



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation Memorial Day honors ancestral sacrifices, veterans, and families of fallen warriors



Navajo Nation's three branch chiefs lay wreaths in solemn tribute during the Memorial Day ceremony, honoring the warriors who gave their lives in services to the Navajo Nation and the United States.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On June 2, Navajo Nation officials, veterans, and families of fallen warriors gathered at Veterans Memorial Park in Window Rock to observe Navajo Nation Memorial Day, formerly known as Treaty Day. The day stands as both a solemn remembrance and a tribute to the prayers, sacrifices, and strength of Diné ancestors who signed the Treaty of 1868, as well as to the many Navajo warriors who gave their lives in service to the Nation and the United States.

Speaker Crystalyne Curley, Delegate Dr. Andy Nez, and Delegate Brenda Jesus were among those in attendance, offering gratitude and reflecting on the day's historical and spiritual significance.

Hosted by the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration, the morning ceremony began with a Posting of Colors representing the United States, Navajo Nation, each military branch, and state flags. Miss Navajo Nation 2024–2025, Ranishia Begay, performed the National Anthem, followed by an invocation led by William Nez, Housing Project Manager.

"This is a sacred day, one where we mourn the suffering of our people and honor the hope that carried them home," said Speaker Curley. "The Treaty of 1868 is more than a document. It is a living promise that we, as Diné, remain sovereign, strong, and deeply rooted in our homeland."

We also carry with us the memory of our warriors—our fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters—who never returned but whose spirits remain with us.”

Bobbie Ann Baldwin, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration, delivered the welcome address. Navajo Nation President Dr. Buu Nygren also spoke, honoring the courage of those who served and the resilience of families who carry the memory of loved ones lost in war.

“Our ancestors signed the Treaty with prayers for a better life. They endured the Long Walk, starvation, and loss so we could be here today,” said Delegate Brenda Jesus. “Their strength lives on in every chapter house, in every language class, in every act of self-governance. We must never forget what they gave, and we must also acknowledge the pain and courage of the families left behind.”

Delegate Dr. Andy Nez reflected on the day’s significance as a moment to educate and empower future generations. As a cultural advocate, he emphasized the importance of teaching the facts about the Treaty of 1868 not only as a historical event but as a living truth that continues to pervade Diné identity. He emphasized that the sacrifices of all Navajo warriorship—both past and present—remain at the heart of the Nation’s strength, and that the prayers of ancestors still guide the people in their pursuit of self-determination.

The event concluded with a wreath-laying ceremony, the playing of “Taps,” and performances by the Shiprock Agency Drum Group. The Navajo-Hopi Honor Riders provided a solemn escort, paying tribute to fallen warriors across generations.

Veterans, families of fallen service members, and community members gathered to honor the legacy of the Treaty of 1868 and the lasting contributions of Navajo military service members. A special flag-folding ceremony was held as a mark of deep respect for those who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

Originally designated “Treaty Day,” the holiday was renamed Navajo Nation Memorial Day to reflect broader remembrance of ancestral struggle and modern-day sacrifice.

As the 25th Navajo Nation Council continues efforts to protect treaty rights, promote self-governance, and strengthen cultural identity, this day stands as a lasting tribute to the vision and survival of the Navajo people.

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