



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL  
Office of the Speaker

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## Navajo Nation Leaders celebrate 30 years of innovation and leadership at Navajo Preparatory School

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**FARMINGTON, N.M.** — Chairman Daniel Tso, Madam Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton, Chairman Rickie Nez, and Council Delegate Edison Wauneka of the 24th Navajo Nation Council were joined by President Jonathan Nez to honor the students, teachers, faculty, and alumni of Navajo Preparatory School as the institution celebrates 30 years of culture, leadership, and innovation.

Located in Farmington, N.M., on the former campus of the Navajo Methodist Mission School, Navajo Prep was established in 1991 when the 17th Navajo Nation Council passed Resolution No. ECMY- 33-91. Today, it is a college-preparatory school that is dedicated to educating the next generation of Indigenous leaders while sustaining the Navajo language & culture.

“Navajo Preparatory School is a premier institution of learning that is raising the next generation of Navajo Nation leaders. From their distinguished alumni to a record of academic excellence, the Navajo Prep Eagles should be proud of their long history of impacting Indigenous education across Indian Country,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh).

The International Baccalaureate Programme is a fundamental part of Navajo Preparatory School that provides students with an academically challenging high school education that meets worldwide standards and criteria and is sanctioned by the International Baccalaureate Organization.

“The Navajo Prep mission is to develop compassionate lifelong learners and naat’áaniis that will return home to lead our communities with compassionate hearts and minds. Their challenging curriculum promotes our Navajo philosophy that cultivates intercultural understanding and prepares our students to be global citizens. We commend the leadership of Head of School Shawna Allison Becenti and our teachers and faculty for uplifting our students during this pandemic,” said former Navajo Prep Board President and Council Delegate Edison Wauneka (Oaksprings, St. Michaels).

Earlier this year, New Mexico lawmakers provided an allocation of \$14.8 million in new capital outlay funds for Navajo Nation chapters, including over \$6.3 million to Navajo Preparatory School for building construction costs, security upgrades, and broadband internet improvements.

“Yideeskaqagóo Naat’áanii translates to Leaders Now and Into the Future. That is the epidemic of the Navajo Preparatory School motto in the present day onward into the next 30 years. Sovereignty in the classroom is the first step to protecting our Diné culture, language, and way of life. Navajo Prep must continue to mold the next generation of young people and educators prepared to defend our sovereignty. May other Navajo schools take on that vision for future generations of young Diné,” said Chairman Daniel Tso (Littlewater, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake, Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Ojo Encino, Counselor).

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Head of School Shawna Allison Becenti provided closing remarks and presented honorary blankets to tribal and state leaders for their support of the Navajo Preparatory School mission and vision.

“The Navajo people appreciate the leadership of former Head of School Betty Ojaye, who was given two months to build a school for our Navajo students. Under her leadership, Navajo Prep flourished. Today, I heard firsthand from our students across the Four Corners region who come to this college-prep school to prepare themselves for higher education and I thought, I cannot wait to see the students that Navajo Prep will produce in the next 30 years and beyond,” said Madam Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock).

New Mexico State Senator Shannon Pinto, Senator William Sharer, State Representative Anthony Allison, and Representative D. Wonda Johnson provided remarks offering praise for the school’s student leaders and their distinguished faculty. Former Chairman and Navajo Code Talker, Honorable Peter MacDonald, delivered virtual remarks on the long history of establishing an Indigenous preparatory school for Indian Country to emulate.

“It is humbling to be surrounded by greatness here at Navajo Preparatory School. We always say to our young people to return home and help us. Head of School Shawna Allison-Becenti is an alumnus and a leader who did just that after being molded on this campus. Navajo Prep should be the model for New Mexico education and the Navajo Nation is leading the way,” said Chairman Rickie Nez (T’iistsoh Sikaad, Nenahnezad, Upper Fruitland, Tsé Daa K’aan, Newcomb, San Juan).

School founders honored include former Navajo Nation President Peterson Zah, HEHSC Chairman Daniel Tso, Council Delegate Edison Wauneka, former Council Delegate George Arthur, Board of Trustee Charley Long Sr., former Head of School Betty Ojaye, and the family of the late William Tso.

“When I meet a student, I ask them what problem they want to solve before asking what they aspire to be in life. Navajo Preparatory School celebrates 30 years of providing an innovative and challenging curriculum that challenges our students to be compassionate, forward-driven people. The Navajo Prep journey is focused on the future where we see Indigenous innovators within all sectors of society. We honor our leaders of the past and present for making that future a reality by building a foundation for Navajo Prep to thrive,” said Head of School Shawna Allison Becenti.

Navajo Preparatory School Board of Trustees includes President Matthew Tso, Vice President Anderson Yazzie Jr., Secretary/Treasurer Charley Long Sr., Member at Large Sherrick Roanhorse, and Student Senator Ajahrain Yellowhair.

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