



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL  
Office of the Speaker

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## 200 Children provided Christmas Gifts from the Navajo Nation Council and Marine Corps Toys for Tots Foundation

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**PHOTO:** Speaker Seth Damon greets families outside of the Navajo Nation Council Chambers during the Christmas Lighting Ceremony in Window Rock, Ariz.

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. —** On Wednesday, several Navajo families joined the 24th Navajo Nation Council for the 3rd annual Christmas Lighting Ceremony and Toys for Tots gift giveaway at the Council Chambers in Window Rock, Ariz. Children from Hogan Hozhoni and the St. Michaels Association for Special Education attended as honored guests of Speaker Seth Damon.

The Marine Toys for Tots Foundation and the Navajo Nation Police Department partnered with the Office of the Speaker to provide boxes of toys from national brands like Hasbro, Build-A-Bear, Lego, and the Walt Disney Company for children across the Navajo Nation.

“We welcome you to the People’s House for the lighting of the Navajo Nation Christmas Tree and this celebration of our families. These two years are a reminder of how precious life is as we come together to overcome this pandemic. Our young people are the Seventh Generation of leaders that will sit in these Council Chambers one day. We greatly appreciate the Navajo Nation Police Department, the Window Rock Police District, and Officer Genevieve Morgan for their dedicated service to the Toys for Tots program. The Council sends its love to our children from Hogan Hozhoni and the St. Michaels Association for Special Education and to the caregivers there who are making a difference. We wish all our families a blessed Christmas and prosperous New Year,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh).

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Toys for Tots is a program founded in 1947 and is run by the United States Marine Corps Reserve, which distributes toys to millions of children during the Christmas holiday. The Window Rock Police Department under the leadership of Officer Genevieve Morgan, has been coordinating Navajo Nation Toys for Tots for the last 25 years.

“Thank you to the student leaders of St. Michaels Indian School for volunteering to wrap hundreds of gifts. Giving back to our communities is an important core value our young leaders understand. We know we cannot gather as large families as we did before, but our actions are keeping us safe. Take care of our elders and share love with our children. It is through our traditional songs, ceremonies, and our prayers that protects us. May Hozhó provide us with strength during these winter months and into the future,” said Council Delegate Vince James (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kiníichii, Steamboat).

Speaker Seth Damon, Vice Chairman Raymond Smith Jr., Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr., Delegate Mark Freeland, Delegate Vince James, and Delegate Jimmy Yellowhair handed out Christmas gifts to over 200 children.

“Since this summer, we have been working with our chapter officials and community leaders to gather food, jackets, toys, and hauling wood for our most vulnerable families on the Navajo Nation. We want to acknowledge our families - especially our single parents and our grandparents - who are raising our children. May our prayers for all our families protect and offer you comfort during this pandemic. The challenges we face will be there but no one will be left behind. Take care of our grandmas and grandpas, watch over our children, and know you are resilient,” said Council Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Lake Valley, Náhodishgish, Standing Rock, Whiterock, Huerfano, Nageezi, Crownpoint).

In 2019, First Lady Michelle Obama placed the first Toys for Tots collection box in the White House. The program reported this year that it continues to impact the lives of over 150,000 Native American children from 60 tribal nations located in 10 states across the country.

“During the holidays, we gather to share in laughter and love. We safely gather to honor our youth, the future Naat’áaniis, and the hope they bring to our families. The Navajo people must remain strong and have optimism knowing our best days are ahead. The Council appreciates our Navajo police officers and the United States Marine Corps for their hard work that is impacting the lives of so many children this time of year. We send protection prayers for our men and women in uniform serving around the world and wish them a Merry Christmas,” said Vice Chairman Raymond Smith Jr. (Klagetoh, Wide Ruins, Houck, Lupton, Nahat’á Dził).

- Toys for Tots has collected and distributed more than 512 million toys across the United States, including tribal communities. Donations can be made at <https://www.toysfortots.org/donate>
- Hogan Hozhoni is a children’s home that is operated by members of the Mennonite congregation in St. Michaels, AZ. Around 30 to 40 children are in their care and many are separated from their birth parents. Donations accepted at <https://www.cps-inc.org/donations/>
- Established in 1968, the St. Michaels Association for Special Education is a 501c3 non-profit organization serving moderate to severely disabled children and adults throughout the Navajo Nation. Donations accepted at <https://smase.org/>