# Navajo Nation

[Download Timeline](https://byu.box.com/s/r0o12m2teh46c0qos4zlkwbdk2udjyqj)

Navajo Nation Website: <https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/>

Background Photograph by Dsdugan, 2016

## Navajo Nation

### Early History

#### Diné: The People

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The word, "Navajo," is likely derived from the Pueblo peoples, meaning "enemies of the cultivated fields." It is in reference to the hostilities that generally characterize the relationship between the two peoples.

The word they prefer and use to describe themselves is Diné, which means "the People."

Source: Department of Dine Education (DODE) and [University of Idaho Study Guide](https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~rfrey/329swnavajostudy.htm#:~:text=However%2C%20the%20term%20used%20to,world%20beneath%20the%20earth's%20surface.)

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#### Hózho and Ké

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**Hózho:** beautiful, peaceful, harmonious

**Ké:** system of kinship. It is the feeling you have when you are deeply connected to others, to the land, to all around you. You understand and value your roots.

Diné way of life is deeply connected to the spiritual principles of Hózho, and Ké. In the following timeline events, notice how elements of Hózho, and Ké are evidenced in Diné history.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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#### Diné Language & Culture

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There are regional differences in the Diné language and the ways they live their culture. This was divinely guided by the Holy People to allow each group to live in harmony (hózho) with each other and with their environment.

The Diné 's strong connection (ké) to the land affects their ceremonies and traditions. For all Diné, storytelling is guided by the seasons and different regions will have different stories based on the region in which they live and everything that lives there. If you practice ké it will bring you to a place of hózho, which is peace and harmony.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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#### Navajo Homelands

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"The traditional homelands of the [Diné] are marked by four sacred mountains that stretch across modern-day [Utah,] Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona.

According to tribal stories, the Navajo (Diné) emerged from the lower worlds to this region, which they call Dinétah, or "among the People." Dinétah is the place where earth people and Holy People interacted; their relationships form the foundation of cultural practices that underlie [Diné] life today."

The traditional homelands were much larger than the current Navajo Nation reservation land. Their land was reduced as a result of the Navajo Treaty of 1868. Mt. Dibé Ntsaa, one of the four sacred mountains, is currently outside of the reservation boundaries.

Learn more about the Dine at the [Native Knowledge 360 (NK360) website](https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/navajo/long-walk/long-walk.cshtml) created by the National Museum of the American Indian of the Smithsonian.

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#### The Emergence and the Four Sacred Mountains

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"The [Diné] tell the story of the Emergence, in which First Man, First Woman, and the people moved [in stages] from the First World to the Fourth World, the Earth-Surface World. First Man brought the four sacred mountains from the Third World to the Earth-Surface World, and these mountains ... mark the sacred homeland of the Diné people":

* Sis Naajinii, or White Shell Mountain (Blanca Peak in Colorado)
* Tsoodził, or Turquoise Mountain (Mount Taylor, in New Mexico);
* Dook' o' oosłiíd, or Abalone Shell Mountain (Mount Humphreys, in Arizona)
* Dibé Ntsaa, or Black Jet Mountain (Hesperus Peak, in Colorado)

Click [HERE](https://byu.box.com/s/b1a47kg52giiblz0tzacm2coib9qv5lg) to see a map of the Four Sacred Mountains

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE) and [Utah American Indian Digital Archive](https://utahindians.org/archives/navajo/history.html)

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#### Hózho and the Four Sacred Mountains

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The four sacred mountains serve as reminders of the beautiful balance we should seek for each day. Represented by the white light of dawn, Sis Naajinii, encourages beginning the day with critical thinking and mindfulness. Tsoodził is represented by the blue of the afternoon sun and focuses on planning and action. The dusk is represented in Dook' o 'oosłiíd and the color yellow and is a time for implementing what you planned. Dibé Ntsaa represents the darkness of night. It is the time when we should reflect on our thoughts and actions from that day and how we can improve the next day.

Every part of the day refers back to the Four Sacred Mountains and the way you conduct your thoughts and actions following this connected path allows you to develop your character in balance and beauty (hózho).

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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#### Learning to Weave

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The Diné believe the Holy People sent them sheep to care for and provide a sustainable life. The Churro sheep was given to them. They nurtured and expanded the sheep into large flocks. This was a great change. Before the churro sheep, most clothing was made up of deerskin, cotton, and other woven natural fibers. Woven rug dresses for women called a "biil" (pronounced beel) began to be made and rug weaving became a traditional part of Navajo culture. Today, Diné men and women are recognized as skilled weavers.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)  
<https://navajopeople.org/navajo-rugs.htm>  
<https://www.heddels.com/2017/04/navajo-blankets-and-rugs/>

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#### Weaving through Hózho

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Navajo weaving exemplifies the principle of Hózho, Spider Woman and Spider Man are deities that hold a special place in the Diné culture. The teachings of Spider Woman and Spider Man together exemplify the balance and harmony communicated in Hózho. It is believed that Spider Woman is the one who taught them to weave, and that Spider Man taught them how to construct a loom. The first loom was made from sky and earth cords, and the weave itself was made from sunlight, lightning, crystals and white shells.

Read More: <https://www.navajorug.com/blogs/news/spider-rock-center-of-the-navajo-nation>

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### 900-1525 AD

#### A Rich and Complex Culture

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"Between 900 and 1525 A.D. the [Diné] developed a rich and complex culture in the area of present-day northwestern New Mexico. Here the [Diné] developed trade networks with the ... [surrounding tribes, which included the Ute, Hopi, Apache, Zuni, Laguna Pueblo, Paiute, Goshute, and Shoshone], bringing new goods and technologies, such as flint points, and moccasins, to the Southwest."

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE) and [Utah American Indian Digital Archive](https://utahindians.org/archives/navajo/history.html)

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### 1100 AD

#### Migrating North

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According to Diné historians, the Diné resided in their ancestral homelands before migrating north to the present-day region of Durango and Grand Junction, Colorado sometime after 1100 AD.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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### 1500 AD

#### Dinétah (Navajo Mountain)

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In approximately 1500 AD, the Diné returned to Dinétah (Navajo Mountain) located in present day northern New Mexico.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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### 1600s

#### The Impact of the Horse

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Although some believe the Spanish introduced the horse to the Diné people, the Holy People created horses for the Diné people as another form of transportation and survival. There are petroglyphs of horses predating Spanish contact. When the Spanish arrived, their horses were not accustomed to Diné terrain like the Diné horses were.

Horses had a great impact on Diné life. "The [Diné] were highly adaptive and incorporated domestic livestock and agriculture into their subsistence system. They also adopted the horse and, like other tribes who used the animal as a means of transportation, sometimes engaged in slave and food raids on neighboring tribes [and villages]."

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE) and [Utah American Indian Digital Archive](https://utahindians.org/archives/navajo/history.html)

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### 1680

#### The Pueblo Revolt

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"The [Diné] came into contact with early Spanish explorers in the sixteenth century. In 1680 [Diné] and Apache groups aided Pueblo Indians in the Pueblo Revolt, a war for independence from the Spanish, who had brutalized and enslaved the Pueblos for decades."

The Spanish enlisted the help of other tribes to fight the Diné people, including the Kiowas, the Comanches, and the Utes. But they weren't successful.

"The rebellion forced the Spanish back into Mexico for a time ... "

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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### 1693

#### Intermixing with Other Groups

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" ... in 1693 the Spanish reconquered the area of the Rio Grande Valley. Some Pueblos took refuge among the [Diné], resulting in an intermixing of Diné and Pueblo cultures."

The arrival of the Spanish and the Pueblo seeking refuge with the Diné resulted in the intermixing of the Diné, Spanish, and Pueblo people. The intermixing of these groups caused a significant growth in the Diné clan system. The original four Diné clans have now grown to be over 100 clans in 2022.

Link to [clan chart](https://www.chinleusd.k12.az.us/pdf/Curriculum/Fifth%20Grade/Navajo-Clan-Names-Groups.pdf)

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE) and [Utah American Indian Digital Archive](https://utahindians.org/archives/navajo/history.html)

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### 1750s

#### Dividing into Smaller Groups

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In the mid 1700s, the Diné divided into smaller groups that settled in the following areas:

Canyon De Chelly (central)  
What is now Lupton, AZ (southern)  
Ch'ooshgai Mountains (eastern)  
What is now Page, AZ (western)  
What is now Grants, NM (southeastern)

The group that went to Grants, NM came under Spanish rule and became scouts for the U.S. Calvary helping to hunt down their fellow Diné. This group was also later forced on the Long Walk to be incarcerated at Fort Sumner in the 1860s, which caused significant contention.

Click [HERE](https://www.nps.gov/articles/survival-of-the-southern-paiute.htm?utm_source=article&amp;utm_medium=website&amp;utm_campaign=experience_more&amp;utm_content=small) to see a map of these locations

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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### Late 1700s

#### Direct Conflict with Spanish Forces

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"In the late-eighteenth century, the [Diné] became involved in direct conflict with Spanish forces intent on conquering the Southwest. The Spanish formed alliances with [the Kiowa], the Comanches and Utes to weaken the [Diné], and many fell victim to the Spanish slave trade."

Read more: [Utah American Indian Digital Archive](https://utahindians.org/archives/navajo/history.html)

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### February 2, 1848

#### Boarding Schools

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Over time, ownership of the ancestral homelands of the Diné (Navajo) were claimed by Spain and later Mexico. The February 2, 1848, signing of the Treaty of Guadelupe-Hidalgo officially signaled the end of the Mexican American War and ceded a significant portion of Mexican-claimed land to the United States. This land includes present day Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, Nevada, and Utah at the center of which are the Diné homelands.

See digital images of the Treaty of Guadelupe-Hidalgo at the [National Archives](https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/guadalupe-hidalgo#background)

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### 1860s

#### Weaving and Survival

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The [Diné] tradition of weaving was essential during both the Long Walk and interment at Bosque Redondo. As explained by [Diné] tribal member Ezekiel Argeanas, "Their [women's] knowledge of weaving and the Churro sheep at Bosque Redondo played an important role in our ancestors surviving during a time that was such a tragedy."

Through weaving, they created clothing, like rug dresses, and blankets that kept them warm during the cold months. They also traded their weavings for essential goods.

Click [HERE](https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/navajo/bosque-redondo/bosque-redondo.cshtml) to see a photo of Navajo weaving at Bosque Redondo

Learn more about the weaving and The Long Walk at the [Native Knowledge 360 (NK360)](https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/navajo/long-walk/long-walk.cshtml) website created by the National Museum of the American Indian of the Smithsonian.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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#### "Fry Bread" Video

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For the Diné (Navajo), fry bread is both a blessing and a curse. Without adequate resources, the Diné survived on the few resources given them while at Bosque Redondo and from these resources they made fry bread. Fry bread has become a symbol of the resilience, creativity and determination to survive during their internment at Bosque Redondo. However, the loss of their traditional hunting and gathering lifestyle and subsequent reliance on the U.S. government for food and resources has brought many challenges.

Listen to Brenda Beyal, (description of her heritage & ties to Navajo Nation), as she explains the pivotal role of fry bread for the Diné people.

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### 1860-1868

#### Hwéeldi: Imprisonment at Bosque Redondo

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"The land at Hwéeldi (the Diné name for Bosque Redondo) was not suitable for farming and conditions continued to worsen. The Diné faced starvation, disease, and death until finally in 1866, General [Kit] Carson ordered that no more prisoners be sent to Bosque Redondo."

Hwéeldi = "the time of overwhelming grief"

Learn more about the Bosque Redondo at the [Native Knowledge 360 (NK360) website](https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/navajo/bosque-redondo/bosque-redondo.cshtml) created by the National Museum of the American Indian of the Smithsonian.

Other Sources: [Smithsonian Magazine](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/decades-us-government-forcibly-placed-native-students-western-schools-effects-felt-today-180959502/)

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### 1863

#### Scorched Earth

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"Major General James H. Carleton ordered Christopher (Kit) Carson to defeat the Navajo (Diné) resistance by conducting a scorched-earth campaign across the [Diné] homelands. Carson burned villages, slaughtered livestock, and destroyed water sources in order to reduce the [Diné] to starvation and desperation."

Evidence of how this campaign marked Diné land is still visible even today. In Canyon De Chelly, there used to be many fruit trees but today there are just a few.

Learn more about the Diné at the [Native Knowledge 360 (NK360) website](https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/navajo/long-walk/long-walk.cshtml) created by the National Museum of the American Indian of the Smithsonian.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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### August 1864

#### The Long Walk

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Between March 6, 1864, which is when the Long Walk began, and the signing of the treaty in 1868 when Navajos began their trek back home, nearly 10,000 Diné people were forcefully imprisoned at Ft. Sumner (Bosque Redondo). "Approximately 7,000 Navajos made it back home. Of the 3,000 that did not make it, it is estimated between 200 and 500 became casualties of the forced march across 400 miles over 18 days. It is unfortunate nearly 2,500 Navajo would succumb to disease, malnutrition, abuse and broken hearts as prisoners of the United States at Ft. Sumner."

Source: [Navajo Nation Museum](https://discovernavajo.com/)

A Modern Perspective: [Santa Fe New Mexico newspaper](https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/the-long-walk-a-tragedy-unobserved-150-years-later/article_22f697c9-5cb0-5fed-bbfc-696e56dd35fb.html)

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### 1868

#### Lives Forever Changed

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Following the Treaty of 1868, the lives of the Diné people were forever changed. Although they could return to their homeland, travel outside of the reservation was restricted and future attempts to assimilate the Diné into a Western lifestyle would threaten the lives of their people as well as their language and traditional cultural practices.

Being unable to live freely made it difficult to care for the land as they had before. The introduction of new foods, restrictive farming practices, and limited access to water altered the traditional diet of the Diné people. The federal government's intrusion into the education of Diné children irreparably changed and harmed families. Sadly, the effects of these practices continue to be felt even today. Even so, the Diné have demonstrated their resilience and adaptability through all of these challenges. They now have the largest land base and largest Native population of all Native groups in the U.S.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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### June 1, 1868

#### Navajo Treaty of 1868; Reservation Established

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According to Diné (Navajo) oral history, the Diné people's determination and strength is exhibited by their persistent negotiations, first the men and then the women, to return to their homelands within the Four Sacred Mountains. These negotiations eventually led to their return. The Navajo Treaty of 1868 is an important symbol of Diné sovereignty, allowing a return to their ancestral homelands and signaling what it means to live as Diné people.

While returning to their homelands was a blessing, the establishment of a reservation felt like a prison that brought restrictions and fears for the future. This treaty was a significant turning point in Diné history. Although it recognized Diné authority to govern their people, the restrictions that came as a result of the treaty would forever change the Diné people.

Learn more about the Navajo Treaty of 1868 at the [Native Knowledge 360 (NK360) website](https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/navajo/bosque-redondo/bosque-redondo.cshtml) created by the National Museum of the American Indian of the Smithsonian.

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### 1868-1960s

#### Boarding Schools

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" ... The [Navajo] treaty [of 1868] brought devastating changes, including compulsory education for children, who were sent to faraway government and missionary schools. For Diné families, sustained by kinship and clan connections that emphasized compassion, love and peacefulness, the separation was all but unendurable. It threatened our very survival, as it was intended to do.

The effects of boarding schools are still felt today:

"Many hold onto a lingering homesickness and sense of alienation. Others are beset by nightmares, paranoia and a deep distrust of authority."

Read more: [Smithsonian Magazine](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/decades-us-government-forcibly-placed-native-students-western-schools-effects-felt-today-180959502/)

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### 1920s

#### Oil Discovered

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"In years past, Navajo land often appeared to be little more than a desolate section of the Southwest, but it was only a matter of time before the Navajo Nation became known as a wealthy nation in a world of its own. The discovery of oil on Navajo land in the early 1920's promoted the need for a more systematic form of government."

Read more: [Navajo Nation Website](https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/history)

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### 1923

#### Tribal Government Established

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"In 1923, a tribal government was established to help meet the increasing desires of American oil companies to lease Navajo land for exploration. [Diné] government has evolved into the largest and most sophisticated form of American Indian government. The Navajo Nation Council Chambers hosts 88 council delegates representing 110 Navajo Nation chapters."

Read more: [Navajo Nation Website](https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/history)

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#### Navajo Nation Government: A Blend of Westernized & Native Cultures

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An essential element of indigenous sovereignty, the Diné people have the right to create a government system that allows for Diné philosophy and beliefs as an integral part of their government system. The Navajo Nation government blends Diné lifeways, principles and leadership together with Westernized government structures.

Spirituality and prayer continue to be important elements of their tribal government, including consulting with the elderly and medicine men before making important decisions.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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### 1924

#### U.S. Citizenship

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"The Snyder Act of 1924 admitted Native Americans born in the U.S. to full U.S. citizenship." However, it was really a partial citizenship with limitations prohibiting them from voting.

These discriminatory practices were influenced by longstanding biased opinions like those shared in U.S Attorney General Caleb Cushings 1856 statement: "The fact, therefore, that Indians are born in the country does not make them citizens of the United States. The simple truth is plain, that Indians are subjects of the United States, and therefore are not, in mere right of homebirth, citizens of the United States."

Read more:   
[Library of Congress](https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/elections/voters/native-americans/)  
[Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2020/11/01/native-americans-right-to-vote-history/)  
[The War After the War Blog Post](https://text-message.blogs.archives.gov/2019/11/12/the-war-after-the-war-the-american-indian-fight-for-the-vote-after-wwii/)  
[All That's Interesting Blog Post](https://allthatsinteresting.com/native-american-voting)

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### 1930s

#### Livestock Slaughtering & Reduction

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During the dust bowl, the US Government slaughtered thousands of Diné sheep. "By the 1930s the U.S. government through the Bureau of Indian Affairs instituted a policy to reduce the large Navajo herds, stating that an acre of land could only support six sheep ... "

"In all, the federal agents killed more than 250,000 sheep and goats and more than 10,000 horses belonging to the Navajo people. The Stock Reduction Program caused starvation on the Navajo Reservation."

Read More: [Southwest Indian Relief Council Article](http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=swirc_hist_dustbowl) and [Navajo Sheep Project](https://www.navajosheepproject.org/navajo-churro-history)

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### After 1930s

#### Negative Effects of Livestock Restrictions

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The negative effects of government livestock reduction continue even today. Following the 1930s, the U.S. Government, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, continues to restrict livestock among the Diné. Currently, only a limited number of the Diné hold livestock permits and they are passed within families. These permits restrict the number of sheep, cows, goats & horses they can graze on their lands depending on their district. These restrictions have impacted the Diné economically making it difficult to provide for their families. Paradoxically, they must have the animals to claim the land placing the Diné in a challenging position.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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#### Livestock Restrictions Affect Health and Culture

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While the economic effects have been difficult, the negative health and cultural effects have been even greater, impacting their very way of life. Prior to these reductions, the Diné managed the land in a healthy, sustainable way. Ongoing livestock grazing restrictions create barriers to their ability to care for the land, harming both the Diné people and the land over which they are caretakers. Many current health problems like diabetes are traced back to the significant lifestyle changes that came as a result of the 1930s livestock reductions.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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### May 1942

#### Creation of the Navajo Code During World War II

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"In May 1942, the first 29 [Diné] recruits attended boot camp. Then, at Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California, this first group created the Navajo code. They developed a dictionary and numerous words for military terms. The dictionary and all code words had to be memorized during training. [Diné] could encode, transmit, and decode a three-line English message in 20 seconds. Machines of the time required 30 minutes to perform the same job. Approximately 400 [Diné] were trained as code talkers."

Read More: [Navajo Nation Website](https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/history)

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### 1942-1945

#### Navajo Code Talkers Influence in the Pacific

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" ... the Navajo code talkers took part in every assault the U.S. Marines conducted in the Pacific from 1942 to 1945. They served in all six Marine divisions, Marine Raider battalions and Marine parachute units, transmitting messages by telephone and radio in their native language – a code that the Japanese never broke."

Read More: [Navajo Nation Website](https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/history)

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### 1946

#### Denied the Right to Vote

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"On May 6, 1946, two former United State Marine Corps Navajo Code Talkers, Jimmie King and Howard Nez, walked into the Shiprock Public School in New Mexico to register to vote. They were denied. Three days prior in Apache County, Arizona, the same scene played out for James Manuelito. At two o'clock that same day, May 3, Army veteran Watson Gibson walked into New Mexico's McKinley County Clerk's office and asked to be registered to vote. County clerk Eva Sabin denied him. The men who had stormed beaches throughout the Pacific during WWII were now storming local county offices for the right to vote ... "

Following WWII, in response to a "letter written in 1943 by Private Ralph Anderson ... demanding the right to vote, on behalf of "the Navaho Soldier boys,"" the Arizona Attorney General, Levi Udall, "bluntly wrote the Arizona Secretary of State that military service does not matter; those living on the reservation would still not be allowed to vote."

Read More: [The War After the War Blog Post](https://text-message.blogs.archives.gov/2019/11/12/the-war-after-the-war-the-american-indian-fight-for-the-vote-after-wwii/)

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### 1965

#### The Right to Vote

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"Even after the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924 ... state governments actively worked to suppress Native American voting rights for years. Native Americans were often forced to fight for the right to vote state-by-state. The last state to guarantee Native American voting rights was Utah in 1962." Unfortunately, discriminatory practices continued. "In 1965, the historic Voting Rights Act outlawed many discriminatory practices that denied U.S. citizens the ability to vote based on their race. And thanks to subsequent legislation in 1970, 1975, and 1982, their voting protections were further strengthened and empowered."

Read More: [All That's Interesting Blog Post](https://allthatsinteresting.com/native-american-voting)

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### May 1, 1968

#### Navajo Nation Flag

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"The Navajo Nation Flag, designed by Jay R. Degroat, a Navajo from Mariano Lake, New Mexico, was selected from 140 entries, and was officially adopted by the Navajo Nation Council on May 21, 1968, by Resolution CMY-55-68."

Read more about the design of the flag: [Navajo Nation Website](https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/history)

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### Aug. 14, 1982

#### National Navajo Code Talker Day

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"August 14 is National Navajo Code Talker's Day. It hasn't always been so. Although the "original 29" who created the military code attended boot camp in May 1942, and they along with nearly 400 other Navajo Code Talkers helped the United States military win World War II by the end of 1945, the group "received no recognition until the declassification of the operation in 1968."

On July 28, 1982, President Reagan declared August 14 National Navajo Code Talker's Day."

Read more: [Native Partnership Blog](https://nativepartnership.org/blog/)

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### 1991

#### Reorganization of the Navajo Nation Government

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"Reorganized in 1991 to form a three-branch system (executive, legislative and judicial), the Navajos conduct what is considered to be the most sophisticated form of Indian government. While the Council is in session, you'll likely hear delegates carry on the tradition of speaking in Navajo, providing a perfect example of how the Navajo Nation retains its valuable cultural heritage while forging ahead with modern progress. When the Council is not in session, legislative work is done by 12 "standing committees" of the Council. Inside the circular Council Chambers, the walls are adorned with colorful murals that depict the history of the Navajo people and the Navajo way of life."

Read more about the design of the flag: [Navajo Nation Website](https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/history)

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### September 17, 1992

#### Recognition of Navajo Code Talkers

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" ... because of the continued value of their language as a security classified code, the Navajo code talkers of World War II were honored for their contributions to defense on Sept. 17, 1992, at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C."

Read more about the design of the flag: [Navajo Nation Website](https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/history)  
[Native Partnership Blog](https://nativepartnership.org/blog/)

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### 2000

#### Honoring the Code Talkers Act

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The "Honoring the Code Talkers Act," introduced by Senator Jeff Bingaman from New Mexico in April 2000 and signed into law December 21, 2000, called for recognition of the Navajo code talkers. The act authorized the President of the United States to award a gold Medal of Honor, on behalf of the Congress, to each of the original twenty-nine Navajo code talkers and a silver Medal of Honor to each man who later qualified as a code talker.

Read More: [National Archives](https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2001/winter/navajo-code-talkers.html)

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### August 21, 2017

#### Total Solar Eclipse

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The Diné people have deep spiritual ties to the land as explained in their origin stories. While many people throughout the world were traveling to key locations to witness the 2017 total solar eclipse, the Navajo Nation government gave each employee two hours off to be spent inside praying and meditating. Blending their traditional ways with modern-day government, the Navajo Nation allowed time for their employees to demonstrate reverence for their traditional teachings and practices which may include fasting, spending time meditating on this important event, praying, singing as a family, and sharing stories. Diné children were given the day off of school. Respecting the Navajo Nation's sovereignty, other states also gave Diné students the opportunity to remain home to follow this practice.

They follow similar practices during a lunar eclipse, allowing employees and students to arrive two hours late to give them rest following a late evening of reverent traditional practices.

Read More: [Sunpainters: Eclipse of the Navajo Sun](https://www.amazon.com/Sunpainters-Eclipse-Baje-Sr-Whitethorne/dp/1893354334) (children's book)  
Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE);

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### May 22, 2019

#### Copy of Naaltsoos Sání Found

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"Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer are pleased to announce the generous donation of one of three original Navajo Treaty of 1868, also known as Naaltsoos Sání, documents to the Navajo Nation. On June 1, 1868, three copies of the Treaty of 1868 were issued at Fort Sumner, N.M. One copy was presented to the U.S. Government, which is housed in the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington D.C. The second copy was given to Navajo leader Barboncito - its current whereabouts are unknown. The third unsigned copy was presented to the Indian Peace Commissioner, Samuel F. Tappan. The original document is also known as the "Tappan Copy" [and] was donated to the Navajo Nation by Clare "Kitty" P. Weaver, the niece of Samuel F. Tappan, who was the Indian Peace Commissioner at the time of the signing of the treaty in 1868."

Read More: [Navajo Nation News Release](https://gallupsun.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;id=12661:2019-05-31-09-32-50&amp;Itemid=600)

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### October 2019

#### Still Fighting for Voting Right

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The Diné, and other Native Americans, still face barriers to exercising their voting rights. The lack of typical street addresses has recently made it difficult for Native Americans to vote. "The Navajo Nation has 50,000 unaddressed homes and businesses."

"In Utah and many other largely rural states, residents can register to vote by describing their approximate location on registration forms, or even draw a rudimentary map, which is allowed by the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. But in states with strict voter identification laws, officials typically require a traditional address. Last year [2018], the U.S. Supreme Court just weeks before the midterm elections declined to block a North Dakota law requiring IDs with street addresses.

Voting is also complicated by language barriers that make it difficult for some Diné people who aren't fluent in English.

Source: [Pew Trusts Publication](https://stateline.org/2019/10/04/for-some-native-americans-no-home-address-might-mean-no-voting/)

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### Modern Day

#### Lack of Basic Necessities

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Nearly 50% of Diné living on the Navajo Nation reservation lack running water. The Navajo Nation were originally excluded from the 1922 Colorado River Compact that divided the river's water among 7 states and Mexico. However, in May 2022, a hundred years later, the Navajo Nation president, Jonathan Nez, signed a federal bill granting the Diné water from the Colorado River and millions in infrastructure support.

Even with this commitment, the Diné are skeptical that change will come anytime soon. Any development on the Navajo Nation reservation is bogged down in federal red tape causing significant delays. Lack of water also comes from widespread pollution from unregulated uranium mining. For now, many Diné live without clean water, electricity, or internet access.

Read More: [KSL Article](https://www.ksl.com/article/50413295/navajo-nation-to-receive-running-water-infrastructure-in-new-settlement)

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#### Oil Drilling Threatens Sacred Native Lands

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Oil production in the San Juan Basin (covering northwestern New Mexico and southwestern Colorado) began over a century ago. Environmentalists and tribal groups worry that continued drilling will affect cultural landmarks in an area that was previously an economic and ceremonial center for the Diné. The Diné are working to protect their land and their water from the pollution that comes with oil fracking. For them, their water is gold, and they want to do all they can to protect it.

Read More: [AP News Article](https://apnews.com/article/ec269090d292498c861959b65c691c21)  
[CPR News](https://www.cpr.org/2019/05/30/u-s-officials-delay-oil-leases-near-sacred-tribal-land-in-new-mexico-and-colorado/)

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#### Requirements to Lead the Navajo Nation

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Qualifying to be a candidate for the President or Vice-President of the Navajo Nation is a rigorous process with many requirements. Candidates must be of a certain age, have a Certificate of Indian Blood, live within the Navajo Nation reservation and pass a Navajo language assessment.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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#### Uranium and Cancer

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Between 1944 and 1986 mining companies blasted more than 4 million tons of uranium out of Navajo Nation land. For years, Diné people have been poisoned by uranium resulting in a doubling of the cancer rate from the 1970s to the 1990s. Today, "27 percent of the participants [in one study] have high levels of uranium in their urine, compared to 5 percent of the U.S. population as a whole."

In addition to affecting their health, mining for uranium has disrupted and ruined Navajo homes as well as sacred sites. For years, uranium mining and dumping was unregulated. Currently, despite recent government efforts to force mining companies to clean up the uranium pollution, the work is costly and time consuming, dragging on for years. Many abandoned site locations are unknown or were not properly remediated and remain a serious hazard today.

Read More: [KSL Article](https://www.ksl.com/article/50413295/navajo-nation-to-receive-running-water-infrastructure-in-new-settlement)

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#### Code Talkers Exhibit in Kayenta, AZ

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In Kayenta, Arizona in the heart of the Navajo Nation reservation, there is an excellent Navajo Code Talkers exhibit hosted within an unusual location: the Burger King.

On August 14th, 2022, they broke ground for another large museum focused on the Navajo code talkers in Tsé Bonito.

Click the link to watch a video showing some of the museum exhibits and to learn about the Navajo Code Talkers.

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#### Weaving

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The tradition of Diné weaving continues today. Due to its deep spiritual connection to the Diné, weaving is tied to cultural ceremonies and teachings. Since time immemorial, certain patterns require special ceremonies before they can be woven, and all weavers go through a rite of passage when they learn to weave. A respected weaver, usually a mother or grandmother, takes a new weaver in search of a perfectly shaped spider web. When they find it, they pass their hand through the center of the web, asking permission, and receiving a blessing to be a great weaver.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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#### Preservation of the Navajo Language

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Over time, fewer and fewer Diné are learning the Navajo language. To preserve their language, the Department of Diné Education has created many opportunities for Diné children to learn the Navajo language. They have established a Navajo immersion school in Fort Defiance in Window Rock Unified School District. They have also employed Navajo Language Culture Teachers to teach the Navajo language and culture at least an hour each day at schools across the Navajo Nation and in some towns bordering the Navajo Nation land.

Source: Department of Diné Education (DODE)

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