the following contacts.

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

**Being a naat'áanii is a rough road our chapter officials persevere through for their communities**

**March 23, 2025** - Today, I had the honor of speaking at the Red Mesa Chapter leadership dinner, a special occasion where we came together to recognize the dedication of our community leaders.

First, I want to extend my gratitude to everyone who attended and for inviting me. Special thanks to Herman Farley, Chapter President; Marilyn Holly, Vice President; Marlene Dee-Ben, Secretary/Treasurer; and Leonard Begay, Grazing Official. Your hard work and leadership are truly appreciated. I also want to thank those who helped organize this dinner—your efforts made this gathering possible.

A highlight of the afternoon was celebrating the good news that the chapter has not only passed its audits but also secured recertification for our land use plan. These accomplishments are a testament to the leaders' determination to keep Red Mesa thriving as a local governing body.

During my remarks, I reminded everyone of the core values of leadership—integrity, humility, accountability, and respect for our land. These values drive me, especially on tough days.

Leadership isn't about commanding; it's about inspiring and empowering others. The leadership we're celebrating today reflects that approach, as we see officials who truly listen to and serve the community.

I encourage everyone to keep attending chapter meetings. When you get tired, keep going—this is how we move projects forward to the Legislative branch and to my office.

If all 110 chapters work together, with the people at the center, we can create the change we all desire.

**Nygren Administration prioritizes road repairs in Chilchinbeto chapter**

**March 22, 2025** - On March 20, my team and I traveled to Chilchinbeto 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 as the 110 chapters in 2025.

In Chilchinbeto, the major concern is the safety and accessibility of bus routes for our Navajo students. Eugene Bedonie, manager for Chilchinbeto 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 Chilchinbeto Chapter House meeting, where I introduced my staff who are actively involved in addressing these road concerns.

As Navajo Nation President, I will continue these conversations with my team and division directors, who are tasked with serving our constituents daily. I remain committed to making these community visits in all 110 communities.

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 volumes. Ahéhee!

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

### **Flags of sovereignty: a call to restore tribal representation at the Phoenix VA Hospital**

**March 21, 2025** - Through social media and advocacy posts of our sister tribes like the Gila River Indian Community, we discovered multiple tribal nation flags reportedly being removed from the Phoenix Veterans Affairs Hospital.

Just this week, we worked closely with our federal government to reinstate materials associated with our Navajo Code Talkers on federal websites. Although that action has since been resolved, our tribal flags being removed from the Phoenix VA hospital is completely disheartening.

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

What's more, March 20 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. Rep. 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.

### **Christopher werito wins 2025 Navajo Nation Spelling Bee, qualifies for the National Scripps Spelling Bee! Yéégo nihilchini yéégo!**

**March 20, 2025** - It is with great pride that we celebrate the achievements of two exceptional young men, Christopher Werito and Ethan Stevenson. Both spellers demonstrated outstanding academic excellence and dedication during the 2025 Navajo Nation Spelling Bee.

Christopher, an 8th grader from Tsaile Public Schools in the Chinle Agency, will proudly represent the Navajo Nation at the prestigious National Scripps Spelling Bee in Washington D.C. on May 26.

Equally deserving of recognition is Ethan Stevenson, an 8th grader from Kirtland Middle School in the Northern Agency. Ethan is runner-up at this year's Navajo Nation Spelling Bee.

I'm proud of both Christopher and Ethan. It has been a while that our young Diné boys had won our spelling bee and now with the chance to spell nationally. Congratulations!

Our Navajo Nation Spelling Bee is a space that teaches us about the determination of our youth and how elevating them with support is critical for life success.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all our families who guide their children with love and encouragement. These young men are true reflections of the bright future that awaits our youth.

### **Thank you, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, for your signature, protecting native graduates across New Mexico!**

**March 20, 2025** - It is with absolute joy that I thank Gov. Lujan Grisham for signing Senate Bill 163, a bill that is made for our Native 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 Native 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.

#### **Navajo code talkers' legacy restored after website removal mishap**

**March 19, 2025** - It has been confirmed by Pentagon officials that the Department of Defense will restore materials related to the Navajo Code Talkers on its website.

White House officials reached out to my office 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.

I'm 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. 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. Ahéhee!

#### **Celebrating diné nursing students at the University of New Mexico's 2025 nursing pledge ceremony**

**March 19, 2025** - 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 marks 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 among 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, like 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 the study to become nurses. Wishing you the best of luck!

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

### **President Nygren signs \$500 million-plus comprehensive budget**

**March 18, 2025** - Although Resolution CF-07-25 does not reflect a consensus among the Three Branch Chiefs or this Administration's steadfast commitment to growth and direct services for the Navajo Nation and our Navajo people, I nonetheless signed into law the Navajo Nation Fiscal Year 2025 Comprehensive Budget totaling over \$500 million on March 14.

I signed this Comprehensive Budget even though it does not have the consensus of the three branch chiefs because we need to move forward on a more productive path and ensure that Fiscal Year 2026 truly reflects the needs of our three branches.

I committed myself to collaborating with the other two branches of government to ensure fiscal responsibility, that our basic branch needs were met, and to ensure that direct services to the people were not negatively impacted.

My position has been very clear from the beginning – my commitment is to a comprehensive budget that honors a Three Branch Chief Agreement. Despite the lack of collaboration from the Council, I signed this legislation with very few line-item vetoes, to which now Speaker Crystalyne Curley is suggesting that I have abused my line-item veto authority. Specifically, I line-item vetoed items that would fund outside contractors, consultants and attorneys who do not work within our tribal government:

- \$610,634 in Contractual Services: These amounts fund outside lobbyists for Speaker Curley and contracts for people who do not work directly for the Navajo government. It is irrational to use lobbyists as we have the Navajo Nation Washington Office to serve as the Nation's liaison. Rather than fund outside lobbyists, the Council could make more investments to the NNWO.

- \$428,414 in Contractual Services: These amounts fund outside attorneys and legal counsel, and support outside contractors who do not work directly for the Navajo government.

- \$975,719 for Office of Legislative Counsel and \$50,005 for the Office of Legislative Services. Both amounts fund additional outside, contract attorneys and consultants. Again, these are outside contractors who do not work directly for the Navajo government.

Even with these vetoes, the Legislative Branch as a whole continues to have significant operating funds of over \$5 million. This includes over \$1 million for travel for the next six months – over half a million dollars for supplies for the next six months, and over \$700,000 for special transactions for the next six months.

As I stated to the Navajo Nation Council, my office is at the forefront of executive management, economic growth, and governance. It is not just another department – it is the leadership hub of the Navajo Nation. Starving my office of necessary resources weakens the Navajo Nation and our ability to serve the Navajo People, implement solutions, and drive progress for future generations.

The Council budgeted significant funds to the Legislative Branch and cut my office funds even though the Legislative Branch does not provide direct services to the Navajo People in the same manner as my office and the Executive Branch. In addition to providing direct services, my office oversees billions of dollars in economic initiatives, infrastructure projects, and essential services that impact thousands of Navajo citizens. Despite this political maneuvering by Speaker Curley, I am happy that key investments have been made for our people and communities including:

- Workforce Compensation – Wage adjustments for all employees to ensure fair pay (in the amounts of \$1,438,597 for compensation increases and \$4,774,382 General Wage Adjustments at 4 percent).

- Veterans Support – Expanded assistance for those who have served our Nation (in the amounts of \$550,000 and \$43,000 for each agency).

- Local Chapter Houses – Increased funding for critical support, maintenance, and repairs. Exhibit J Budget Binder \$42,493,069 Exhibit G \$5.2 million to Chapters (Veterans above, Utility Payments, Solid Waste, Youth employment, LGA GWA for staff in the amount of \$1.5 million).



Over \$5 million has been allocated for chapter house repairs, including immediate support for the To'Hajiilee Chapter House. This chapter house has since been condemned, and this funding will help reopen it and maintain other vital community hubs.

Additionally, this budget strengthens our Nation through:

- Increased Scholarships – Investing in the education of our youth namely \$921,179 to Chapters and \$2 million to Navajo Nation Scholarships.
- Enhanced Emergency Response – Strengthening disaster preparedness and public safety including \$7,351,671 for Emergency Medical Services
- Community Development – Infrastructure improvements and economic growth (including CR Exhibit G-1 No. 17 through 19 in the amounts of \$374,341, \$250,000, and \$479,236; and No. 30 through 34 in the amounts of \$500,000, \$51,409, \$1,774,923, \$46,338 and \$60,332)
- Law Enforcement & Aging Services – Expanding resources for critical services (specifically CR Exhibit G-1 No. 38, 39 45, 46, 7, 48, 49 and 50 in the amounts of \$1,000,000, \$100,000, \$179,236, \$500,000, \$30,000, \$43,829, \$158,816 and \$80,000)
- New Solid Waste Management Department – Addressing sanitation needs across the Nation (in the amount of \$1,130,766)

One of our upcoming budget priorities is transitioning utilities—such as internet, water, and electricity—to fixed costs. This will prevent chapter houses and administrative buildings from shutting down due to unpaid bills, allowing us to focus on bigger challenges while keeping essential services operational.

I look forward to closer collaboration with the Navajo Nation Council to ensure that the FY2026 budget delivers even more direct services to our people.

### **President Nygren requests clarification on the removal of Navajo Code Talker content**

**March 18, 2025** – Shortly after Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren formally requested clarification from the U.S. Army and the Department of Defense regarding the recent removal of articles related to the Navajo Code Talkers from official websites, the Department of Defense announced plans to restore the content.

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 emphasized that tribal nations, including the Navajo Nation, are distinct sovereign entities with their own governments and rights. He further expressed that tribal recognition should not be affected by federal administrative initiatives, including those related to DEI.

Currently, U.S. Marine Corps, Air Force, and Navy websites continue to host articles featuring the Navajo Code Talkers.

President Nygren requested further clarity on the issue and highlighted the importance of preserving public awareness about the contributions of the Navajo Code Talkers to ensure future generations remain informed.

### **Empowering Navajo families across New Mexico: advocating for children with disabilities**

**March 14, 2025** - 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.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

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.

### **Same lake, new facilities: Wheatfields Lake recreation area to get new additions**

**March 14, 2025** – With the Ch'óóshgai (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.

On February 25, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren 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.

President Nygren emphasized the lake's importance and said, "These places are part of our tradition. We need to protect them not just because they're given to us from 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.

### **Celebrating our Diné leaders at the 2025 native american 40 under 40 ceremony**

**March 12, 2025** - Congratulations to our Diné members, Colin Bradley, Candace French, and Adrian Standing-Elk Pinnecoose, who were recognized as honorable awardees during the Native American 40 Under 40 celebration event in Las Vegas.

Last night, these individuals showed pride through their dedication and leadership within our community. I commend their success as they are representing the Navajo Nation by shaping the future by going beyond boundaries.

Hosted by the Native American Leadership Initiative Dedication, this award ceremony was held at the Reservation Economic Summit.

Not only was this event for celebrating inspiring individuals but to recognize their contributions of their hard work that will pave a bright future for the Navajo Nation as leaders and role models.

Every awardee that was present and nominated show how much they are making a difference within their community, and I acknowledge their dedication in making a positive impact for our future leaders and youth.

The evening was full of networking from different programs and other awardees who were in attendance.

I am very honored to have witnessed this moment of our young Diné leaders being acknowledged for their contributions to helping the Diné people.

May the Holy People continue to guide our young people to continue their journey of empowerment and hard work as representatives of the Navajo Nation. I am very proud.

### **Empowering future entrepreneurs through tribal sovereignty and resilience at the reservation economic summit**

**March 12, 2025** - This morning, I had the honor of speaking 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) here in Las Vegas.

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

As Navajo Nation President, I spoke on our evolving Navajo economy, and some of the accomplishments we have achieved for the nation and our people. I was proud to share 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.

In 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 reminds us that we are still here and are resilient.

Gathering here today at RES not only reflects our commitment to our people but shows the resilience of our tribal sovereignty in thinking for the future.

Our future generations depend on our leadership to guide them through the journey of constant change and current challenges we face in this modern economy. We are the original traders and business folks that builds the American economy, too.

Today reminded me of the strength that we received from our ancestors who fought for us to be here today. We honor them by using our voices to speak.

### **Investing in our communities: local shopping in nahata'dzil means money back to dine impacted by Navajo Hopi settlement act of 1974**

**March 11, 2025** – The 1974 settlement act forced nearly 4,000 Diné people to relocate, a hardship they continue to face, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

To support those affected, the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Office established the Diné Relocatee Fund, which provides financial assistance to those who were displaced.

On March 3, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren signed a business site lease modification for the Bashas store in Nahata'Dzil, updating ownership and clarifying rental terms. The change ensures the store can continue to serve the relocated community.

A representative from the Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development explained that part of the rental revenue from Bashas is directed back into the Diné Relocatee Fund to assist displaced families.

“It provides the local services to the people who were relocated, provides the jobs, provides the convenience of having the store there, it’s a hub to bring in economic development,” said the employee.

The relocation disrupted families, uprooting them from their homes and communities. In addition to offering groceries and household items, Bashas helps by contributing to the fund that continues to support the relocated families.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

“We understand the pain that comes with the stories of those who were relocated,” President Nygren said. “It remains a priority for me to check in and assist our families. It’s going to take more than just moving them to a new place—they need continued support. Together with the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission and Bashas, we are working to do what should have been done long ago: help our people.”

### **BEE-ING BRILLIANT: NORTHERN AGENCY STUDENTS BUZZ INTO SPELLING SUCCESS!**

**March 10, 2025** – Nervous hearts and fidgety hands shifted in seats, waiting for the next challenging word like “token” or “backgammon” for a chance to be a Spelling Bee Champion.

On March 6, 2025, the Northern Agency Spelling Bee held their annual National Scripps Spelling Bee at the Phil L. Thomas Performing Arts Center hosted by the Office of Diné Youth.

The annual Spelling Bee 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.

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.”

These winners and the runners-up will compete in the Navajo Nation Spelling Bee on March 20, 2025 at the Crownpoint Office of Dine' Youth in Crownpoint, N.M. Winners there proceed to the Scripps National Spelling Bee on May 27-29.

“I am a big believer in literacy, as I have been an avid reader since I was in grade school,” said Malinda Notah, program and project specialist at ODY. “The Spelling Bee also builds students’ confidence in communication, language and critical thinking skills. It also boosts their confidence and adds fun and provides an example of healthy competition among their peers.”

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren sends each student, including the runner-ups and alternates, who did their best to make it so far in the Northern Agency Spelling Bee.

“Our future is bright with each and every one of our students,” President Nygren said. “These young minds striving for excellence shows they will continue to create a healthy future for themselves and our Nation. Ahe’hee to our young, bright minds for pushing yourselves.”

### **Bringing government to the people: listening, responding and taking action**

**March 10, 2025** - Every weekend, we are bringing the Navajo Nation government to our people at local flea markets. This past weekend, my team and I visited the Gallup and Shiprock Flea Markets to hear directly from our people to provide immediate government response.

With the recent snowfall, many concerns were about road conditions. Roads remain a top priority, and while maintenance takes time, progress is happening. A few weeks ago, I signed a contract for on-call engineering services to pave roads in several communities, costing around \$400 million. Construction will begin this spring, and I have directed the Navajo Department of Transportation to expedite schedules.

In Shiprock, I was excited to visit the new flea market location under the iconic Shiprock Bridge along the San Juan River. This market is part of a larger development that includes an RV park, vendor spaces, a camping site, and a river walk. Many vendors shared their needs, and I fully support their entrepreneurial spirit.

Being at the flea markets reminds me why I ran for office—to engage directly with our people and address their concerns. Our people remain gracious and supportive of the Nygren Administration and the Office of the President, and I will continue working hard with the executive branch to serve them.

I’d like to thank my team and the Navajo people for coming out on a cold day and with this, please continue to dress warm and be safe.

**22 Navajo Nation Office of the President**



**Congratulations to our 'elite 8' teams for advancing in the new mexico state basketball tournament**

**March 8, 2025** - I extend my warmest congratulations to the outstanding teams that have advanced to the Elite 8 in their respective brackets of the 2025 Nusenda Credit Union State Basketball championships for New Mexico!

This includes both the Navajo Prep Eagles and Lady Eagles, Tohatchi Cougars and Lady Cougars, Kirtland Central Lady Broncos, Gallup Lady Bengals, Crownpoint Lady Eagles, Newcomb Lady Skyhawks, and the Rehoboth Lynx boys' team!

And to the other schools in the state that feature our Diné ballers, like 3A Santa Fe Indian School Braves and Lady Braves, and the Sandia Lady Matadors in Class 5A.

A special shoutout goes to the Navajo Prep Eagles, who secured their place in the Elite 8 by defeating the Hot Springs Tigers Saturday afternoon, with an impressive score of 47-43. As the defending 3A champions, your skill and determination truly shine through.

The Tohatchi Cougars have also showcased exceptional talent this year, while the Kirtland Central Lady Broncos and Gallup Lady Bengals have made significant strides in the 4A bracket on a potential title clash. Additionally, the Navajo Prep Lady Eagles, Crownpoint Lady Eagles, Newcomb Lady Skyhawks, and Tohatchi Lady Cougars have made their mark in 3A girls' competition, and the Rehoboth boys team in the 2A bracket has demonstrated resilience and dedication.

This year, District 1-AAA is particularly strong, contributing to the competitiveness and success of our teams in both boys and girls Class 3A brackets.

Supporting student-athletes across the Navajo Nation is one of my administration's priorities. I am committed to fostering excellence in academics and athletics to empower our young athletes to achieve their goals both on the court and in the classroom.

Best of luck for the rest of the tournament! I wish you nothing but success as you strive to bring back the Blue Trophy. Congratulations again, and 'Go Eagles, Cougars, Broncos, Bengals, Braves, Lynx and Skyhawks!' You all represent the Navajo Nation!

**Shiprock and Gallup Flea Market: Bringing Leadership to the People**

**March 8, 2025** - I'm bringing my Division Directors and staff directly to the community—where our people are—so we can listen, connect, and take action. We want to hear about the challenges you're facing, whether it's roads, electricity, applications you've submitted, or employment concerns. My team and I are here to follow up, find solutions, and ensure your voices are heard.

We're also handing out my office phone number because I want you to know that we're available Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM. If you share your concerns with us today, we will follow up next week and let you know what's possible and what steps we can take together.

Not everyone can make it to Window Rock during the week, and I understand that—many of you are working, taking care of family, or running errands. That's why we're coming to you. This is our chance to meet at the grassroots level, to engage with the people who need help the most, and to make sure my team remains humble and connected to the realities our communities face every day.

I have always said, I will never forget where I came from, and I will never stop fighting for our people. That commitment is what drives me, and I will continue to show up, listen, and do everything I can to bring real solutions to the Navajo Nation.

**Honoring tradition, inspiring the future: the rise of navajo youth at the 67th annual heard indian fair and market**

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

**March 7, 2025** - 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. Today, 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 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. Congratulations to all artisans featured at this year's Heard Indian Fair and Market!

### **Honoring heroes: key turning ceremonies for veterans in ganado and huerfano**

**March 7, 2025** - Honoring and taking care of our Navajo Veterans is one of my key priorities as Navajo Nation President. This 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 community. 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 2 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 that contains 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 3 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 program 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.

### **Oak springs chapter builds for the future with a \$3.4 million renovation**

**March 6, 2025** - Oak Springs Chapter is setting a strong example of what's possible when we invest in our communities. For years, this chapter 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'm 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.

### **President Nygren supports future diné law students paving a future at asu law**

**March 6, 2025** - I was able to meet with four of our Diné law students currently attending the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University (ASU), and one prospective student. Their passion and hard work is not going unnoticed!

As I listened to their stories and experiences in law, I am confident that they will obtain the knowledge, skills and experience to become great future lawyers who represent the Navajo Nation.

"We've had a formal agreement to try to get more Navajo students trained so that they would be good attorneys for the nation and representing the nation and other tribes," said Kate Rosier, executive director for the Indian Legal Program.

Recently, the agreement contract with Navajo Nation was extended for another five years. The only change is that the program will house three attorneys in hopes of utilizing the Beus Center for Law and Society for Diné students to work directly with the nation to receive credit while gaining hands-on experience that is currently in progress.

It brings me pride knowing our students are pursuing law, as it will help to continue bridging a connection to create change for the future by being the voice of the Navajo people by addressing important matters.

"We are really appreciative of our partnership with Navajo," Rosier said.

I would like to thank Mrs. Rosier, professors and the program for supporting our Diné students by guiding them through leadership, mentorship and offering opportunities that will benefit their law journeys.

Moving forward, I believe these students will pave a path for future lawyers and make a difference within the law field by representing the Navajo Nation.

### **Investing in our chapters: st. Michaels renovation moving forward**

**March 5, 2025** -As President of the Navajo Nation, I am proud to share exciting progress on the St. Michaels Chapter House renovation—a project that reflects our commitment to building strong, vibrant communities for our people.

In St. Michaels, we selected Buffalo Design Architects out of Albuquerque to lead the design of an 8,500-square-foot renovation and expansion. While the original plan anticipated completion in March 2023, we faced some delays, and we are now targeting July 2025 to finish the work.

This 20-acre site will feature a modern steel structure with thoughtful architectural details like a steel canopy and beautiful salvaged sandstone on the exterior. Inside, we're creating an open office space, a larger kitchen,

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

and a spacious meeting area with high ceilings—all designed to bring people together and support local governance.

With an overall investment of \$6 million, this project is made possible through a combination of Sihasin, ARPA, and Navajo Nation funds. Arviso Construction is hard at work to deliver this much-needed project for the St. Michaels community.

Thanks to the coordination and leadership of our Division of Community Development's Capital Project Management Department, this long-awaited renovation is finally becoming a reality. Together, we are creating the infrastructure our chapters need to better serve our people today and for generations to come.

### **Flagstaff mayor visits navajo nation for sovereign-to-sovereign talks**

**March 5, 2024** - I had the honor of meeting with Flagstaff Mayor Becky Daggett in the Navajo Nation's tribal capital for an important sovereign-to-sovereign discussion. This was a follow-up to our meeting last month, where we addressed key issues that affect both the Navajo Nation and the broader Northern Arizona region.

Our conversation covered a range of topics, including water development, artificial intelligence (AI), and the cultural importance of Rez Ball, which is central to our communities. We focused on finding common ground for regional economic development and sustainable management of resources.

One of the critical issues we discussed was water development. This is an area of great importance to both Flagstaff and the Navajo Nation, and we emphasized the need for responsible, sustainable water use to protect the future of our region. The Mayor affirmed the city's commitment and support for the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement.

I am grateful for the mayor's visit to Navajo land and for the opportunity to continue building a relationship of collaboration. These conversations are crucial in shaping lasting solutions that benefit not only the Navajo Nation but all of Northern Arizona.

This visit further highlighted the importance of maintaining ongoing dialogue between our two governments, aligning our priorities, and working together to address the challenges and opportunities we share.

### **Fighting against food insecurity with navajo agricultural products industry to deliver 49,333 food boxes**

**March 4, 2025** - Over the next few weeks, 49,333 food boxes filled with nutritious staples will be delivered to all 110 chapter governments for distribution. Each box—containing blue corn meal, potatoes, beans, and more—symbolizes not just nourishment, but also love and connection to our culture. As President of the Navajo Nation, I feel the weight of our responsibility to ensure the well-being of our people. This initiative is made possible by a pivotal \$5.5 million USDA grant aimed at combating food insecurity in our communities.

I thank the Navajo Nation Washington Office for applying for this grant on behalf of our citizens. It's an opportunity for us to uplift those who need it most, including high-risk patients, the elderly, and families struggling to put food on the table.

I want to acknowledge our other partners who have worked tirelessly to make this happen: NAPI (Navajo Agricultural Products Industry), the Department of Agriculture, USDA's Local Food Purchase Program, and our divisions, such as the Navajo Division of Children and Family Services.

Over the past year and a half, we have aligned our processes with the Navajo Nation's procurement laws to ensure compliance with USDA requirements. Our partnership with NAPI has been essential; their capacity allows us to meet the necessary standards for this funding.

As I prepare to sign this vital agreement, I feel urgency. We must not let these funds go—they are meant to uplift our communities. This is just the beginning of our commitment to addressing food insecurity.



Together, we will overcome this challenge, strengthen our community, and build a healthier future for all our Navajo families.

**Chinle leads the way: modern wastewater facility to drive economic opportunities and public health**

**March 3, 2025** - As President of the Navajo Nation, I firmly believe that building modern wastewater treatment facilities is essential for our economic growth and demonstrates our sovereignty and responsibility towards our communities.

Through projects in Chinle, Kayenta, and Shiprock, we are not only enhancing public health and environmental sustainability but also attracting businesses, including big box stores, to our region. Many of our communities currently rely on outdated lagoon systems or aging water treatment facilities that desperately need upgrades. That's why investing in modernizing these treatment facilities is vital for the well-being of our people.

The new wastewater facility in Chinle is particularly noteworthy, with an estimated total investment of \$68 million for the Permanent Replacement Activated Sludge Treatment Plant alone.

This facility will ensure effective management of wastewater, protect our precious water resources, and reduce pollution. It lays a solid foundation for attracting new businesses and creating jobs for our citizens.

Designed to handle a peak capacity of one million gallons per day and to last for 30 to 40 years, this facility represents a significant step forward. We are proud that it is funded through various sources, notably receiving \$44 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

This funding reflects our commitment to environmental stewardship and economic viability for all Navajo people. Together, we are building a brighter, more sustainable future for our Nation, with partners liked NTUA, NECA, AG Solutions, Oscar Renda Contracting, Inc., and WSP.

**Showing up matters: strengthening our students and their education**

**March 2, 2025** - Yesterday, I had the honor of speaking to our Indian Wells community members, chapter representatives, parents, and teachers about something that is vital for the future of our children – the importance of school attendance and the critical role we, as a community, must play in supporting the education of our youth.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Holbrook Unified School District 3 and Superintendent Dr. Robbie Koerperich and Indian Education Director Bernice Gover for the opportunity to speak before our Diné people on behalf of our students.

Our children's future is in our hands, and we must be unwavering in our commitment to building a supportive, thriving community that ensures their educational success, well-being, and growth. We are fortunate to have dedicated teachers who pour their hearts and souls into helping our children excel, not just in the classroom, but in life. However, the work of our educators alone is not enough – we must all show up. Together, we can break down barriers and create opportunities that allow every student to succeed. It begins with something as simple, yet powerful, as encouraging our children to attend school. Every single day of absence represents a missed opportunity for learning, a missed chance to grasp new concepts and materials. I understand the challenges and setbacks that some of our students face, but we can't let these obstacles stand in the way of their success. Every child deserves the opportunity to receive a high-quality education, and it's on all of us to ensure they do.

I urged everyone to view this moment as an opportunity to deepen our understanding of how we can better support our students. By showing up – both physically and emotionally – we can create a foundation for their success.

Let us be a community that does not merely speak about supporting our children but one that actively shows up for them, every day, in every way.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

### **Congratulations to two incredibly persevering teams from dinetah: the lady wildcats and hornets!**

**March 1, 2025** - Without a doubt, yesterday's games – the Lady Hornets facing the Snowflake Lobos and the Lady Wildcats playing the Payson Longhorns – were truly unforgettable. The energy and passion displayed by our Navajo student-athletes were beyond anything I've experienced. Though the results were tough, I know that each player gave their absolute best, and our families were there every step of the way to support them.

Despite the losses, our teams showed incredible strength, and that's something we, as parents and guardians, can't always teach – but sports do. They help build some of the most resilient individuals. Through this experience, our students have learned humility, discipline, and perseverance. These are the qualities that will serve them well not only on the court but in every aspect of life.

As Navajo Nation President, I am deeply proud to see our students investing in their future through sports. While losing may bring a heavy heart, I encourage each of you to see it not as an end, but as an opportunity to grow. Every setback is simply a setup for a stronger comeback. Let this drive you even harder to push forward and give your best next time.

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!

### **Revitalizing the church rock facility: opening doors to new possibilities**

**February 28, 2025** - Yesterday, I conducted an inspection of the Church Rock Manufacturing Facility, a \$38 million project and one of the largest facilities on the Navajo Nation. This critical space is a vital asset for large-scale manufacturing, reinforcing our commitment to creating jobs and fostering economic growth for our people.

Funded by a collaboration of New Mexico state and tribal funds, this facility is situated on private lands owned by the Navajo Nation, ensuring stability for future development.

I am impressed by our local contractors' dedication and the commitment to safety during Phase 2 construction, costing around \$21 million. Built with reliable materials, including innovative insulated panels, the facility spans 65,000 square feet and features energy efficiency superior to traditional concrete.

Created as a vertical engineering project by NECA in collaboration with Murphy Builders, this facility is conceived by Diné, designed by Diné, and for Diné, with significant support from Indigenous Design Studio+Architecture.

We are moving beyond past failures, such as the glove factory, to focus on tangible, economically sound opportunities.

One venture includes utilizing this facility to ramp up the production of manufactured homes, addressing housing needs while boosting economic activity.

To complete this facility, an additional investment of \$17 million is required, ensuring it will cater to various manufacturing opportunities.

While challenges remain—especially in connecting over 1,000 homes to essential water, septic, and sewer systems—our commitment to local employment shines through with a 90% workforce participation rate, turning this project into a valuable asset for our community.

I also want to extend my gratitude to the Navajo Division of Economic Development's Project Development Department, which advocates for large-scale projects like this one, helping us move forward with confidence.

### **Utility planning for the 1,000 home initiative**

**February 27, 2025** - As homes are delivered each week under the Nygren Administration's 1,000 Home Initiative, the next critical step is utility planning. To ensure these homes are truly turn-key, we are working to provide electricity, water, and sewer connections—allowing our most vulnerable Diné families to move in with dignity and security.

Since launching the initiative, we have coordinated millions in ARPA funds to build quality homes with modern utilities.

Key partners in this effort include:

Navajo Nation entities:

- Office of the President
- Navajo Division of Community Development
- Community Housing & Infrastructure Department
- Housing Improvement Program
- Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Office
- Fiscal Recovery Fund Office
- Office of the Controller
- Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency
- Navajo Division of Natural Resources

Private sector partners:

- Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA)
- Navajo Housing Authority (NHA)
- Navajo Engineering & Construction Authority (NECA)
- Indian Health Service (IHS)

Contractors leading construction:

- BITCO Corp.
- Homes Direct
- Iina Ba Inc.
- Indigenous Design Studio + Architecture

Every two weeks, we advance utility connections. For instance, under the BIA-funded Housing Improvement Program, homeowners have completed clearances with NTUA. The process is well underway, and we remain committed to achieving turn-key status for every home.

This initiative remains a top priority of the Nygren Administration—delivering homes and essential services to the neediest of our people. Ahéhee'!

### **Congratulations to the Page girls for advancing to the 2025 AIA copper championship, and to the Chinle and Ganado girls for reaching the 2025 AIA 3A final four in Phoenix, AZ**

**February 24, 2025** - Our Diné girls truly know how to play basketball! We are proud to have three teams left in the 2025 Arizona Interscholastic Association's Girls Basketball Brackets: the Page Lady Sand Devils in the Copper Championship, and the Chinle Lady Wildcats and Ganado Lady Hornets in the 3A Final Four.

This season, the AIA introduced a new Copper Division, featuring the top 16 teams from the 3A, 2A, and 1A classes. Amid mixed opinions on this change, the No. 5 Page Lady Sand Devils now have a chance to compete for a state title for the inaugural Copper Championship.

On Friday, First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren and I attended the semifinal game between Page and the Tuba City Lady Warriors, who had a strong season. The Lady Warriors upset No. 1 Chinle, moving Chinle from the Copper to the 3A bracket. The game ended with the Lady Sand Devils narrowly defeating Tuba City 46-41. With this victory, the Lady Sand Devils advance to the Copper State Title Game against No. 2 seed Phoenix Country Day at 6 p.m. on March 1 at the Arizona Veteran's Memorial Coliseum.

In the 3A Bracket, No. 1 Chinle advanced to the 3A Final Four after beating Coolidge 51-29 and will face No. 5 Payson at 8 p.m. on February 28.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

The No. 3 Ganado Lady Hornets, who were also eliminated from the Copper Division, won against No. 6 Valley Christian 76-69 and will play No. 2 Snowflake at 6 p.m. on February 28. There is a chance for a 3A title game between both Chinle and Ganado.

Nonetheless, I'm always proud of our student-athletes across the Navajo Nation! Wishing you the best of luck!

### **Navajo Nation celebrates Future Farmers of America Day, honoring youth leaders in agriculture**

**February 22, 2025** - Yesterday, First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren and I had the honor of celebrating our Diné students who are active in the Future Farmers of America (FFA). This day was significant because I signed a proclamation that recognizes the importance of farming and ranching that should be memorialized.

We thank all the parents, agricultural leaders and mentors, our bright FFA youth and Elissa McBride, FFA Advisor at Monument Valley High School. Together, we will continue to learn and lead a future of farmers. A fun fact, our First Lady was a member of the FFA program at MVHS, where she shared with our students how she cared for a lamb on campus and that agriculture practices through FFA and from the livestock at her home influenced her career and values as a mother and wife.

Through our teachings as Diné, we have always been caretakers of the land, we plant our own crops and raise livestock to sustain our livelihoods.

I am very proud of our Diné youth for learning these teachings and practices that will continue the legacy that has been passed down from our elders and now to our future generation.

These practices are not just about food or commerce, they reflect our connection to our ancestors, our community and our sacred land.

With this signed proclamation, we honor our Diné youth who are involved in FFA, along with their teachers and mentors who contribute to this significant event.

Our youth are not only learning how to grow crops—they're learning how to lead with integrity, how to care for the earth and how to uplift others along the way.

I hold these achievements close to my heart and I encourage the Navajo Nation to join me in celebrating our youth and to recognize the hard work they are dedicating to preserve our cultural knowledge and continue to carry our traditions in agriculture.

As we reflect on this day, February 21, now known as Navajo Nation Future Farmers of America Day, let us honor the strength and resilience of our people, and continue to build a future full of promise, hope and growth.

### **Congratulations to Mary West of Navajo Gaming for being "Chamber Champion of the Year" by the Greater Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce**

**February 21, 2025** - I was invited to the 36th Annual Meeting and ATHENA Awards ceremony at Northern Arizona University, organized by the Greater Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce. There, I had the opportunity to learn more about community engagement and focused on economic prosperity within greater the Flagstaff region which includes the Navajo Nation.

Guest speaker John Gartin, director for Northern Arizona University's Career Development, shared a presentation on promoting Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help boost businesses and how to implement Generative AI in the workspaces.

Additionally, I was engaged in the Q&A session with Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs, where she actively shared updates on concerns of the state of Arizona.

Governor Hobbs was the keynote speaker, and she shared that her focus was on housing, childcare, homeland security, economic growth, educational funding and healthcare access. Hobbs said that she is working diligently to address state concerns by advocating for these topics, particularly in rural Arizona.

"We don't want to talk about it because it's too hard to deal with but, if we're not addressing key issues and issuing workforce then there will be no progress," Hobbs said.

I also offer my congratulations to Mary West, executive director of development for Navajo Gaming, who received the “Chamber Champion of the Year” in her work for our gaming enterprises across the Navajo Nation.

I would also like to congratulate the ATHENA recipients who were awarded and acknowledged for their hard work and advocacy.

It was inspiring and I am grateful for the ongoing support that we have towards our women leaders throughout Arizona.

I would like to thank the Greater Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce for inviting me to this event. It brings an insight of what the Navajo Nation can do to help support our local businesses and regional economies.

### **Over \$400 million in road projects to break ground with on-call engineering firms**

February 21, 2025 - Today, the Navajo Nation takes a significant step forward in improving our road infrastructure. I am pleased to announce the signing of contract modifications for on-call engineering services with Dibble Engineering and Wilson & Company Inc. These agreements reaffirm the Nygren Administration’s commitment to advancing road construction planning, backed by over \$400 million in funding.

These contracts are a crucial step in allowing the Navajo Nation to proceed with on-demand engineering services, a necessary precursor to construction. With today’s signing, we move closer to the bidding phase, bringing actual construction projects one step closer to reality.

Funding for these projects comes from the Federal Highway Administration’s Tribal Transportation Program, which requires rigorous environmental and historical clearances. We are committed to adhering to all federal, state, and Navajo Nation regulations to ensure sustainable and responsible development.

Transparency and open communication remain top priorities for my administration. By working closely with our partners and the Diné public, we aim to create an efficient, modern transportation network that meets the needs of our communities.

Under Fiscal Year 2025, nine communities will see road improvements totaling \$144.7 million—work that traditionally would have taken decades will now be completed in 12 to 18 months.

Looking ahead to Fiscal Year 2026, additional road projects totaling \$243.8 million will further enhance our infrastructure.

I extend my appreciation to Tom Platero, Division Director for the Navajo Department of Transportation, the Resources and Development Committee, and our communities for their leadership and commitment. Infrastructure is the backbone of progress. Roads, water, power, sewer, and housing—these essential connections embody our vision to “Think for the Future.”

I look forward to witnessing the implementation of these projects as we build a stronger Navajo Nation, and our joint effort to use and borrow \$1 billion of our investments to go to more roads.

### **Protecting our livelihoods: cattle theft on the Navajo Nation**

February 20, 2025 - As your Navajo Nation President, I want to address an issue that strikes at the heart of who we are as Diné—our livestock and the sacred responsibility of caring for it. Recent cases of cattle theft have reminded us of how vulnerable our communities and livelihoods can be.

Earlier this month, a vigilant livestock producer noticed stolen cattle being transported through Tuba City. Thanks to their quick action, 57 head of cattle with altered and rebranded markings are being recovered from a stockyard in Marana, Arizona. These cattle, stolen from our Nation, were valued at nearly \$90,000. This is not just theft—it is an attack on the livelihood and spirit of our families.

What is most troubling is that these crimes exploit the trust we place in our neighbors and the traditions we’ve upheld for generations. Our open-range grazing system is a cornerstone of Navajo life, but it requires protections that criminals are finding ways to bypass.

We must take action. Branding our livestock, particularly calves before six months of age, is not just a federal requirement—it is a defense against theft. I urge every producer to keep accurate tally counts, vaccinate livestock, and work together to safeguard our herds.



## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

As we move forward, I am committed to improving our enforcement mechanisms and modernizing our laws to hold thieves accountable. This fight is about more than cattle—it is about protecting our way of life. To those who have experienced this loss, know that we are working diligently to ensure justice. Our livestock is sacred, and our unity as Diné is stronger than those who seek to harm us. Together, we will protect what sustains us.

### **Exploring innovative solutions with SpaceX and Starlink**

February 20, 2025 - This week, I had the privilege of visiting SpaceX and Starlink facilities with the Navajo Nation Broadband Office and the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Office to explore opportunities that could transform connectivity across the Navajo Nation.

Yesterday, we toured SpaceX's headquarters in Hawthorne, California, where I witnessed firsthand their rocket manufacturing process and Starlink equipment production. During this visit, we met with SpaceX employees and discussed how their technology could benefit our communities, particularly in our most remote areas.

Today, I will visit Starlink's satellite production facility in Redmond, Washington. This visit is particularly important as we look for solutions to expand internet access across our 27,000 square miles of canyons, mountains and rugged areas of Dinétah.

Just as we saw with the recent Jeehdeez'a Tower project that brings permanent connectivity to Low Mountain, we must continue seeking innovative ways to connect our people.

These visits are part of my administration's commitment to modernizing the Navajo Nation's infrastructure as well as government efficiency to our people. We're exploring how these new technologies could support our schools, emergency services, chapter houses, and families who currently lack reliable internet access.

We will continue to explore potential partnerships and opportunities in the coming weeks and months as we continue this important work. The goal of my "Connect Diné" initiative remains clear: ensuring every Navajo community has access to the technology and connectivity they need to thrive in today's digital world.

### **Congratulations to "rockisaan" and "rez kidz" on advancing to the first tech challenge world championships!**

February 19, 2025 - I was in awe of our students' innovation and creativity at the 2nd Annual RezBotics First Tech Challenge Championship hosted by Diné College recently. These young minds built robots that moved with precision and purpose, combining engineering, coding, and problem-solving into remarkable creations.

Through FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), students explore STEM fields in an exciting and hands-on ways. This global program challenges youth to design, build, and program robots while fostering teamwork and leadership.

Participating teams included:

- Wingate High School: "SHASH"
- Shiprock High School: "Chieftains" and "S.H.I.P.R.O.C.K"
- Kayenta Baker Middle School: "Rez Kidz" and "Coltz & Boltz"
- Tsehootsoi Middle School: "ROCK Bots"
- Navajo Mountain High School: "Rocksisaan"
- St. Michael Indian Schools: "Navajo Code Writers" and "Navajo Code Breakers"
- Rock Point Community School: "RoboCougars"
- Greyhills Academy High School: "ROBO-Tech"
- Tohatchi High School: "TOH-MESA"

Congratulations to “Rocksisaan” from Navajo Mountain High School and “Rez Kidz” from Kayenta Baker Middle School for earning spots at the FIRST Tech Challenge World Championships in Houston! Navajo Mountain represented us last year, earning the “Judges’ Choice” award—a proud moment for the Nation. This success was made possible by partners like TEAM 2486 – CocoNuts from Coconino High School, Diné College, Navajo Transitional Energy Company, Into The Deep, and FIRST Tech Challenge. We also thank student judges from Diné College and MIT for their expertise and support.

Rezbotics gives the Navajo Nation its own competitive region, allowing our teams to advance directly to nationals. This platform inspires creativity, passion, and innovation, preparing our students to shine on the world stage.

Let’s continue growing this effort and encouraging more schools to join. Robotics is shaping the future of STEM for the Navajo Nation.

#### **Four corners dialysis clinic in chinle, ariz., gets 25-year lease extension**

**February 19, 2025** – With signatures from Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, community members from Chinle will no longer need to travel hours off the Navajo Nation for dialysis treatment. On Feb. 10, President Nygren signed six sets of business site leases for TRC Four Corners Dialysis Clinic, which had been in operation for 25 years from a previous lease that recently expired. TRC Four Corners Dialysis also has clinics in Kayenta and Tuba City.

According to the National Kidney Foundation, dialysis is a medical treatment that removes waste products and excess fluid from the blood when the kidneys are not functioning properly.

In a study by Kidney International, Navajo people experience End-Stage Renal Disease (ERSD) at a higher rate than the average American citizen. ERSD is the last stage of chronic kidney disease.

The Chinle clinic has less than 40 employees, which provides valuable services to the 31 chapters in Chinle Agency.

“If they weren’t there and the clinic wasn’t operating, the patients would have to travel to off reservation locations, so this saves them a lot of travel and travel expense,” said Anslem Harvey, who works with the Chinle Regional Business Development Office.

One of President Nygren’s priorities is improving the health care and access among Diné people. Through this 25-year lease extension, he is striving toward the Nation building healthcare that the people need and deserve.

“We have high rates of illnesses in various areas among our people, including kidney disease,” said President Nygren. “As Navajo Nation President, it’s time we take care of these modern monsters, so our children won’t have to endure a preventive illness.”

#### **Building the future: groundbreaking for the \$6.2 million San Juan Lateral Waterline in Naschitti, NM**

**February 18, 2025** - Below the snow-capped Chooshgai Mountains, we broke ground on the \$6.2 million Naschitti San Juan Lateral water line in Naschitti, N.M., earlier this morning.

This vital project, part of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project, will bring much-needed water access and availability to the community.

This moment was deeply spiritual for Naschitti, guided by healer Jasper Pablo’s blessing, which reminded us that the water we receive comes from our sacred connection to Mother Earth and Father Sky. The water pipeline will bring water from the San Juan Mountains’ snowpack, reflecting the paper of the Navajo Nation’s water rights.

Today’s blessing was led by Naschitti Governance Commissioners – Willis Nez, Rhonda Herbert, Orlin Skyberg, Tammy Yazzie and Alexis Wood and Naschitti Chapter Administrator Carissa Wood and staff.

I also thank Navajo Nation Vice President Richelle Montoya for her meaningful words, as well as the Navajo Nation Water Resources Department, Clawson Excavating, Inc., and Souder Miller and Associates.

With this water line, Naschitti will transition from its beloved groundwater to San Juan River water. This shift allows groundwater to replenish naturally while the community benefits from reliable infrastructure.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

The project will deliver 220 gallons per minute via a 2.12-mile, 8-inch pipeline, with a 200,000-gallon storage tank fed by the main Navajo-Gallup line crossing U.S. Highway 491.

The project, made possible through Navajo Nation ARPA funds and New Mexico's Tribal Infrastructure Fund and Capital Outlay, highlights the power of strategic partnerships with federal and state partners.

As Naschitti prepares for future growth along the U.S. Highway 491 corridor, this water access and availability offers an opportunity to plan for sustainable, economic growth.

I encourage community members to create business plans and engage with their land use committee to shape Naschitti's future with intention—Yidaaskáadi Nitsáhákees.

### **Good luck to our 3a north teams competing in the 2025 AIA 3A and copper brackets**

**February 17, 2025** - February Frenzy is here, and that means Rez Ball takes center stage in the Arizona Interscholastic Association state basketball playoffs.

Congratulations to all our Navajo Nation-based schools in Arizona that qualified for state, and to those eliminated—hold your heads high and be proud of your season.

In the 2025 AIA Girls 3A bracket, during pool play, the Holbrook Lady Roadrunners defeated the Window Rock Lady Scouts 50-39, earning the No. 12 seed. Tonight, the Lady Roadrunners will face No. 5 Payson in the first round of the 14-team 3A bracket.

Other exciting first-round matchups tonight include:

- No. 3 Ganado vs. No. 14 Winslow
- No. 7 Monument Valley vs. No. 10 ALA – West Foothills

All games will tip off at 7 p.m.

In the 3A bracket, after being eliminated from the Copper Bracket by Tuba City, the Chinle Lady Wildcats secured the No. 1 seed. They will face the winner of No. 8 Coolidge vs. No. 9 Yuma Catholic in the quarterfinals this Friday.

In the 16-team Copper Girls Bracket, the No. 5 Page Lady Sand Devils will meet the No. 8 Tuba City Lady Warriors in a Final Four matchup on Friday, February 21. Tuba City pulled off a stunning upset over No. 1 Chinle in the Copper Bracket, winning 48-39.

For the 2025 AIA 3A Boys Bracket, the No. 3 Page Sand Devils are the only remaining 3A North team in the playoffs. They will take on No. 14 Northwest Christian on Tuesday at 7 p.m.

I wish the best of luck to all our 3A teams, as well as our 2A and 1A schools. I look forward to seeing one of our teams bring home a gold ball to the Navajo Nation!

### **Preserving diné bizaad: empowering our children through literacy and community support**

**February 17, 2025** - In the most remote regions of the Navajo Nation, our children continue to show remarkable creativity despite limited resources. I ensured that Diné Bizaad books were delivered to the students at Black Mesa Community School.

This federally funded BIE school serves grades kindergarten through eighth grade, drawing students from nearby communities such as Burnt Corn, Low Mountain, Kíts'ííí, Pinon, and Whippoorwill Springs, with a current enrollment of 48 students.

Our administration remains committed to improving language literacy among Diné children. Reading is a skill that grows stronger through practice, and promoting our Diné Bizaad is critical to our future sovereignty. As part of our mission to build healthier families, we work with the Navajo Division of Children and Family Services to deliver books to our communities.

The students at Black Mesa Community School are currently fundraising for an end-of-year trip to California and Disneyland. As a government, we will do our best to support their fundraising efforts.

Visiting remote areas like Dziłjiiin serves as a powerful reminder of the beauty of our homeland and people. In these places, our language remains alive and spoken fluently every day. To our young children, I encourage you to keep learning our language and to take pride in being Diné.

**This President's Day, we honor our tribal presidents and chairmen and acknowledge the sovereignty of the Navajo Nation government**

**February 17, 2025** - As public servants, we are entrusted by our people to lead with integrity and focus. While many enjoy this day as a well-deserved break, the Nygren Administration remains committed to advancing critical priorities such as roads, water access, infrastructure, housing, economic growth, education, and the many dimensions of nation-building.

Title II of the Navajo Nation Code firmly establishes the system of checks and balances within our government, providing clarity on the roles of the Navajo Nation President, the Navajo Nation Council, and the Supreme Court of the Navajo Nation.

As President of the Navajo Nation, I embrace accountability as an essential pillar of our government and as a cornerstone of our service to the Navajo people. Through the Office of the President, one of the authorities to help move our government is the development of a comprehensive budget and that financial resources are managed and allocated appropriately and responsibly for the Navajo people.

The Navajo Nation is a sovereign government, and Title II says the president advocates for our tribal sovereignty, treaty rights, and interests in political, social and economic matters. As such, Title II reaffirms the political authority and updates to the Navajo people about the progress of the government's goals and functions.

Whether you're working today or at home with loved ones, enjoy your time off and remember that your government is accountable to you. Happy President's Day!

**Expanding broadband Internet access in Ramah Navajo**

**February 17, 2025** - As Navajo Nation President, one of my top priorities is to expand broadband—high-speed internet access—to our homes, schools, and chapter houses across our vast territory.

**"CCPF-Funded Fiber Project: Connecting 78 Families"**

In Ramah Navajo, 78 families living in the housing quarters of the Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc. now have high-speed internet, thanks to a fiber project by Oso Internet Solutions. This \$167,504 project is funded by the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CCPF), a grant secured by the Navajo Nation Broadband Office in 2022.

"We work to expand fiber access and keep service affordable to reduce barriers to broadband connectivity," said Margaret Merrill, owner of Oso Internet Solutions.

**"ARPA-Funded Fiber Project: Expanding Middle-Mile Infrastructure"**

Separately, 13.2 miles of middle-mile fiber have been installed under \$5.8 million in ARPA-funds. This will connect 600 homes, with 300 already benefiting, Merrill said.

**"Closing the Digital Divide"**

These projects ensure that more families in rural communities can access reliable internet for education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

I thank the Ramah Chapter leadership, the Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc., Oso Internet Solutions, and the Navajo Nation Broadband Office for their efforts. Credit also goes to the Navajo Nation Council for approving ARPA funding and NNBO for securing the CC PF grant.

Together, we are making real progress in bringing broadband to our people.

**Update: protecting essential federal positions serving the Navajo Nation**

**February 16, 2025** - In my previous statement, I assured the Navajo people that my administration was actively working with the Trump Administration to protect essential federal positions within the Indian Health Service (IHS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). I want to provide an update on the progress we've made and challenges we are still addressing.

We first received written confirmation that the following healthcare positions within IHS have been deemed essential and exempt from termination:

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

- \* 93 physicians
- \* 350 nurses
- \* 26 nurse practitioners
- \* 129 medical assistants
- \* 25 hospital social workers
- \* 45 lab technicians
- \* 89 pharmacists
- \* 18 dentists
- \* 43 dental assistants

Initially, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) indicated that 2,200 probationary IHS employees would be terminated. IHS formally requested exemptions for all healthcare workers, and while many were protected, 950 employees would still be laid off, but has since been verbally rescinded by Secretary of Health, Robert F. Kennedy.

As of Friday evening, we were still working to classify 31 sanitation engineers as essential. Unfortunately, termination notices had already started going out for other positions deemed non-exempt. In response to advocacy by my office and our partners in the National Indian Health Board, we continued working with the Trump Administration on solutions.

We are also actively engaging with the administration on the impact to BIE employees. While all BIE K-12 teaching positions were exempt, we are working to protect higher education faculty and staff who serve Native students.

I want to reassure our people that we have not been silent on this issue. We remain in direct discussions with the Trump Administration, and our advocacy are being seen. We will continue to advocate to restore impacted positions and ensure uninterrupted services for the Navajo people.

If you have concerns or need further information, please reach out to my office.

### **Over \$1 billion dollars in new construction for BIE schools**

**February 15, 2025** - Our students deserve the best! I am happy to share with the Navajo people that 17 Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools are either undergoing construction for new or renovated facilities, and/or are being planned out totaling over \$1 billion.

Shonto Preparatory School and Kinteel Residential Campus are undergoing renovations funded by the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). Additionally, the GAOA is facilitating the demolition of Navajo Region one, two, and three.

Aneth Community School is currently in the design contract phase. Chi'Chil'Tah Jones Ranch Community School is expected to break ground within the month. Cottonwood Day School is in the planning phase for solicitation. Cove Day School is undergoing remediation, demolition, and design work. Crystal Boarding School is in the mobilization phase, with a design-build process underway.

Many Farms High School, Tonalea Red Lake School, Greasewood Springs Community School and the Shiprock Dormitory are in the mobilization phase. To'Hajiilee Community School is in the planning phase. Many Farms Community School is currently in the Navajo Nation 164 review process, while Pine Springs Day School received its notification letter to begin the design process. Further, 35 percent of the Teec Nos Pos Community School is completed. Pine Hill Schools is currently in the solicitation phase, and Greyhills Academy is preparing for the construction process.

Education is also about the conditions in which our students learn.

Some schools, like Crystal Boarding School, have struggled with unsafe, outdated, and even hazardous classrooms that make students sick or disrupt learning.



Thank you to Bureau of Indian Affairs' Chief of Staff of the Office of Facilities, Property and Safety Management Gabriel Draper and Division Chief of Facilities Management and Construction Gary Mosesman, whose efforts are making a tangible difference.

**PSAP project to ensure quicker response times in cases of 911 emergencies**

**February 15, 2025** - When our Navajo citizens dial 911 during an emergency, their calls are rerouted to an off-reservation agency. Operators who answer the call are then forced to relay the calls back to our first responders located on the Navajo Nation – spending precious time that can mean the difference of saving a life.

This is about to change with the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) station project.

I am excited to share that I signed a lease agreement on behalf of the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety (NDPS), which kicks off the planning stages for a PSAP station – a new facility will be home to Emergency Communication Dispatchers, including those working with law enforcement, EMTs, and other vital first responders.

Fully funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), we're expecting the station to be completed and ready to take its first call by August 2026.

The PSAP will be designed with inclusivity in mind, ensuring that all Navajo citizens, including those with disabilities such as hearing impairments and speech impediments, are fully accommodated. This is a huge milestone for our people and Nation as this is the first tribal public safety program to be deployed and recognized by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

This project is more than just a station—it's about improving emergency response times, bringing critical services closer to our people, and setting a precedent for future tribal initiatives in public safety.

**Navajo Nation celebrates \$3.5 million revenue sharing payment from Goulding's Lodge**

**February 14, 2025** - Today is a historic day because the \$3.5 million revenue sharing disbursement check from Goulding's Lodge, operated by the Navajo Nation Hospitality Enterprise, was presented to the Navajo Nation.

This is the marking of a new era of enterprise partnership and prosperity for the Navajo Nation.

Navajo Nation Hospitality Enterprise CEO Stanley Sapp presented the Navajo Nation with a \$3.5 million check, as required under the structured revenue sharing agreement. In just six months under the new ownership of NNHE, approximately \$7 million has been generated with half equally coming to our tribal treasury.

In addition to receiving this check, I signed a groundbreaking 50-year lease for Goulding's Lodge.

Generating more revenue will allow our nation to receive profit in return of all the hard work that has been produced in partnership with NNHE and the Navajo Department of Economic Development.

Council Delegate Herman Daniels Jr. acknowledged how the former owners, the LaFont Family, had wanting to sell its operations back to the Navajo Nation.

"Goulding's belongs to Navajo," said Council delegate Daniels Jr, who represents chapters in Utah Navajo, including Oljato Chapter.

I believe that Goulding's Lodge will not only bring good hospitality and tourism, but welcome visitors to our beautiful backyard while receiving an experience of a lifetime.

The purchases from this lease include the historic hotel, a grocery store, ancillary facilities, campgrounds and an RV park. NNHE has successfully provided jobs to over 300 Navajo employees since taking over ownership.

We must continue to invest and structure agreements that will ensure economic sovereignty to the nation. Thank you to past leaders and current leaders, including Mr. Stanley Sapp for leading this innovative business.

Goulding's is not just a business; it is a legacy.

**Protecting essential federal positions serving the Navajo Nation**

**February 14, 2025** - I understand that many have concerns regarding the recent directive from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on the termination of probationary employees within the federal government, and the potential impact it may have on tribal nations.

In particular, there were concerns about positions within the Indian Health Service (IHS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). The possible loss of healthcare professionals, educators, and other critical personnel threatened the well-being of our communities and the services they depend on.

I want to assure you that my administration has been actively engaging with the Trump Administration to advocate for the protection and exemption of these essential positions. I am pleased to report that, for the most part, we have been successful. President Trump has heard our concerns and has allowed for the exemption of many IHS and BIE workers, ensuring that these critical services continue without disruption, and we thank him.

Although not all positions have received an exemption, we continue to work closely with federal officials to emphasize the vital role these positions play. Our goal is to restore any impacted positions to ensure uninterrupted service to our people while advancing the shared priorities of the Navajo Nation and the U.S. government.

The well-being of our Nation remains our highest priority. We are fully committed to ensuring that essential services continue uninterrupted for all Navajo people. If you have concerns or need further information, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office.

**\$80 million new school groundbreaking in Chi Chil'tah Jones Ranch community**

**February 13, 2025** - Yesterday, I had the honor of witnessing an exciting new chapter of the new school groundbreaking of Chi Chil'Tah Jones Ranch Community School.

So much hard work has been put into this project to provide a brighter, safer future for our Diné children to thrive within their learning environment.

This school has been in use since the 1930's, which has led to the need to be rebuilt to updated standards. In doing so, it is planned to be 70,000 square feet, which will include 20 dormitory units that will house up to 40 students.

Additionally, staff quarters will be built and so will a 3,000 square foot bus maintenance building.

Construction is expected to be completed in 2027.

With projects like this, it is important to give our children a quality education and a safe school that will allow them to expand their knowledge and will serve students from grades K-8th.

When I met with the Bureau of Indian Education last month, this school was on the list for a groundbreaking. This school is also a BIE funded institution worth \$80 million.

As we gathered to celebrate this milestone for our students, we are not only celebrating education, but our student's hopes, dreams of their futures as Diné children.

I would like to give special thanks to the staff who help our children to learn to their best ability every single day and all the guests in attendance for supporting our children's education and a blessing by Tom Chatto, a Diné Medicine Man.

Congratulations to the Chi Chil'Tah community and may the Holy People bless this new school.

**600 Diné Bizaad books gifted to Diné children at Gallup v. Kirtland Central girls basketball game**

**February 11, 2025** - In partnership with the Navajo Division of Children and Family Services, 2024-2025 Miss Navajo Nation Ranisha Begay and the Gallup Boys Basketball Team, we took another step in revitalizing Diné Bizaad and strengthening our future as a Nation by gifting 600 books to our children and families.

That's 600 opportunities to bring our language into the hands, homes, and hearts of our young people. This effort is part of a larger vision—a commitment to creating fluent and literate Navajo speakers for generations to come.

Diné Bizaad is power. Our language is more than words—it is our connection to our ancestors, our teachings, and our future. The ability to speak, read, and write in Diné Bizaad strengthens our identity and ensures that our culture remains strong. Each book given out is a step forward in raising confident, fluent Diné Bizaad speakers.

This initiative aligns with the executive order I signed to implement Diné Bizaad across executive branch agencies. There is no better way to engage young readers and promote literacy among our people than through basketball or rez ball — an event that brings our communities together.

The showdown between the No. 1 Kirtland Central Lady Broncos (20-2) and the No. 2 Gallup Lady Bengals (20-2) on February 8 was nothing short of intense. Kirtland took the win, 70-45, in this District 1-4A battle. Both teams are ranked No. 1 and No. 2 in Class 4A and are also No. 3 and No. 4 statewide, regardless of class, and will likely face off again in the district championship and the Class 4A title game at The Pit in Albuquerque.

Ahéhee' to both teams for their hard work—and to our young Navajo speakers, who are the future of our language and Nation.

**Closing the digital divide: Permanent Internet now serving Low Mountain**

**February 10, 2025** - Permanent internet access is now available for community members in Low Mountain, Arizona, and students at Jeehdeez'a Elementary School. This milestone bridges the digital divide—connecting families, students, and businesses to new opportunities.

Funded through CARES Act funds from the previous Trump Administration, this project took four years to complete. Delays in funding and the COVID-19 pandemic forced the community to rely on temporary solutions like Cells On Wheels (COW), which only connected 40 people at a time.

Now, with advanced technology installed by the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) and NTUA Wireless, the Jeehdeez'a Broadband Tower serves approximately 200 people using Tarana technology—cutting-edge wireless broadband that provides fast, reliable, and scalable connectivity. This ensures the people of Low Mountain are no longer left behind in the digital world.

I acknowledge the dedication of former leaders like former Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, along with NTUA, NTUA Wireless, and the Low Mountain Chapter leadership, for their persistence in making this project a reality. Their efforts have connected this community to vital services, education, and business opportunities. While the community celebrates, they have also raised concerns about the poor condition of Indian Route 8059. Speaker Crystalyne Curley and I heard them. I have pledged to work with my team and the Navajo Nation Council to explore investments in infrastructure, leveraging \$1 billion of our own funds to strengthen our economy and build a better future.

**Chinle Wildcats dominate 3a north – onward to the AIA playoffs**

**February 10, 2025** - Congratulations to both Chinle basketball teams – the girls (26-1) and boys (19-9) teams for capturing the 3A North Conference Championships over the weekend at the Bee Hółdzil Fighting Scouts Events Center!

The Lady Wildcats secured a hard-fought 53-42 victory over Tuba City, while the Wildcats battled past Page with a 41-35 win. Winning a conference title is never easy—it takes dedication, teamwork, resilience, and an

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

unwavering commitment to excellence. These championships are a testament to the hard work of the players, coaches, families, and communities who stand behind them.

This is just the beginning. As the postseason unfolds, I want to recognize all the 3A North teams—Chinle, Ganado, Monument Valley, Page, Tuba City, and Window Rock—for their dedication to the game.

The Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA) Playoffs begin Tuesday, February 11, and I know our teams will continue to represent the Navajo Nation with pride and determination.

A special acknowledgment goes to the No. 1-ranked Chinle Lady Wildcats, who have earned the top seed in the newly formed Copper Division, a bracket showcasing the best teams from the 3A, 2A, and 1A divisions. Our region is also well represented in the 2A and 3A brackets, and I look forward to seeing our student-athletes rise to the challenge.

Go out there, play with heart, and keep the spirit of rez ball alive. Best of luck to all our teams!

### **President Nygren addresses the New Mexico House of Representatives**

**February 9, 2025** - I had the honor of addressing a joint session of the Senate House of Representatives to acknowledge New Mexico's partnership with the Navajo Nation and was introduced by NM State Representative of District five and Chair of House Government, Elections, and Indian Affairs, D. Wonda Johnson.

To respectfully honor the Native American people of New Mexico, during the opening ceremony, the Iron Singers from San Felipe Pueblo were invited to share a prayer song by Representative Derrick J. Lente.

In this session, I addressed the utility infrastructure needs in New Mexico and our agreements with NTUA, Continental Divide Electric Cooperative, Jemez Mountain Electric Cooperative and the City of Farmington Utility Service.

These agreements are a key component of our strategy to improve access to essential utility services.

Alongside the contract under the Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity, which will provide architectural and engineering services that will allow us to meet deadlines before funds expire.

I am beyond grateful for the support and effort with New Mexico and hope to remain a close connection with our tribal leaders and lawmakers to build a bright future for our youth.

### **Celebrating 50 years of self-determination at 2025 New Mexico American Indian Legislative Day**

**February 8, 2025** - In honor of tribal self-determination and the sovereign rights of the 23 tribes in New Mexico, I addressed the importance of collaboration with New Mexico House of Representatives and Senate, and other tribal leaders.

We, as leaders of the 23 tribal nations of NM, acknowledged the needs of our communities and the efforts we've put forth.

Prior to the American Indian Day event, I met with Governor Michelle Lujan-Grisham to acknowledge her and thank her for her continued support for our Diné people.

I also had the honor of meeting with NM State Senator Peter Wirth, NM Senator Shannon Pinto, Attorney General of NM, Raúl Torrez, Speaker of the NM House of Representatives, Javier Martinez and NM Majority Floor Leader Reena Szczepanski.

Navajo Chief of Justice JoAnne Jayne was one of the few speakers who made legislative remarks to the general public, royalty and students from neighboring tribes who were in attendance.

During these remarks, I had the honor of recognizing Burton Platero, World War II Korean War Veteran from To'Hajiile and thanked him for his service to our people and our country.

The main takeaway from this listening session is remembering who we are as Native American people and the dedication our leadership pushes toward resilient efforts to preserve our way of life, culture and sovereignty.

I believe that we are leaders who are shaping the future for our children.

### **Haskell vs. NTU games showcase native athletes' heart and determination**

**February 8, 2025** - Great job to all the teams who played last night! I truly enjoyed the Haskell vs. Navajo Technical University games at the Santa Fe Indian School. Whether it's our Diné athletes or those from other Native communities, our young athletes give it their all, carrying forward the teachings they've grown up with.

Learning humility, perseverance, and discipline isn't always easy, but these athletes embody those values, shaped by the wisdom of their communities. It was especially heartwarming to see respect and sportsmanship on display, even as competitors. At the end of the day, we're all here to support one another. It was a beautiful moment to see athletes helping each other after falls, showing true sportsmanship. Congratulations to both Haskell teams on their wins. The atmosphere was filled with love and support from family members cheering for their student-athletes.

### **President Nygren encourages n.m. governor to appoint a Diné citizen to house district 6**

**February 7, 2025** - During my visit to the New Mexico Capitol in Santa Fe this week, I met with New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham to talk about the appointment of a qualified Diné leader to House District 6.

This legislative seat must be filled as soon as possible for Navajo interests, and I strongly encourage the appointment of a Navajo individual who will uplift the voices and priorities of Cibola and McKinley counties throughout this 60-day legislative session.

The seat became vacant following the retirement of Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon, who faithfully served District 6 for 16 years. Now, the Navajo Nation has a significant opportunity to add another community member to the state legislature.

Currently, the New Mexico Legislature includes three state senators and five state representatives with Indigenous/Native cultural backgrounds. If a Navajo leader is appointed to House District 6, the number of Native lawmakers in the state legislature will increase to nine—further strengthening Indigenous value and representation at the state level.

Under state law, the county commissioners from Cibola and McKinley counties must recommend a successor for this seat. Cibola County selected Clemente Sanchez and McKinley County has chosen Martha Garcia, a Diné woman from Pine Hill, N.M.

The communities of Mariano Lake, Thoreau, Pine Hill, Ramah and Zuni are key parts of House District 6, and these communities deserve a Diné leader to represent them.

While the counties submitted their recommendations to the governor, I urged her to appoint a qualified Navajo to the empty New Mexico House seat. This is an opportunity to ensure that our people's voices are heard and that our concerns are represented in the halls of the New Mexico Legislature.

### **Navajo Nation expresses needs with NM governor**

**February 7, 2025** - This morning, I met with several leaders from New Mexico, including Governor of New Mexico Michelle Lujan Grisham to discuss the needs of our Navajo Nation.

In 2025, we are seeking to elevate the quality of life for our people with New Mexico's support, by focusing on water settlements, infrastructure, public safety, education, and language preservation.

Key priorities shared with Gov. Lujan Grisham included recruiting tribal police, building homes, and supporting veterans, while regulating uranium shipments to protect health.

I talked about many of our infrastructure needs and projects, which can be partially funded by the \$25 million in reauthorized capital outlay funds from New Mexico. These projects enhance community facilities and roadways.

Economic growth initiatives aiming to support small businesses, renewable energy, and healthcare are other priorities.

Our education efforts will target equitable funding for Navajo students and language preservation.



## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

The Nation also seeks continued support for water rights settlements and infrastructure projects such as with the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project.

Gov. Lujan Grisham has shown her support for our efforts in putting our Navajo people first.

Along with meeting Gov. Lujan Grisham, I was able to meet with Gov. Lujan Grisham's Policy Advisor, James Mountain, and Cabinet Secretary of Indian Affairs, Josett Monette.

Mountain and Monette shared for the Fiscal year of 2024, in the last six months, between my office and New Mexico, we were able to allocate \$12 million in funding for projects compared to 2023 where the Nation was only able to allocate \$2 million to projects.

Before meeting Gov. Lujan Grisham, I met Native American high school students from the Albuquerque Public Schools. I encouraged them to find a passion that brings happiness to their heart when pursuing higher education. Once they find what drives their mission, it will be fun and rewarding at the same time.

I also met fellow within the Jicarilla Apache Nation legislative members Spencer Wells and Francine Manwell, Veryl D. Chavez and Lisa Vigil, and Jicarilla Apache Legislative Public Information Officer Shasta Campbell. I also met with Ute Mountain Chairman Manuel Heart.

This administration continues to address our nation's needs through collaboration with our state and federal leaders but also with our sister tribes.

### **President Nygren fights for the Navajo Nation in Washington**

**February 6, 2025** — Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren met with top congressional lawmakers this week to fight for resources that directly impact Navajo families, including funding for school repairs, stronger tribal control over public safety, compensation for uranium workers, and securing support for the Nation's future.

President Nygren's meetings with these congressional leaders reinforce the urgent need for federal policies that respect tribal sovereignty and deliver real change for the Navajo people. One of the most urgent priorities for President Nygren is to reauthorize the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), which provides funding for critical infrastructure, including Navajo schools in dire need of repair.

President Nygren met with the Office of Congresswoman Linda Sánchez (D-CA-38) to push for the reauthorization of this vital funding. Without it, the Navajo Nation could lose an estimated \$300 million, leaving children in deteriorating schools that fail to meet basic safety standards.

"Too many of our children go to school in buildings that should have been replaced decades ago," President Nygren said. "This funding is a chance to fix what's broken and provide a safe environment where our students can thrive."

In a meeting with Holmes Whalen, senior counsel to Sen. Markwayne Mullin (R-OK), President Nygren pressed for policy changes that would allow the Navajo Nation to set its own enlistment criteria for police officers.

Whalen also suggested the nation work with the AZ delegation to arrange a visit to the Navajo Nation with newly confirmed U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi so that federal officials better understand the challenges of tribal police.

In discussions with Sen. John Curtis (R-UT) and Rep. Mike Kennedy (R-UT), President Nygren pushed for the inclusion of post-1971 uranium workers in the proposed RECA amendments. Many Navajo uranium miners have been left out of previous compensation efforts, despite suffering from severe health conditions linked to their exposure.

While both Sen. Curtis and Rep. Kennedy indicated a proposal is in the works, further coordination with Sen. Josh Hawley's (R-MO) office is needed to RECA amendments forward.

To show goodwill, President Nygren gifted them a photo from his meeting with LDS Church President Russell M. Nelson last year, a meaningful exchange given how the lawmakers are both members of the LDS Church.

President Nygren wrapped up his meetings with Rep. David Schweikert (R-AZ), who had recently visited the Navajo Nation in December. During his visit, Rep. Schweikert experienced firsthand the hardships that Navajo families endure to access clean water. Many Navajo people still haul water for miles just to meet basic needs. President Nygren thanked Rep. Schweikert for taking the time to understand these struggles and presented him with a framed photo from his visit. President Nygren said the need for swift action and support on the Arizona Water Rights Settlement will bring lasting solutions.

#### **That's a burger' secures 25-year lease renewal**

**February 5, 2025** - The beloved 'That's A Burger' in Fort Defiance, Ariz. will continue serving its famous burgers for another 25 years after its business site lease was renewed on January 23 by the Fort Defiance Regional Business Development Office (RBDO) and the Navajo Nation.

Lease renewals are vital for businesses on the Navajo Nation, supporting jobs, generating sales tax revenue, and strengthening the local economy. I congratulate the Wolfe Family, owners of Jack Wolfe, Inc., which also operates Spot Free Power Wash and Fort Storage, for their dedication to keeping their businesses running strong.

Leonard Francisco, program manager for Fort Defiance RBDO, said the significance of this renewal keeps the Navajo economy strong and diverse.

"We strive not to close a business," Francisco said. "Most businesses that shut down leave behind abandoned properties, which can become an eyesore in the community. Jack Wolfe, Inc. has not only maintained its operations but continues to provide employment for Navajo people."

Since 2000, siblings Jacqueline Montgomery and Martin D. Wolfe have managed their family businesses, honoring their late father, Jack Wolfe, who inherited 'That's A Burger' in 1992 and passed away in September. Mr. Wolfe raised his family in Fort Defiance as a member of the Window Rock Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Montgomery said.

"It means everything," Montgomery said. "We love being out here. I love providing employment for my girls (Navajo employees). It's really important for me to provide a wage for them and their families."

With this lease renewal, 'That's A Burger' remains a pillar of the community, ensuring jobs and economic growth for years to come.

#### **Diné bizaad literacy at the red mesa and rock point basketball game**

**February 3, 2025** - I had the honor of attending two exciting basketball games at Red Mesa High School, my alma mater. My wife, First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren, also joined in on the fun. Both the boys and girls teams faced off against rival Rock Point Cougars.

The girls' game had both teams showcasing incredible athleticism and grit. There were steals left and right, and despite the fierce competition, Rock Point's girls came out on top with a 65-point victory and a 62-point win for Red Mesa Boys. Congratulations to them! It was clear from the court that every player gave their all. During halftime of the boys' game, I took the time to share with our Diné citizens the importance of literacy, particularly through Diné Bizaad, our official language of the Navajo Nation. Thereafter, we gave out books written in Diné Bizaad, a resource to encourage our children and families to embrace and preserve our language.

Thank you to Navajo Division of Children and Family Services for helping provide these wonderful books for our families.

I'm grateful to those who took a book—thank you for supporting this initiative!

I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Red Mesa High School community for welcoming the First Lady and I to their conference games. The talent, dedication, and sportsmanship displayed by all the athletes is truly inspiring.

**Long-awaited Pueblo Pintado Health Center nears groundbreaking in Eastern Navajo Agency**

**February 3, 2025** — A long-awaited health center for Pueblo Pintado in the Eastern Navajo Agency is finally becoming a reality, bringing critical healthcare access to five chapters in the region.

The Pueblo Pintado Health Center, funded through the Indian Health Service, has been on the federal priority list for decades. Thanks to persistent community advocacy, the facility is now nearing its groundbreaking.

According to Janice Arthur, the chapter's community service coordinator, Pueblo Pintado is centrally located among the Counselor, Nageezi, Ojo Encino, and Torreon/Star Lake Chapters.

For years, residents of these communities have traveled long distances to access basic healthcare services in Dził-Na-O-Dith-Hle, Cuba, Crownpoint, or Shiprock.

"When the health center comes up, it will relieve Crownpoint of the walk-in clinic services," Arthur said.

"Right now, (our people) have to travel 43 miles, and it will be here."

Arthur has been a vocal advocate for her community, working since 1995 to push the \$110 million facility higher on the federal priority list.

"It's a long time coming," she said.

The 125,884-square-foot facility will provide 24 healthcare services and other specialty care, serving an estimated 48,573 patients annually. It will also create approximately 82 staff positions.

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren emphasized that the new health center in the Eastern Navajo Agency will ease the burden of healthcare access—a key priority for his administration.

"Navajos healing Navajos is the value that my administration works from," President Nygren said. "I thank the grazing permit holders in Pueblo Pintado for giving up their grazing lands to bring a much-needed health center to their communities."

**Investing in ourselves: wood delivery for red valley and the path to \$1 billion for navajo communities**

**February 1, 2025** - Before delivering three cords of wood to the community of Red Valley, Ariz., with the Navajo Department of Emergency Management, I met with Red Valley Chapter's elected leadership. I congratulated them on their elections and re-elections to their four-year terms, because every project we accomplish begins at the local level.

Red Valley's leadership includes returning and new officials: President Leonard Benally, Vice President Clarence Chavez, Secretary/Treasurer Susan Cisco, Grazing Officer Jerald Begay, and Farm Board Official Zelma King. I also want to recognize Community Service Coordinator Marlene Palmer and Office Aide Carol Castillo—without them, this wood delivery wouldn't have been possible.

One of our key discussions focused on investing in ourselves by utilizing \$1 billion of the Navajo Nation's funds to build stronger communities.

"As president, I need your help," I told them. "We sit on a lot of money."

In 2025, I'll be visiting all 110 chapters, and I urge local leaders to work with the Navajo Nation Council to unlock these funds for community projects. We should not have to wait on Washington, D.C., when we have resources available now.

We also addressed the ongoing cleanup of abandoned uranium mines in the chapter and advocated for the new BIA-funded Red Valley School. These are critical issues that require immediate action from all three branches of the Navajo Nation government.

Together, we can build a future where our communities thrive.

**600 diné bizaad children's book given to children at the page v. Chinle basketball game**

**January 31, 2025** - On Tuesday (January 28), First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren and I distributed 600 children's books during a crucial Arizona's Division 3A girls' basketball game at the Chinle Wildcat Den between No. 1 Chinle Lady Wildcats (23-1) and No. Page Lady Sand Devils (15-8).

It was an amazing turnout. It warmed my heart because, as a parent and as a leader, I want to see our children learning our Diné bizaad.

I've signed an Executive Order declaring Diné Bizaad as the official language of the Navajo Nation, which requires executive branch offices and programs to use Navajo language in their daily tasks.

Within the Office of the President, I am honored to have Mr. Peter Thomas on staff as my Diné language and cultural advisor. Mr. Thomas is credited for being a Navajo language scholar, translating children's books into Navajo.

Thank you to the Navajo Division of Children and Family Services for aiding in getting the books and helping us pass them out during halftime!

Our Navajo language keeps us grounded and rooted in who we are, while keeping us close to our ancestors who fought for us to be here today.

For our parents, please read to your children. Be patient with them and teach them Diné Bizaad from a place of love. Learning a language is not easy and our children who do want to learn should not be laughed at. I encourage you to use these children's books as tools to share and teach our beautiful language with humbleness.

### **Acoma, diné relatives build homes for the 1,000 home initiative**

**January 30, 2025** - Yesterday (January 30), I excitingly witnessed one of my biggest priorities as Navajo Nation President come to life.

I had the opportunity to tour the Clayton Homes construction warehouse, where the BIA's Housing Improvement Program and Navajo Community Housing and Infrastructure Development (CHID) houses are being built. This is a milestone moment for our people. When I took office, I told voters that I would bring homes to our Diné under the "1,000 Home Initiative." Today, we are making progress on that vision. Achieving this goal means ensuring that some of our most vulnerable Navajo families receive affordable, high-quality homes because they deserve stability, security, and a place to call their own. Our people should not have to live in overcrowded, deteriorating homes. I grew up like many Navajo children—without electricity, in a small, rundown house. That experience shaped my understanding of what our people need. Given the opportunity to lead, I vowed to help provide families with homes where they can feel safe.

I want to extend my appreciation to General Manager of Clayton Homes in Albuquerque Vance McMillan, President of Developer Division with Homes Direct Greg McClanahan, Acting Department Manager for CHID Patrick Dalgai, and Division Director for the Navajo Division of Community Development Candice Yazzie. McClanahan reported that Homes Direct has delivered 11 homes to date, with 10 more in production and 371 pending work orders. Three developers are working to complete 150 homes. Each warehouse can build four homes per week, meaning 12 homes are completed weekly.

Walking through these homes today, I saw the careful craftsmanship from the flooring to the framework. Thank you to our hardworking construction crews, including our Diné and Acoma relatives. These homes are built to last—beautiful homes for our Navajo people.

### **Sharing Navajo government lessons with students from Albuquerque Public Schools**

**January 29, 2025** - It is always an honor to teach our Navajo and Native students about our tribal government systems and how they operate for the Diné people. There is no better experience than to get this real-life experience during a Navajo Nation Council session or a visit to the Office of the President.

Earlier this week, I enjoyed the visit by 25 Indigenous students from Cleveland Middle School, which is part of the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS). They made the four-hour round trip from Albuquerque, New Mexico to our tribal capital with APS School Board Members, four chaperones and a bus driver.

I shared with them the value and teaching of resilience and that being grounded in who they are – that their DNA and bloodstreams – have overcome many historical obstacles to be here today. And that as the future leaders of Mother Earth and Father Sky, they're meant to be here today among us all.

I thank our Navajo Department of Diné Education for organizing this field trip with APS, a growing partnership agreement. APS Board Members Ronalda Tome-Warito, District 2, Josefina E. Domínguez, District

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

6, Dr. Antonio Gonzales, deputy superintendent of leadership and learning for APS, and Tanya Campos, chief equity officer for APS, were among other visitors.

In New Mexico, we have approximately 26,000 Diné students enrolled in public schools, some of which attend Albuquerque Public Schools. The school district serves 6,850 Native students from 123 tribes, with 4,114 students listing their tribal affiliation as Diné/Navajo.

Also huge thanks to the Kyle Tapaha, chairman for the City of Albuquerque's Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs, Phil Farson, Indian Education Department's (IED) Senior Director, Thorn Begay, IED Instructional Manager, Cheryl Antone, IED Indigenous Education Coordinator, Alvino Sandoval, Navajo language teacher at Cleveland Middle School, along with the librarian and parents of the Cleveland Middle School students. Ahéhee for visiting the Office of the President!

### **OMB memo pausing federal funds has been rescinded**

**January 29, 2025** - The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) memorandum that directed federal executive agencies to "pause" funding obligations and disbursements for financial assistance, loans, and grants has officially been rescinded.

Our team, in collaboration with the Navajo Office of the Controller, the Navajo Nation Washington Office, and the Navajo Nation Council, will continue to monitor the effects of ongoing Executive Orders to ensure the protection of our financial resources.

At this time, there is no immediate concern regarding the daily operations of the Navajo Nation government or its federal funding. Additionally, portals for drawdowns are now open and fully operational.

### **Statement from Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren on freeze of federal funds, grants**

**January 28, 2025** - I write to update you on the Nygren Administration's review of President Trump's memorandum calling for federal executive agencies to "pause" funding obligations and disbursements of financial assistance, loans, and grants.

After consulting with my legal team and having read the plain language of the memorandum, there should be little impact to the daily operations of the Navajo Nation government. Programs that are funded with federal dollars may be impacted however as the Memorandum is implemented.

Take special note that Social Security benefits, Medicare, and other federally funded social programs remain unaffected by the memorandum. Earlier today, the federal funding portal, which releases federal dollars for these programs, was shut down for a short period of time but has since been reactivated.

It is also important to emphasize that as a sovereign government, the Navajo Nation operates under treaty obligations with the United States. Treaty agreements create legal protections for our government's funding and operations.

We are closely monitoring the situation and conducting the necessary analyses. As of now, a lawsuit has been filed challenging the Office of Management and Budget's memorandum, and an injunction has been issued. The legal and policy landscape is evolving rapidly, and we are committed to providing timely updates as developments occur.

I want to assure the Navajo people that the Office of the President is working diligently with the Office of the Controller and the Navajo Nation Council's Budget and Finance Committee to identify unspent federal funds and determine how they can be utilized without interference from these executive orders.

The Nygren Administration remains steadfast in protecting the interests of the Navajo Nation. Thank you for your patience and trust as we navigate this matter.

### **41 volunteers help the foster grandparent program shine**

**January 28, 2025** – On December 30th, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren made a powerful move to strengthen the bond between elders and youth.



He signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Window Rock Unified School District (WRUSD) and the Navajo Division of Aging and Long-Term Care Support, strengthening the partnership with the Navajo Foster Grandparent Program.

The WRUSD District #8 is now one of the volunteer stations for the program.

The volunteers, elders 55 and over, receive stipends and, if needed, travel reimbursements, but the real reward comes from the connections made with the youth.

"They become mentors, helping kids from low-income households, single-parent families, or homes where grandparents are raising grandchildren," said Lee Begay, Sr. Program and Project Specialist. "Many of the students continue to stay in touch with their elder even after graduation."

The program began in 1965 and was created under the Older Americans Act.

The program supports tutoring and mentorship across the five agencies and is funded by AmeriCorps.

"Because of the grandmas and cheiis, we see kids go to school, further their education, and graduate," Begay said. "That's the impact our grandmas and cheiis have."

However, while the program thrives in many areas, Begay points out that the Eastern and Central agencies have been struggling with a shortage of volunteers and are working hard to recruit more this year.

President Nygren also signed an MOA with the Beclabito Day School in Northern Navajo Agency to bring the Navajo Foster Grandparent Program to elders and students there.

"These programs are essential," President Nygren said. "Our elders are vital to our community. They often provide the guidance and wisdom that helps shape our lives. It's heartwarming to see our elderly giving their time to guide the next generation."

### **Prayer of k'e and healing disregarded as two delegates interrupt State of the Navajo Nation Address during the winter session**

**January 27, 2025** - Historically, Navajo Nation Delegates have walked the President to the Council Chambers before the State of the Navajo Nation Address, symbolizing unity between the executive and legislative branches. It is a tradition rooted in respect and collaboration, reflecting the values of K'é and mutual commitment to serving the Navajo people.

Earlier today, I had the honor of continuing this tradition alongside Delegates Germaine Simonson and George Tolth, who graciously escorted me to the Council Chambers. Together, we witnessed the Speaker election and celebrated Speaker Crystalyne Curley's second term. This moment was beautifully grounded by a prayer led by Delegate Tolth, which emphasized healing, unity, and respect among leaders. The prayer set a tone of hope and commitment to serve our people with dignity.

However, it is with disappointment that I recount the disruption that followed. As I began delivering the State of the Navajo Nation Address—a critical opportunity to update the Nation's leadership and citizens on progress and challenges—Delegates Eugenia Charles-Newton and Vince James repeatedly interrupted. Their focus on procedural concerns regarding the Vice President's participation overshadowed the purpose of the address and the opportunity to share the accomplishments and needs of the Nation.

While Vice President Richelle Montoya explained that she had not prepared a report, and Delegate Danny Simpson clarified that Title II and the Council's Rules of Order designate the President as the sole presenter of the State of the Nation Address, the interruptions persisted. These actions detracted from the spirit of unity established by Delegate Tolth's prayer and undermined the importance of the moment.

It has been eight months since my last in-person address. I was eager to share the administration's updates, highlight the progress we have made, and outline the challenges we must tackle together. Instead, this critical opportunity was overshadowed by divisive behavior and misplaced priorities. Such actions do not serve the interests of our people, who deserve leaders focused on solutions and healing rather than political distractions.

Despite these challenges, I remained committed to honoring the prayer of unity and healing. In an effort to de-escalate the situation and refocus the session, I invited Vice President Montoya to join me at the presentation table. Although I ultimately yielded my time to her, the interruptions had already diverted attention from the address.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

Our roles as leaders are sacred. We are entrusted to serve the Navajo people with integrity, respect, and collaboration. The behavior displayed by certain delegates today does not reflect these values. Our people, especially our youth, deserve to witness leadership rooted in K'é—unity, harmony, and mutual respect. I remain steadfast in my commitment to working for the people and moving our Nation forward. Let this serve as a reminder of the importance of unity and the need to prioritize the well-being of our people above all else. Together, we can and must do better.

### **Congratulations to Speaker Curley on re-election**

**January 27, 2025** - Today, during the first day of the 2025 Winter Session, the 25th Navajo Nation Council elected Crystalyne Curley, once again, to serve as Speaker for the next two years. Your oath obligates you to serve the Navajo people through the legislative body, and I am eager to collaborate with you during this term.

As Speaker and President, we both have two years remaining in our terms. It is imperative that we work together to ensure access to basic water, power, and electricity for our communities. Our constituents elected us to serve them, and addressing these urgent needs must be our top priority.

As we move into 2025, I encourage both of us to hold each other accountable, alongside Chief Justice Jayne. The three-branch government provides essential checks and balances, enabling us to achieve significant goals for our people.

Speaker Curley's election followed three rounds of runoff, demonstrating the confidence the council has in your leadership. I look forward to working with the entire Navajo Nation Council on our progress and urge everyone to roll up their sleeves and pass the budget.

Congratulations again, Speaker Curley on your re-election!

### **Prayers to the Tó'nánees'díí community today**

**January 27, 2025** - Last night, I learned of the tragic events that unfolded in Tuba City, Arizona. My heart is heavy as I send prayers to the family of the individual who lost their life and to the entire community of Tuba City. Our prayers also go out to the second person who was taken to Flagstaff Medical Center. I am grateful for the swift response of our first responders and law enforcement, who acted quickly to ensure the safety of others. Their dedication is truly appreciated.

While rumors and fears can often spread in times like these, I want to reassure the community that the situation is under control. The Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety has confirmed that the suspect is in custody, and the community is now safe. However, we must all remain vigilant, continuing to support law enforcement and work together to ensure our community is safe.

Tragic events such as these not only result in loss of life, but also add to the mental health challenges that many of our people already face. Let us all commit to helping each other find healthier ways to cope with life's struggles. Whether through prayer, counseling, or traditional ceremonies, may we seek the healing we need. Today, I encourage you to reach out to those who may be hurting and offer comfort. Let us hold the families of the victims in our prayers.

### **Warm hearts: anonymous donor provides coats to Diné people amid freezing temperatures**

**January 26, 2025** - Nearly 2,000 coats were distributed to Diné people in and around Shiprock, as well as the broader Northern Navajo Agency, this past Friday, thanks to an anonymous donor.

The coat drive was organized by former Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer, Pastor Robert Tso of Victory Life Church, staff from the Office of the President, and Northern Agency Veterans Commanders in collaboration with the nonprofit Operation Warm, based in Salt Lake City.

The coats, available in a variety of colors, arrived just in time, as temperatures across the Navajo Nation have plummeted, with some nights dipping into the negatives.

Additional partners included volunteers from the Shiprock Chapter and Comes As You Are Ministries. Some coats were also given to students from Dream Diné Charter and Shiprock Associated Schools Inc. Our deepest thanks to this anonymous donor for their generous support for our Diné people during this challenging time, as well as to all the community volunteers and organizers who braved the cold to distribute these jackets.

Jackets serve as our robes and shawls, providing shelter, warmth, and security.

### **New electric line installation, enhancing power supply and efficiency for the Huerfano chapter**

**January 24, 2025** - The Huerfano Chapter is working on a new electric line project so 15 residents will receive electricity.

The first electric line was built between 2004-2005. It was the first major electric line that drew power from the Newcomb grid line, coming into Burnham to power over 55 homes in the community.

Prior to this project, the Huerfano Chapter received a waterline in October 2024. This is a small step toward helping our surrounding communities receive resources that will benefit their homes.

Currently, the project is working with right of ways on homes that may not have adequate wiring, where wiring is not fully completed or has no wiring at all. With mobile homes, wiring is outdated.

With the assistance from NTUA, wiring can be brought up to standard.

The project is funded by the State of New Mexico and Navajo Nation ARPA funds with the help of NTUA.

With state funding ending in June 2025, the chapter is applying again in an attempt to extend funding that will be used to expand power lines to others in the community.

A new electric line would provide essential services to the large population of ranchers, farmers and students, as well as to Diné returning home, as electricity and water become increasingly available.

At least five people have been served so far while 10 more are on the list. This positively impacts young people and retirees who are trying to move back home.

"We are very thankful for Nygren Administration for doing all he can to help us," said Harrison LaMone, President of Huerfano Chapter.

Thank you, Mr. LaMone, for the faith you have in me but also the administration. And thank you for working with us so we can all work toward a better future for our communities.

More projects are yet to come in the new year. This is a start to bring infrastructure to the community to maintain efficiency and assistance for those who need it.

### **President Nygren shares Navajo priorities with NM state leaders**

**January 23, 2025** - At the New Mexico State Capitol, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren met with state leaders, including Speaker Javier Martinez, to discuss Navajo's legislative priorities.

Speaker Martinez invited tribal leaders from the state's 24 tribes, nations and pueblos to Santa Fe to meet with him and other members of the legislature to hear tribal needs, upholding tribal sovereignty.

President Nygren shared that the Navajo Nation is taking bold steps in 2025 to uplift the lives of the Diné, with a strong focus on economic growth, public safety, and cultural preservation. The administration is prioritizing critical water rights settlements, including the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project, which will bring vital water access to communities across the Nation. Education remains a core issue, with efforts to ensure equitable support for Navajo students and increase the use of the Navajo language in schools and daily life.

Public safety is also a major concern, with recruitment of Navajo police officers to tackle crime and the ongoing Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) crisis. The administration continues to push for the Shiprock First Responders Substation, a long-awaited project to centralize emergency services in one modern facility, improving response times for Shiprock and surrounding areas.

Economic initiatives, like the Navajo Small Business Credit Program, are helping small businesses grow and create jobs, with a particular focus on renewable energy, agriculture, and cultural tourism. Infrastructure

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

development, including broadband expansion and road improvements, will help connect rural communities and boost access to healthcare and commerce.

### **Sonsela Butte Wildfire is officially contained after burning 133 acres**

**January 22, 2025** – On Tuesday, Jan. 21, the BIA Wildland Fire Management-Navajo Region responded to the Sonsela Butte Wildfire, which charred 133 acres north of Crystal Chapter House on Indian Route 12. Today, BIA Wildland Fire Management-Navajo Region officials announced that the human-caused fire has been, and were able to do so thanks to low winds and low temperatures.

Sharen Sandoval, executive director for the Navajo Department of Emergency Management, said there was no new growth to the fire. No homes were affected, except damage to one telephone pole, she said.

“Fire danger has gone up from low to moderate,” Sandoval said, noting that fire prevention awareness would be the next step across Navajo Nation communities.

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren thanked the frontline firefighters and Navajo Nation Departments for ensuring the fire did not get out of control, while monitoring the surrounding communities.

“I understand during these times things can get hectic and everyone is doing the best they can to help,” said President Nygren. “I want to thank Director Sandoval and BIA Wildland Fire Management-Navajo Region for keeping me updated on what is going on. I encourage our people to stay safe and be careful burning fires during these dry conditions. Only you can prevent forest fires.”

### **National Cheii Day**

**January 22, 2025** - Today, we honor our Cheiis, the strong pillars of our families and communities. With deep gratitude, we thank them for the strength and wisdom they have passed down, teaching us how to protect ourselves and care for one another. Many of our Cheiis have shown us the importance of listening, not only to the elders but also to the matriarchs who guide us.

Na'ashq'ii dich'ízhii, the horned toad, to us as Diné is also our grandfather. We are taught to bless ourselves as they provide protection. As we reflect on our Cheii's and horned toad's teachings, let us continue to honor their legacy by respecting the wisdom of those who came before us and nurturing the generations that follow. May we walk in balance, as they have shown us, and carry their teachings forward in all we do.

### **President Nygren urges New Mexico leaders to fund the Shiprock First Responder Substation**

**January 22, 2025** - At the New Mexico State Capitol, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren met with state leaders, including Speaker Javier Martinez, to discuss legislative priorities for the 60-day session.

Speaker Martinez invited tribal leaders from the state's 24 tribes, nations and pueblos to Santa Fe to meet with him and other members of the legislature to hear tribal needs, upholding tribal sovereignty.

Nygren stressed the need to fund the Shiprock First Responders Substation, highlighting a \$3.5 million shortfall in its \$15.9 million budget.

“Our police officers in Shiprock are operating from an old post office with significant structural and environmental issues,” President Nygren stated. “Shiprock is the largest community in the Navajo Nation.” Nygren submitted a written report to lawmakers that outlines the need for consultation and collaboration on capital outlay funds for essential infrastructure, public safety, and resources to address the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples crisis.

Another priority is working with chapter governments in New Mexico to access capital outlay funding for basic infrastructure projects. Currently, about \$21.5 million in state capital outlay funding has expired.

“Over the past several months, we have engaged with the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department to ensure that funding is not returned,” President Nygren said.

**\$118 million approved for nine solar and battery storage projects across Arizona and New Mexico**

**January 22, 2025** – On Tuesday, President Buu Nygren proudly announced that the Navajo Nation, through the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA), is taking a significant step toward energy sovereignty. The funding, secured under the Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Powering American Clean Energy (PACE) program, is set to contribute to Navajo Nation's clean energy infrastructure and creating economic opportunities for the Navajo people.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has committed more than \$100 million through the Powering Affordable Clean Energy Program to finance solar-powered facilities and a battery energy storage system for NTUA. This investment is expected to generate over 30 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy, providing power to approximately 40,000 NTUA customers in rural Arizona.

"This initiative marks a transformative moment for the Navajo Nation," said President Nygren, "By embracing renewable energy, we are doubling down on meeting today's needs while securing a future of sustainability and self-reliance—empowering the Navajo Nation to lead in energy independence and environmental stewardship.

NTUA's proposal includes nine solar projects strategically located across rural Arizona and New Mexico, with three incorporating battery storage systems:

**Solar with Battery Storage Projects:**

Cudei, New Mexico (4.9 MW solar, 20 MWh storage)

Ganado, Arizona (4.9 MW solar, 20 MWh storage)

Round Rock, Arizona (10 MW solar, 20 MWh storage)

**Solar-Only Projects:**

Chinle, Arizona (4.9 MW)

LeChee, Arizona (4.9 MW)

District Office locations (Chinle, Dilkon, Crownpoint, and Headquarters), totaling 1.15 MW

These renewable energy projects will provide immediate and lasting benefits to NTUA customers by reducing reliance on costly third-party energy providers and reinvesting savings into local communities. By harnessing solar power, the Navajo Nation is advancing toward energy independence, strengthening current energy resources, and driving economic growth.

The projects will also create approximately 525 construction jobs, offering workforce training and skill development for Navajo workers. More specifically, 1,000 hours of specialized training will equip participants with translatable experience and expertise in renewable energy, opening doors to long-term career opportunities.

Post-construction, each facility will sustain 2-3 full-time jobs, contributing to local employment and economic stability. Additionally, tax revenues generated will support the Navajo Nation government and help NTUA expand electricity access to homes without power. Beyond economic impact, these projects will transform lives by providing reliable electricity to thousands of households, enabling families to focus on education, employment, and community growth in their home communities.

"Our vision is clear," President Nygren stated. "We are investing in a future where the Navajo Nation stands as an example of self-sufficiency, resilience, and innovation in clean energy by harnessing the power of the sun right here in our home communities. My administration excited for NTUA and we urge the Navajo People to join us in building our Nation for the future.

Navajo leadership is dedicated to responsible energy development that respects traditional values, protects the environment, and advances the Nation's position as a leader in renewable energy.

**Crystal, NM fire chars at least 133 acres**

**January 21, 2025** - A human-caused wildland fire is 0 percent contained and has charred at least 133 acres in the community of Crystal, N.M. off Route 12, according to BIA Wildland Fire Management-Navajo Region.

The fire, called the "Sonsela Butte Fire," started around 1 p.m. this afternoon off the Navajo Route 12 highway between mile marker 53 and 55. Resources are currently deployed to suppress the fire.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

As of 5:40 pm, Navajo Route 12 north and south bound lanes are open. Drivers are asked to proceed with caution if commuting through the area. First responders are still on site and are on an active scene. Fire officials are currently on the ground suppressing the fire, said Johnson Benallie, of the BIA Wildland Fire Management-Navajo Region.

“Proceed with caution with driving through,” said Benallie, who attributed the growing fire to dry conditions. “Be careful and take it slow.”

As of 5:30 p.m. fire crews from Navajo Region BIA, Navajo Department of Emergency Management, Navajo Police Window Rock District, Ganado Fire District, Navajo Nation Rangers and Navajo Fish and Wildlife were actively suppressing the fire.

There are no evacuations at this time, Benallie said.

### **Navajo Nation leaders advocate for water rights and economic development at inaugural ball**

**January 21, 2025** - Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren attended the Inaugural Ball in the nation’s capital this week, leveraging the high-profile event to advance critical federal priorities on behalf of the Navajo people. Their visit underscored the administration’s commitment to addressing issues such as water rights, economic development, and sovereignty restoration. During the event, President Nygren had the opportunity to join Congressional leaders in welcoming President Donald Trump as the 47th President of the United States. To President Nygren, it is important that the Nation be willing to work with the administration on advancing shared priorities including respecting sovereignty, improving economic development, and providing safe sustainable housing.

The First Lady and President Nygren also connected with UFC fighter Jorge Masvidal, who expressed deep interest in the resilience of the Navajo people and their rich cultural heritage. Masvidal’s engagement highlights the broader appeal of Navajo traditions and the importance of sharing their stories on a global stage.

In addition, President Nygren and the First Lady met with Pastor Lorenzo Sewell, who delivered the closing invocation at President Trump’s 2025 inauguration. Pastor Sewell’s reflections on faith and service resonated with the administration’s vision of fostering unity and community-focused leadership.

Key discussions during the visit included meetings with Congresswoman Harriet Hageman, Chair of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries, and Congressman Bruce Westerman, Chair of the House Natural Resources Committee. These conversations focused on the Arizona Water Rights Settlement, a cornerstone legislative priority aimed at securing water security and access for the Navajo Nation.

“The Arizona Water Rights Settlement is more than a legal framework—it’s a lifeline for our communities,” said President Nygren. “Water is life, and we are committed to ensuring our people have the resources they need to thrive for generations to come. I am encouraged by the support and commitment from our federal partners.”

Beyond water rights, President Nygren highlighted the importance of revitalizing the Navajo Nation’s economy through investments in infrastructure, workforce development, and renewable energy. These initiatives aim to create sustainable opportunities while upholding the principles of tribal sovereignty.

“This week in Washington, D.C., has been a powerful reminder of the importance of collaboration,” said President Nygren. “By engaging with federal leaders and partners, we are taking critical steps to address longstanding challenges and secure a brighter future for the Navajo people.”

President Nygren remains committed in his efforts to maintain proactive engagement with the federal government. He emphasized the importance of working together to secure resources, implement sustainable solutions, and uphold the federal trust responsibility to Indian Country.



### **Navajo Department of Workforce Development: unlocking training for lasting employment**

January 21, 2025 – With a remarkable 90% completion rate and an annual average of 200 participants, the Navajo Department of Workforce Development is transforming lives.

Open to eligible applicants across the Four Corners region, this vital department serves both Native Americans and non-Natives. The Navajo Department of Workforce Development provides essential services to pave the way to sustainable careers.

The Navajo Department of Workforce Development (NDWD) provides valuable support, including work experience placements, vocational training, and GED assistance, helping many people in the area. They also offer housing support and relocation aid to assist participants. Whether you're looking to gain hands-on experience or need help with living expenses, Workforce Development is a great place to start building a better future. Interested applicants can apply online at [www.ndwd.org](http://www.ndwd.org).

"This program is about giving people the chance to enhance their resumes and build their careers," said Orlanda Wauneka, NDWD Program Manager. "We create opportunities within 100 miles of the Navajo Nation, allowing participants to gain valuable experience in real-world work settings."

One standout success story comes from a participant placed with the tribe's fleet management, who went on to secure a full-time position after completing their placement. Wauneka said the program helps non-Navajo individuals, too.

"Our goal is to equip people with the skills and opportunities they need to achieve financial independence," Wauneka said.

Roger James, now the chapter president for Red Lake Chapter, is a prime example of benefitting from NDWP. Starting as an office assistant at the Office of the President, James has since climbed the ranks, proving that being part of NDWP can lead to great employment outcomes.

"It's an incredible opportunity for people of all ages," James said. "Workforce Development helps you get back on your feet and set you up for your next step—there are resources available, you just have to take that first step."

### **Navajo Nation celebrates trump administration at inaugural reception for the 47th President of the United States**

**January 20, 2025** - During Donald J. Trump's inauguration activities, the Navajo Nation Washington Office proudly hosted a reception on Sunday evening in Washington, D.C. Alongside First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren, we celebrated this historic occasion with Rep. Eli Crane, a staunch ally of the Navajo Nation.

Working collaboratively with Rep. Crane, we have made significant progress in advocating for our water rights in Arizona, particularly through the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement. We remain dedicated to ensuring that rural Arizona, including the Navajo Nation, has access to vital resources such as water, power, and electricity.

Also in attendance were former Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer and former Second Lady Dottie Lizer. This event celebrated the new golden era under the Trump Administration, emphasizing the many allies standing with the Navajo Nation. Ahehee!

### **The late rev. Dr. Martin luther king sought peace, balance, beauty, harmony for the world**

**January 20, 2025** - "Returning violence for violence multiples violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars." – The late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, legacy to all people is to remind us that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Injustice is what he called moral blindness.

On Jan. 15, he would have been 96 years old. Tragically, his life was taken on April 4, 1968, as he sought for the country what Diné know as hózhó. He was only 39 years old.

His life represented the continual struggle to promote freedom, equality, peace, justice and dignity for all races and all people. He sought to bring an end to people's inhumanity to others.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on Dec. 10, 1964, just five months after President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law that he worked so hard for.

Dr. King reminds us of our own great leaders of the past, and the struggles they confronted to achieve justice for the Diné.

Our Navajo hataathlis and naataanis long ago understood that for peace and happiness to thrive, our people need to live in harmony and beauty. Even now, all of our prayers and all of our aspirations for ourselves, our families and our Diné has this at its center.

Like the virtues of love, tolerance, understanding and empathy, the shortcomings of hatred, intolerance, racism and apathy are learned from childhood. We must teach our children that the teachings of our Navajo elders hold all that we need for a good life.

On this Martin Luther King Day, I ask that our thoughts for our families, our Navajo Nation and our country be good thoughts, and that we strive to forgive the shortcomings of those around us.

### **President Nygren announces groundbreaking partnership for Ne'zaad Solar Project**

**January 19, 2025** – Today marks a significant step forward in our commitment to sustainable energy and economic growth for the Navajo Nation. I am proud to announce the full support of my administration for the Ne'zaad Solar project, a groundbreaking collaboration between the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA), Shijing, Lion Point Capital, and Navajo Sun.

The Ne'zaad project, situated in the Nenahnezad Chapter, represents a pivotal investment in our future. This ambitious undertaking will bring not only a state-of-the-art 5GW solar cell manufacturing facility and a 5GW solar module assembly plant but also a much-needed economic revitalization to a region significantly impacted by the decline of the coal industry.

This project aligns perfectly with our administration's commitment to transparent and accountable governance. The Nenahnezad Chapter has voiced its strong support through Resolution NZC-036-2024, reflecting a shared vision for progress and prosperity. We are confident that this project will generate over 2,000 construction jobs and 2,000 long-term, well-paying positions for our Navajo people.

Beyond immediate job creation, the Ne'zaad Solar project will provide substantial revenue for the Nation through taxes and lease payments, enabling us to invest further in critical community programs. The chapter's intention to use these funds to support scholarships, internships, youth programs, and veteran services exemplifies the broader positive impact this project will have on our communities.

We are deeply grateful for the collaborative spirit and foresight demonstrated by NTUA, Shijing, Lion Point Capital, and Navajo Sun. Their commitment to sustainable energy development, coupled with the Nenahnezad Chapter's strong support, signals a bright future for our Nation.

We anticipate the project's substantial contribution to creating a stronger, more equitable, and energy-independent Navajo Nation. NTUA will provide regular updates on the project's advancement.

### **Public Safety at the forefront of Navajo Nation and state leadership**

**January 18, 2025** – In 2023, numerous Navajo citizens were trafficked off the Navajo Nation through scams, particularly to fake sober-living homes.

Thanks to a coordinated effort by Navajo Nation leaders and Arizona lawmakers, these Diné are now safely returning home.

Operation Rainbow Bridge, launched in May 2023, exposed a troubling trend where individuals seeking recovery from substance use had been exploited by fraudulent sober-living facilities.

The "homes" were being used to defraud the insurance system. Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs and Attorney General Kris Mayes partnered with Navajo leaders, including Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and Senator Theresa Hatathlie-Delmar, to bring victims back to the Navajo Nation.

Senate President Warren Petersen also played a crucial role. He supported Hatathlie's sober-living bill. While the bill didn't pass last year due to language issues in the bill, it will be presented again during this legislative session.

"This has to stop," Petersen said. "I know Sen. Hatathlie will make this (sober-living bill) a top focus of hers this year and again, Sen. Hatathlie will have my full support."

Public safety remains a top priority for state leaders, including House Speaker Steve Montenegro, who has pledged to assist in any way possible.

"If I can help, I will," said Montenegro, emphasizing the importance of integrity in government.

He asked President Nygren how the House could better represent the Navajo Nation, and Nygren's response was clear: language.

Nygren recalled a close call where a man was nearly scammed but was saved when another person spoke to him in Navajo.

"Our language is essential," Nygren said. "It saved a life, and it continues to protect our people."

The Navajo language, once crucial during WWII, remains a vital tool in protecting the community from scams and preserving the nation's security. Both Petersen and Montenegro understand and commit to helping where they can.

### **President Nygren relieves Olin Kieyoomia of his duties as Veterans Administrator and wishes him well**

**January 17, 2025** - I am writing to inform you about the recent situation involving Olin Kieyoomia, now former deputy director of the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration.

A local newspaper published a notice recently on the arrest of Mr. Kieyoomia by local law enforcement. I issued an initial statement in support of Mr. Kieyoomia based on the preliminary report I received.

Unfortunately, that initial report differs from the information we just received from authorities. As a result of these developments, Mr. Kieyoomia has been relieved of his duties with the Navajo Nation Office of the President and the Veterans Administration. We are in the process of helping him transition to the necessary resources and help.

This is an unfortunate and sad situation all around as many of our Navajo people suffer from similar issues. I know first-hand the service and advocacy Mr. Kieyoomia has provided to the Navajo Nation, our veterans, our people and our country as a U.S. Army veteran. Mr. Kieyoomia dedicated himself to serving our Navajo veterans and has changed the lives of countless veterans.

We are very sympathetic to his medical conditions, which we believe contributed to the circumstances surrounding this incident. I am thankful that no one was hurt. However, under the circumstances, this action to relieve Mr. Kieyoomia must be taken. I urge the public to pray for Mr. Kieyoomia and send him positive thoughts for a healthy recovery.

As we move forward, my administration remains committed to transparency, accountability, and efficiency in all our operations and decision-making processes. The political pressures associated with nation-building are heavy, as we strive to bring equity and justice to our people. This work involves not only setting policies, but also fostering a sense of unity and ensuring that every voice is heard and valued.

Nation-building encompasses addressing the historical injustices faced by our communities, enhancing access to resources, and ensuring that all Navajo people can thrive. As we work towards a more equitable future, it is essential to recognize the emotional and mental toll this work can take on individuals dedicated to our cause, especially during a time of transformation under the Nygren Administration.

Supporting the mental health and healing of our Diné people, including our Navajo veterans, is a top priority for my administration. I fully support Mr. Olin Kieyoomia in his healing and recovery process, as we continue to work together toward our shared vision of a stronger, more equitable Navajo Nation marked by transparency and accountability. Bless our Navajo Nation and our People.



## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

### **Diné bizaad is the official language of the Navajo nation ... so let's practice every day**

**January 17, 2025** - Earlier this week, during the Second People's State of the Nation event at Greyhills Academy High School, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren signed Executive Order No. 01-2025, which directs Executive Branch's Divisions, Departments, Commissions, Offices and Programs to find ways to implement and use the Navajo language throughout the workday.

The executive order comes after the Navajo Nation Council passed legislation codifying Diné Bizaad as the official language of the Navajo Nation. On Christmas Eve, President Nygren signed the Council's bill into law. On Tuesday, in front of over 1,500 attendees at the SONN, President Nygren signed the executive order. In celebration of this significant moment, 300 books were distributed to Navajo youth who attended his second address as a start to help encourage them to learn and speak Navajo by reading and sounding out the language.

"Next week, the Office of the President will begin offering Navajo classes for the public and my team will begin in-person Navajo lessons," President Nygren said.

The executive order requires at least one Navajo word or phrase to be included in written documents. For non-Diné Bizaad speaking staff employed with the tribal government, they will have the opportunity to learn the language.

The executive order also specifies how the Navajo Nation government will include street signs and signs in office spaces that spell out both the English and Navajo translations.

Ensuring this huge step not only continues to preserve the beautiful Diné Bizaad for the current generations of Diné people but for the most precious resource, the future generations.

"This is just the beginning of a bright future ahead for the 2025 year," President Nygren said. "Ya'at'eeh doo ahéhee nitsaago!"

### **Four leaders, same goal— better life for the Navajo people**

**January 16, 2025** - From the Senate and House floors to the Arizona Governor's office, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren put his people first.

On Wednesday, Jan. 15, at the 30th Annual Indian Nations and Tribes Legislative Day, Native American leaders and their members filled the Arizona Senate floor and gallery to bring attention to their needs before President of the Senate, Warren Petersen and Speaker of the House, Steve Montenegro.

President Nygren continued his advocacy for his people and after the session met with Governor Katie Hobbs. With Hobbs, President Nygren and Council Delegates Shawna Claw and Cherilyn Yazzie shared critical issues facing the Navajo Nation and its people, ranging from water access to the preservation of the Navajo language. Council delegate Yazzie said the growing need for water from outside cities such as Phoenix and especially now with wildfires in Los Angeles County is more important than ever for the water security of the Navajo Nation and other tribes. This demand for water, Yazzie said, depends on the passage and federal funding of the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement.

Meanwhile, Council delegate Claw reshared the value of getting Navajo language on signs, so when tourists enter the Navajo Nation, it shows the importance of ongoing language preservation of a thriving Diné culture. President Nygren said the governor's support and commitment to the Navajo Nation with halting uranium transport across the nation and the continued advocacy with tribal water rights issues and overall tribal economic development helps the Navajo Nation grow.

He thanked Claw and Yazzie for their help in the effort to secure water and sustain the Navajo language. It's what the Navajo people deserve, he said.

"(I'm) so grateful for your partnership. I know we've made a lot of progress," Hobbs said. "I'm so excited about the water settlement. I think it's going to be all hands on deck from us and I know our senators are really focused on getting that through so we will continue to work with you on that— we're on top of that and whatever else we should be, let us know."

Hobbs said that she wants to see road signs in the Navajo Nation that reads in both Navajo and English.

**A prayer for our NTUA linemen who are traveling to Los Angeles, CA to restore power**

**January 15, 2025** - My Navajo People, I come to you today with a heartfelt request - let us unite in prayer for 11 of our bravest NTUA linemen—two full crews and a superintendent—who are embarking on a critical mission to Los Angeles.

They are answering the urgent call to action following the devastating wildfires that have ravaged Southern California, leaving thousands without power.

These skilled men are selflessly putting themselves in harm's way to assist the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) and other utility companies in the monumental task of restoring essential services. Their willingness to travel far from home, to work long hours in dangerous and challenging conditions, is a testament to their dedication and the compassionate spirit of the Navajo Nation.

This act of selfless service is a powerful reflection of the mutual aid and support we have always shown others. It is a direct echo of the generous assistance provided to our communities by LADWP crews for over three years through the vital "Light Up Navajo" program. We remember their kindness and support, and now we demonstrate our own commitment to helping those in need.

I implore all of us to join in lifting these 11 courageous linemen up in prayer. Let us ask for the divine guidance and unwavering protection of the Holy People and the Creator.

May their journey be safe, their work effective, and their return home blessed. May they be shielded from harm and guided by strength and wisdom in their important work. Let us pray for their safety, their well-being, and their safe return to their families.

**Thank you, Gerald Keetso, for your 12 years of service as Tuba City Chapter President**

**January 15, 2025** - We honor your remarkable 12 years as Chapter President of Tuba City. Your leadership has been inspiring, marked by your unwavering commitment to our community's well-being. Throughout your tenure, you faced daunting challenges yet remained determined, always prioritizing the needs of Tó'Nanéés'Díí. Under your guidance, your community has not only survived but truly thrived. Your dedication to the Navajo Nation shines through all that you have accomplished. You exemplified what it means to lead with humility and resolve. In stabilizing our fiscal policies and procedures, you laid the groundwork for essential growth. Your tireless work with the NTUA ensured that Tuba City residents had access to reliable services and resources, benefiting generations to come.

Thanks to your vision, significant projects like the community center, Dodson Pond revitalization, and amphitheater expansion became reality. Your foresight and determination made these transformations possible. You have turned our chapter into a model of local governance that reflects our values and meets the needs of our people.

Your diligence to the youth of Tuba City highlights your understanding of our Nation's future. Recognizing that today's youth are the leaders and guardians of our culture, you committed yourself to nurturing and empowering them, creating a legacy that will endure.

As you pass the baton to the next administration, we hope they continue the important projects you started. Your legacy will forever be part of the Tuba City Chapter, guiding us into the future. Ayóó Aniinshní, Cheíí.

**President Nygren presents People's State of the Navajo Nation: key accomplishments in housing, water rights, tourism and taxation**

**January 15, 2025** - In a captivating hour-long address delivered in rapid-fire Navajo, President Buu Nygren showcased the top accomplishments of the Navajo Nation for 2024 during the second annual People's State of the Navajo Nation address.

Covering 22 significant topics, he emphasized the administration's commitment to sovereignty, government improvements, infrastructure, and more.

"With our focus on accountability, transparency, and efficiency, we've dedicated ourselves to addressing the essential services our people need," President Nygren stated as he opened the address.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

Following cultural performances and briefings, he took the stage at 11 a.m. and completed his detailed speech of 4,300 words by noon, concluding with an executive order declaring the Navajo language, Diné Bizaad, as the official language of the Navajo Nation.

Among the highlights of his administration, the Navajo Small Business Credit Initiative secured a remarkable \$26 million from the U.S. Treasury, providing \$89 million in loans over the next decade. The Navajo Nation Tax Commission achieved a record \$140.7 million in tax revenue, 26% above projections, largely driven by a booming tourism sector.

“We’ve seen an impressive rise in tourist visits, with over 1.9 million guests flocking to our parks, notably Lake Powell Tribal Park,” he reported. This influx generated \$15.5 million in revenue from tribal parks and museums.

Significantly, the planned Horseshoe Bend Resort is set to create 3,000 jobs and boost the economy by \$14 million annually. Additionally, the purchase of the historic Goulding’s Lodge is expected to yield \$7 million in annual revenue.

In terms of housing initiatives, President Nygren announced the “1,000 Home Initiative,” which has already achieved 474 housing contracts. Moreover, various partnerships are underway to develop modular homes, with considerable allocations from ARPA funds.

To realize his priority of providing clean water, the President highlighted successful water settlements in Arizona and New Mexico awaiting congressional approval. Ongoing projects aim to connect more families to clean water, with substantial investments in infrastructure.

President Nygren concluded with an outline of future projects, reinforcing his administration's commitment to ensuring that every Navajo family enjoys strong housing, infrastructure, and services.

### **Navajo Nation connects the unreachable: starlink pilot program brings broadband to remote chapters**

**January 11, 2025** – The Navajo Nation Broadband Office launched a transformative pilot program with Starlink, the Low Earth Orbit satellite provider, as part of a broader Chapter Connectivity Plan.

The initiative will bring reliable internet to all unconnected Navajo chapters across the Nation.

“By merging innovative satellite solutions with a comprehensive connectivity plan, NNBBBO is creating a future where every corner of the Navajo Nation is empowered through technology,” said Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren.

The pilot program has connected five chapters – Burnham, Jeddito, Coppermine, Tolani Lake, Ojo Encino – and the Red Rock Senior Center, as well as government facilities in St. Michaels.

Mobile units equipped with Starlink are being used for people with high mobility needs.

Sonia Nez is director of the Broadband Office. She said this initiative serves as a temporary solution while long-term middle-mile and fiber projects are being developed.

“Building on the program's success, a plan is underway to extend LEO satellite technology to 50 more underserved chapters,” she said. “A feasibility study is also evaluating satellite coverage for over 6,000 households in remote areas that may be difficult to reach with traditional broadband technologies.”

The Chapter Connectivity Plan will expand these efforts and enable virtual meetings, telehealth access, enhanced education, and improved administrative functions for chapters. This approach also strengthens emergency response capabilities.

### **Wishing the 36th WINGS national team success at the USA cross country championships**

**January 10, 2025** - I would like to extend my best wishes to the 36th Wings National Team as they compete in the “Junior” race at the USA Cross Country Championships in Lubbock, TX on Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025.

Since 1989, Wings has proudly sponsored this exceptional inter-tribal squad, showcasing the fastest Native runners in the U.S. aged 14-19. I am particularly proud that of the 17 runners selected for this year's team, 10



are affiliated with the Navajo Nation, along with our honorary men's team coach, Herbert Beyale (Diné from Shiprock).

Wings has been instrumental in encouraging Native runners to participate on national and international stages. For over 35 years, they have promoted running as a vital tool for building and maintaining physical, mental, and spiritual health among our youth.

Last summer, the Navajo Nation Department of Health was proud to partner with Wings to offer eight two-day "Running & Fitness Camps" for kids ages 6-18 across eight communities in the Navajo Nation. Through vital funding from the Navajo Nation Division of Behavioral and Health Services and Community Health Representative programs, Wings provided free summer enrichment for nearly 750 youth.

Notably, Wings hires and trains Navajo high school and college-aged runners to lead these camps, fostering a sense of community and mentorship. Programs like Wings not only promote fitness but also honor our long-standing tradition of running among Indigenous Peoples, a tradition that transcends geographic and cultural boundaries.

### **Building bridges to the future: Navajo Nation broadband office expands digital access, connectivity**

**January 10, 2025** – The Navajo Nation Broadband Office has made significant progress this year to close the digital divide for the Diné people.

Through strategic partnerships with the Digital Equity Initiative, tribal leadership and industry stakeholders, NNBBO achieved several key milestones that promise lasting impact.

NNBBO Division Director Sonia Nez has reported:

- **Middle Mile Infrastructure:** NNBBO completed Phase I planning, which includes 36 new towers and 325 miles of fiber. Phase II will expand this with 42 additional towers and 1,200 miles of fiber to lay the groundwork for 5G and broadband access.
- **Rapid Deployment Pilot:** In partnership with Starlink, NNBBO launched a pilot program to connect six Navajo chapters and government facilities to provide immediate access to broadband in underserved areas. The initiative will expand to other unconnected chapters.
- **BEAD Program Funding:** NNBBO coordinated efforts in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah to secure funding for last-mile broadband services. In Arizona alone, reclaiming thousands of Business Subscriber Locations, or BSLs, could unlock up to \$100 million in additional funding.
- **ARPA Initiatives:** With ARPA funding, NNBBO supported fiber-to-home, or FTTH, projects, 4G LTE upgrades and middle-mile fiber installations to achieve 450 FTTH connections and upgrades to 33 cellular sites.
- **Regulatory Reform:** NNBBO is working with the Navajo Land Department to streamline regulations to accelerate deployment of 5G and broadband infrastructure across the Nation.

### **Seven new homes delivered: a step toward the 1,000 home initiative**

**January 10, 2025** - I am pleased to report that the Navajo Division of Community Development's Housing Improvement Program is about a third of the way to complete its first contract/work order for new homes.

This initiative is an important part of my commitment to the 1,000 Home Initiative to address the housing needs within the Navajo Nation.

Through this program, we are set to help at least 74 new homeowners, all of whom have passed the HIP application process.

Here are some key updates:

**Delivered Homes:** I am happy to report that seven homes have already been delivered and two homes are in production as of today.

**Partnerships:** Recently, my office visited the HIP office in Fort Defiance to meet with Rita Begay, the program manager, and Greg McClanahan, the president of developer division for Homes Direct, to receive updates on their progress. Together with our external contractors, LBH Investment, Inc., and Speedy Sales and Services, we are working hard to ensure the successful delivery and setup of these homes.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

**Quality Assurance:** Homes Direct is building our homes to the Navajo Nation's construction standards, federal and state housing codes. This ensures that our families receive quality residences.

This project represents a significant step forward under HIP and is supported by BIA ARPA funding and its application requirements. I want to extend my gratitude to Rita, Greg and all the partners involved for their dedication to bring new homes to our most vulnerable relatives.

### **Prayers to our brave Navajos who are on their way to California to fight wildfires**

**January 9, 2025** - As more people evacuate the Los Angeles area from the blazing wildfires, our Navajo Scouts are answering the call to help fight and protect the millions of people in LA County who are fleeing their homes.

I ask that we, as a united Navajo people, keep our Navajo Scouts in our thoughts and prayers. Let us send them our heartfelt wishes for protection, so that they may return home safely after aiding our relatives in Southern California during this challenging time.

According to reports from California Fire, there are currently five active fires: the Palisades Fire, the Eaton Fire, the Hurst Fire, the Lidia Fire, and the Sunset Fire. The Palisades Fire has already burned over 17,234 acres, while the Eaton Fire has charred approximately 10,600 acres. Both of these fires ignited on January 7 and have forced massive evacuations, destroying homes and property, and tragically resulting in five lives lost.

The cause of these wildfires has been undetermined as of this social media post. However, extreme fire behavior has been attributed to the Santa Ana winds combined with the dry conditions that have been exacerbated by climate change.

Our Navajo Scouts, a dedicated team of 23 members, including a courageous female wildland firefighter, are highly trained and available to combat fires like these for ten months out of the year. They represent various communities across the Navajo Nation, united in their mission to help those in need.

Let us continue to pray for our Navajo Scouts and for the safety of everyone affected by these wildfires in the Los Angeles area.

### **Navajo Nation acts against environmental damage: \$4.9 million contract to plug orphaned wells**

**January 9, 2025** – More than 50 orphaned wells have been identified by the Navajo Nation Minerals Department, and a \$4.9 million contract will allow 19 of them to be properly plugged and abandoned. An orphaned well is an oil or gas well that is no longer in use and has been abandoned by its owner or operator.

The wells on the Navajo Nation are primarily located in northwestern New Mexico and southeastern Utah. The wells were not properly plugged, though left abandoned by former operators.

The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health reports that people living near orphaned wells may experience higher mortality rates. Orphan wells can leak methane and hydrogen sulfide, which poses risks for water contamination.

On December 30, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and the Minerals Department committed to the plugging of the wells, ending a century of environmental damage caused by outside drilling companies. The President signed a \$4.97 million service contract with Navajo Nation Oil & Gas Co., a tribal enterprise, to carry out Phase Two of the plug and abandon activities. The contract is funded through the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

"Our people come first, their needs, but also their safety," President Nygren said. "Many of our loved ones have suffered health complications because of these wells. I commend the Minerals Department and NNOGC for working with me to protect our people."

Navajo Oil & Gas is completing Phase One of the project. It includes environmental assessments by Navajo Nation Fish and Wildlife to ensure endangered species are unharmed during the plugging of the wells.

“When an oil company leaves because the well is no longer economically producing, they are required to follow a process,” said Rowena Cheromiah, manager for the Minerals Department. “What we found with these orphaned wells is that operators didn’t follow that process or didn’t do it according to standards.” Since 1956, 577 oil and gas wells have produced 428 million barrels of oil from the Navajo Nation. “Some (orphaned wells) are still seeping, causing harm to the environment and to the groundwater,” said Mike Halona, director of the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources. “They pose a safety hazard for individuals who live out there. Once we address these properly, it’s good for the environment and good for the people.”

### **Witnessing the oath: a new chapter for our communities in Chinle Agency**

**January 8, 2025** - Today, I reflect on a significant milestone we celebrated—the inauguration of our chapter officials—president, vice president, secretary/treasurer, grazing officers, farm board, and school board members. For those who were unable to attend, I want to share why this day matters so much to our community.

As I witnessed our dedicated local leaders take their oaths of office, I felt a profound sense of pride and responsibility. These individuals are committed to shaping the future of our Chinle Agency, which comprises 14 vibrant communities.

Throughout the ceremony, we honored our rich Navajo heritage. Our clans connect us to our identity and our ancestors, and it is essential for us as leaders to uphold these traditions while striving for progress in regions like Chinle, Rough Rock, Round Rock, Wheatfields, Tsailé, and beyond.

One of the highlights of the day was recognizing the incredible work done at the Rough Rock Community School. This institution plays a vital role in maintaining and revitalizing our language. Its commitment to teaching Navajo is crucial for preserving our cultural traditions and instilling a strong sense of identity in our youth.

I expressed my eagerness to collaborate with local leadership to bring community projects to life, ensuring our initiatives reflect the values and needs of our people. Together, we can make a substantial impact.

I also want to extend my gratitude to the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors and the students and staff for hosting this inauguration. Their support exemplifies the spirit of community we cherish.

As we move forward, let us remember that leadership is about collaboration, innovation, and building lasting relationships. This day is not just a new beginning for our officials but a collective commitment to the hopes and aspirations of our community. Congratulations to our re-elected and newly elected chapter officials in Chinle Agency!

### **One step at a time, new Office of the President Legal Counsel made her way home**

**January 8, 2024** - It is with great pride that I welcome and congratulate Darrah Blackwater, our new legal counsel, distinguished two-time tennis champion from Farmington, New Mexico, and a dedicated advocate for her people.

Darrah’s journey is one of perseverance and determination, qualities that have driven her success both on and off the tennis court.

In 2009, she led the Farmington High School tennis team to a state championship victory, while securing the doubles state title with her partner. That same dedication, focus and commitment to excellence now shapes her legal career and her service to the Navajo Nation.

Darrah is Béésh Bich’ahii, born for Tsi’naajinii. Her maternal grandfather is Béésh Bich’ahii, and her paternal grandfather is Táchii’nii. Her path has been one of extraordinary service advocating for those in need across the globe or returning home to the Navajo Nation to uplift and serve her community.

Darrah graduated from Fort Lewis College in 2013 with a Bachelor of Arts in psychology. In 2020, she earned her Juris Doctorate from the University of Arizona. Before returning to the Navajo Nation, Darrah led her own law firm, Blackwater Consulting. She specialized in broadband and spectrum rights.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

Her legal career began with the Department of the Interior, where she focused on Indian law. With her extensive experience in advocacy and her expertise in key areas like broadband policy and federal law, Darrah is poised to be an invaluable asset to our team.

"It's nice to be asked to come home," Darrah said. "I went to law school with the intention to better serve my people. So, to be in a position to now serve the Diné, my people, is something I'm truly proud of."

With Darrah's leadership, we are on the brink of making tremendous progress to advance the work of the Navajo Nation Broadband Office – an essential step to achieve digital equity for our people.

Congratulations, Darrah, and welcome home! We are excited to have you on our team, ready to continue your legacy of service, leadership and dedication to the Navajo Nation. (Courtesy photo by Darklisted Photography)

### **President Nygren unveils \$31 million ERP system to modernize government response to the Navajo people**

**January 7, 2025** – Hundreds of Navajo Nation employees heard firsthand from Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, Controller Sean McCabe and Arctic IT CEO Thomas Mercer about the Navajo Nation's new groundbreaking Enterprise Resource Planning system, or ERP.

It's a technology designed to raise efficiency and improve service delivery to the Navajo people.

The ERP system integrates finance, HR and tribal enrollment onto a single platform. That promises greater efficiency, cost savings and enhanced citizen services.

In November, President Nygren signed a \$31 million contract with Arctic IT. With the current system, the Nation pays \$5 million per year for the FMIS system for accounting, but at five years with Arctic IT there will be a slight cost saving for various functions.

"This will be the largest technology rollout in Indian Country," he said. "You will demonstrate to Indian Country what a truly efficient, high-performing government looks like, the kind of government the Navajo Nation deserves."

Arctic IT CEO Thomas Mercer said the ERP system leverages Microsoft Dynamics to streamline workflows, reduce paperwork and strengthen data security.

"We're adapting this software to your specific business processes, customizing it to meet the unique needs of the Navajo Nation," Mercer said.

The key benefits include:

- **Increased efficiency:** automation reduces processing times and eliminates redundancies.
- **Cost savings:** lower operational costs and reduced reliance on external consultants, ultimately costing less than the current FMIS system.
- **Improved citizen services:** easier access to information and services for all Navajos.
- **Alignment with Presidential priorities:** the project directly supports President Nygren's commitment to efficient governance.

Today's project kickoff at the Window Rock Cinema marks the beginning of training for tribal employees from the Office of the Controller, Office of Management and Budget, Office of Vital Records and Identification, and the Department of Personnel Management.

Arctic IT, its consultants and Navajo DIT will provide instruction on Microsoft Dynamics.

Although the initial investment is substantial, the long-term cost savings are projected to be outstanding. The ERP system will enhance Navajo Nation's government operations to improve the lives of its citizens.

Controller McCabe noted that securing the \$31 million allocation involved extensive collaboration with the Navajo Nation Council's Budget and Finance Committee.

### **The nations fight for broadband equality**

**January 7, 2025** – Broadband is more than high-speed internet. It's the bridge to opportunity, safety and choice.

For the Navajo Nation, reliable broadband means ensuring digital equity for all communities by unlocking access to education, healthcare, public safety and commerce, while enabling full participation in the digital economy and preserving Navajo culture and community ties.

Broadband connects people to the world in ways that empower them like online education, telehealth services or new economic opportunities. Broadband is high speed, always-on internet that is essential for the modern digital age.

According to the Navajo Nation Broadband Office, over 80% of Navajo Nation households are underserved or unserved.

“Unserved” means households experience internet speeds below 25 MegaBits Per Second (Mbps), the measurement of internet speed, for downloading and 3 Mbps for uploading, making even basic activities like schoolwork or checking emails a struggle.

“Underserved” areas have speeds below 100 Mbps for downloading and 20 Mbps for uploading, which are necessary for modern activities like video conferencing, telehealth and remote work.

Households in urban areas across the United States are able to access internet speeds above 25 Mbps to upload and 100 Mbps to download.

“Our approach is focused on fostering an environment of choice and fairness, promoting open-access infrastructure and driving healthy competition,” said Sonia Nez, director of the broadcast office. “With affordable, reliable broadband, we’re not just connecting homes, we’re building a foundation for economic growth and opportunity.”

Without proper internet speed, the digital divide limits the Navajo people's ability to improve economic development, growth for businesses and new opportunities.

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren said NNBBO and the Digital Equity Initiative are working to change that.

“Establishing the foundational infrastructure to connect every household, chapter house, business and school with reliable, high-speed broadband, we ensure that our Navajo people are not excluded from the opportunities that the rest of the world has access to, advancing the digital age,” said President Nygren.

### **Ringling in the new year with new officials in Eastern Navajo Agency**

**January 6, 2024** - Today, I had the privilege of congratulating the newly elected officials of the Eastern Navajo Agency. For some of you, this is a return to leadership, and for others, it marks the beginning of a new and meaningful chapter. I know this journey comes with a mix of excitement and uncertainty—believe me, I’ve been there.

When I first decided to run for president, I quickly realized that I could not do it alone. It was the support of family, friends, and loved ones that continue to carry me through the tough moments. It’s been incredible to see that same support around you all today—those who believe in you and in your potential as leaders.

Remember, in those moments when the path ahead feels uncertain, they will be right there for you. Their guidance, love, and encouragement will be your anchor.

But, as many of us know, leadership isn’t always smooth sailing. There may be times when people you thought were your closest allies step away, when the pressure feels like it’s too much to bear. Change is never easy, and sometimes it can make you feel alone. But remember, positive change requires us to be resilient and to rise above the challenges. Trust that the work you do, no matter how hard it gets, is worth it.

We all share a common goal: to put our Navajo people first. To serve them with everything we’ve got. Let that mission guide you—hold it close to your heart as you navigate both the highs and the lows.

Thank you to the Eastern Navajo Agency Council for putting together the inauguration ceremony at the Navajo Technical University Wellness Center in Crownpoint, N.M.. Your efforts truly honor our new community leaders.

Once again, congratulations to each of you! You are stepping into a role of great responsibility, and I have no doubt that you are ready for it. Best of luck as you begin this new journey as our Náátáníis. I’m proud of each of you and look forward to seeing all the good you will do.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

### **Diné College President Dr. Charles “Monty” Roessel passes after long illness**

**January 6, 2025** - It's with great sadness that I learned this morning of the loss of Diné College President Dr. Charles “Monty” Roessel. He was 63.

Dr. Roessel died this morning while in hospice care in Albuquerque after a long illness. His brothers and sisters were with him. Dr. Roessel's nephew is Navajo Nation Council Delegate Carl Slater. We extend our sincerest condolences to each of them.

Despite his illness, Dr. Roessel continued to valiantly lead Diné College, where he was the beloved 18th president since 2017. He followed in the footsteps of his father, Dr. Robert Roessel, the college's first president from 1968 to 1969.

During his tenure, he led its transition from a two-year institution to a four-year college. Since its founding, Diné College has served its predominantly Navajo student population from its campus in Tsaile, Ariz.

Under his leadership, the college established four new transdisciplinary schools. These include the School of Diné Studies and Education, the School of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, the School of Arts, Humanities and English, and the School of Business and Social Science.

Significantly, Dr. Roessel guided the college to begin the Navajo Sovereignty Institute, the Navajo Cultural Arts Program, and the creation of the Navajo Law Program.

In 2020, Dr. Roessel was elected to the distinguished American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His class included Joy Harjo, Suzan Harjo, Kevin Gover, Greg Sarris, Kay WalkingStick, Edgar Heap of Birds and Aileen Moreton-Robinson. Academy members are leaders in the arts and sciences, business, philanthropy and public affairs.

Dr. Roessel was a journalist, photographer, author and educator. His work was published in Time, Newsweek, Arizona Highways and National Geographic and in many books. In the 1980s, he was the first managing editor of Navajo Times.

### **From the Navajo Nation to phoenix: Dragon, a golden eagle's journey**

**January 5, 2025** - “Dragon,” a 25-year-old Golden eagle, is being transported to the Phoenix Zoo to become a companion for another eagle. She has been at the Navajo Nation Golden Eagle Sanctuary since July. Thanks to a transport permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, she is headed to the Valley of the Sun. Dragon was brought to the sanctuary by Curtis Martin, a falconer from Farmington, N.M. Dragon suffered from West Nile virus, which can cause neurological issues in birds of prey and hinder their ability to fly. Since 2012, the Navajo Nation Zoo has distributed over 10,000 eagle feathers to tribal members, including those from neighboring Zuni and Hopi tribes. The zoo holds a permit for Live Eagle Possession for Indian Religious Purposes, reflecting its commitment to cultural and ecological preservation.

Visitors to the Navajo Nation Zoo can observe various Indigenous animals that inhabit Diné'tah. Our dedicated zookeepers work tirelessly to rehabilitate wildlife, with some animals returning to the wild while others find permanent sanctuary.

However, zookeepers reported that Dragon was not meeting the necessary milestones for release.

Fortunately, she fits well with the needs of the Phoenix Zoo.

For our urban relatives living in Phoenix, I encourage you to visit Dragon and learn more about the vital role we play in protecting our animal relatives. Together, we can ensure their well-being and combat poaching.

### **New executive director of the Division of Community Development brings a ‘go get ‘em and get it done attitude’**

**January 4, 2025** - It is with great pride that I congratulate Candice Yazzie on her new role as the Executive Director of Community Development. From Fort Defiance, Arizona, Yazzie is Tódí'ch'í'nií born for Naneesh't'ézhí Tá'chii'nií, her maternal grandfather being Naashashí and paternal grandfather is Kin'ichí'nií. Yazzie earned her Bachelor's degree in Construction Management from Northern Arizona University in 2003 and has spent her career mastering community development within the construction industry. Her first



project was with the Hopi community, where she learned the importance of collaboration between tribes and construction teams to achieve meaningful results.

"I know it's going to be a lot of communication and team building to push these projects through," said Yazzie. "I hope I can bring the collaboration and positivity that any successful team needs because it's important in getting things done."

Like many Navajos, Yazzie left the reservation to pursue higher education. Upon returning home, she faced challenges in finding a job on the Navajo Nation despite submitting numerous resumes.

Fortunately, Yazzie now has the chance to give back to her community in this important role.

With experience in both New Mexico and Arizona, working alongside private owners, state, and federal entities, Yazzie is ready to lead with a "get it done" attitude.

"I was excited getting the call from President Nygren because that means I get to come home," Yazzie shared, expressing her pride in returning to serve her people.

Congratulations, Ms. Yazzie - we look forward to seeing how your leadership will drive the future of community development

### **Preparing for winter: emergency support for navajo elders in crystal and sawmill chapters**

**January 3, 2024** - Navajo Nation President Nygren and the Navajo Department of Emergency Management dropped off a cord of wood at the home of the Mark sisters.

The sisters rely on spring water from Hidden Springs, hauling buckets for drinking, cooking, and bathing. Their childhood home has become dilapidated, with a leaky roof and an incomplete bathroom. One sister is disabled, and both are elderly, depending on each other for support.

After assessing their home, President Nygren assured the sisters he would work with Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority to address their bathroom using a portion of the \$50 million ARPA funds allocated for bathroom additions. He also committed to helping to repair the roof through the Navajo Division of Community Development's housing repair programs.

"This is one of the first projects where we will release bathroom addition money," Nygren said. "With NECA, this is the perfect opportunity to work on this home."

In a related effort, wood was delivered to Thomason Damon, a Vietnam veteran living in Sawmill.

"It is just me and my wife that stay here," Damon said. "I was out getting wood in the forest but turned around when I got the call about this delivery."

Sharen Sandoval, executive director for the Department of Emergency Management, noted that the wood delivery is part of their initiative to prepare the Navajo people for emergencies. She emphasized that ensuring homes are prepared for winter alleviates concerns during emergencies.

"Our approach to preparedness is crucial for some of our most vulnerable community members," Sandoval said.

Community service coordinators from both chapters identified these elders for the wood delivery, highlighting the importance of support and readiness in the community.

### **Navajo Nation animal control officers push for education on animal care to aid in stray animal problem**

**January 2, 2025** – Between 60 to 80 stray animals are euthanized each week, according to Navajo Nation Animal Control Officers based out of Fort Defiance, Ariz.

"People think we just kill dogs (but) they don't understand it's them," said Nina Brady, Animal Control Officer in Fort Defiance.

In previous reports provided in 2023, there are an estimated 250,000 stray dogs roaming the Navajo Nation. Within a month, Brady said on average, 12 to 18 percent of animals captured. While some are adopted by rescuers or are reclaimed by their owners, the rest aren't so lucky and face being put down.

## **Chinle Agency Council Report – April 5, 2025**

For those not claimed, the clock starts ticking. In dog bite cases, dogs are kept in quarantine for 10 days for observation and based on observations, they could be put down. Stray dogs that are deemed adoptable can be rescued and taken from the shelter, but if they don't get the dog within 72 hours, the dogs are put down.

"Eighty percent of diseases the dogs get can be passed to humans," Navajo Animal Control Officer Gregory Pahe said, adding that the public generally doesn't know. "We have to keep ourselves safe too."

Pahe said at the end of each day, animal control officers are required to decontaminate their units, clothes and the facility so diseases and contaminants aren't spread.

"We're trying to keep the communities safe and they don't understand that," said Jennifer Johnson, Navajo animal control officer. "People say we just take dogs (and) we kill them. But it's because the owners don't understand they need to take proper care of their animals. Keep them on leashes, get them vaccinated, make sure they're chipped, these are ways to protect your pets, there's no excuses."

To help with public awareness, the animal control officers created a pamphlet with information on animal shelters located across the reservation including those in Fort Defiance, Many Farms, Shiprock, Crownpoint, Tuba City, and Kayenta. Their phone numbers and a central dispatch number is included. In the pamphlet, laws are outlined that relate to owning animals on the reservation and the fines for not following the law.

On the Navajo Nation, pet owners are required:

- To have proof of vaccinations,
- Microchipping and
- Collars.
- Pet owners are allowed to have up to four pets.

"These (rules) are in place for the safety of the people," said Johnson. "These dogs are running around all over the place and if elders and children are alone out walking around, I've seen what these dogs can do, so that's why there's these rules."