



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Council Delegate Shawna Ann Claw hosts event to kick off Diné Bizaad as official language



Delegates Shawna Ann Claw and Germaine Simonson encourage students to continue learning their language and culture.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Thursday, Council Delegate Shawna Ann Claw (Chinle) joined students and staff from Chinle Junior High School (CJHS) to kick off a special event celebrating Diné Bizaad as the official language of the Navajo Nation.

This milestone follows Delegate Claw’s successful passage of a bill during a special session of the 25th Navajo Nation Council on December 16, 2024. The bill amended Title 1 of the Navajo Nation Code, formally recognizing Diné Bizaad as the official language. It was signed into law by Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren on December 24, 2024.

Delegate Claw remarked that the event, dubbed Diné Bizaad Day, symbolized a powerful declaration to both the Navajo Nation and the United States. It affirmed the Diné people’s commitment to strengthening their sovereignty by designating Diné Bizaad as an official language in the nation’s legal framework.

“It sends a clear message to our congressional leaders that we, the Navajo people, will remain steadfast in our values from time immemorial by embracing our language, which makes us unique, resilient, and beautiful,” Delegate Claw said. “Through our traditional language, we are able to live in harmony with all that exists. Let us honor our ancestors, our Navajo Code Talkers, and our grandparents who gifted us this beautiful language, enabling us to continue living in harmony with the world around us.”

Chinle Unified School District (CUSD) Board President Dr. Paul Guy Jr. expressed gratitude to the district, CUSD Superintendent Quincy Natay, acting Associate Superintendent Sheila Betz, CJHS Principal Melissa Martin, and Council Delegate Germaine Simonson for their support of the event.

Dr. Guy shared that his parents and grandparents not only taught him to speak Navajo but also impressed upon him the deep importance of never forgetting his language. They emphasized that it is a bridge to his heritage, identity, and the respect woven into the relationships within his community.

“Start learning to speak Navajo. It’s incredibly important—our language is powerful, sacred, and strong. When you see elders, greet them in Diné Bizaad. Don’t be embarrassed,” Dr. Guy said. “In our language, when we greet one another, we acknowledge our relationships and clans. Navajo is more than just words; it establishes kinship, creating a foundation of respect and understanding in how we address each other.”

The Náshdoítbeí Diné Club Yei bi Chei Dancers, Ribbon Dancers, Miss Central Preteen Kimaley Carr, Miss CJHS Nadine Francis, and other students performed songs in Diné Bizaad during Diné Bizaad Day.

Council Delegate Claw encouraged the students to continue learning their language and culture, emphasizing the importance of their role in preserving their heritage. She also shared that she is urging her colleagues to support similar events in their own chapters to celebrate Diné Bizaad as the official language of the Navajo Nation.

“From our youth, we gain energy and a new perspective on the world. You are the leaders, and we follow you. Your actions speak louder than your words,” she said. “Today, across the Navajo Nation, Chinle will be the first to kick off the Diné Bizaad legislation.”

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