



THE QUARTERLY STATE OF THE NATION

PRESIDENT BUU VAN NYGREN

October 20, 2025

Greetings! To my fellow Navajo people, Navajo Nation employees, Vice President Richelle Montoya, Interim Chief Justice Eleanor Shirley, Speaker Crystalyne Curley, Honorable Members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council, Division Directors and local officials.

I am submitting this written State of the Nation as required by tribal law. However, I will not be attending this Fall Council Session due to the active lawsuit against me by Speaker Curley.

I would like to start off by first wishing everyone a happy Navajo New Year. October is the start of our new year. It is a time to reflect on how far we have come, where we are today and where we are going. This seasonal change also gives us a hopeful feeling. Our people considered October the new year after all the crops had been harvested. Let us reflect on where we are and the future we look forward to.

This was another busy quarter for the Navajo Nation. I am happy to share our accomplishments with you and the challenges we are currently facing. This State of the Navajo Nation focuses on the good work of our employees, who are on the frontlines serving the needs of the Navajo people despite all of challenges that confront them. Thus, this State of the Nation is dedicated to them and all the good work they do for the Nation.

As we weather the shutdown of the federal government, our Navajo Washington Office is keeping us updated on what is happening in Washington, D.C., while also advocating daily for the interests of the Nation. We were the only individual tribe to answer the call from the National Indian Education Association calling for the rescission of reduction-in-force notices at the Department of Education, and we have been in close contact with the White House and Congress on this development. The shutdown is not good for our Nation and I call on our federal partners in Congress to find a path to end this shutdown.



I am very proud of my team for saving the Padres Mesa Ranch Demonstration Project at Nahata Dziil. The U.S. Office of Navajo Hopi Indian Relocation (ONHIR) ran this project and it would have ended during the shutdown if not for our swift actions. This project is what led to the creation of the highly successful Navajo Beef Program, now called Native American Beef.

At the end of the last fiscal year, the employees of ONHIR retired. This meant the end of the Padres Mesa Demonstration Project unless the Navajo Nation took over. My team quickly sprung into action and I issued a letter in the middle of September to ONHIR ensuring that the Nation would operate the Project. ONHIR transferred the Project to the Navajo Nation and we have retained the ranch hands who continue to work on the Project. We received sufficient funds from ONHIR to operate the Project for three months. Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office Executive Director Sarah Slim continues to work with the Navajo Hopi Land Commission to identify funds for the continued operation of the Project.

My team is also working to take over other portions of ONHIR's holdings and operations, including its leases and buildings. We look forward to working with the U.S. Department of the Interior to certify the remaining relocatee applicants once the shutdown ends.

Prior to the shutdown, I had the opportunity to speak to Secretary of Education Linda McMahon, and to express the importance of our treaty and the federal government's failing to uphold it. My conversation with the Secretary helped lead to a one-time investment in Tribal Colleges and Universities of over \$100 million or an over 100 percent increase in current funding. The funding will support programs, services, and operations at these institutions, which provide education while maintaining Native languages, histories, and traditions. Secretary McMahon stated that the investment is intended to improve outcomes, emphasize merit and excellence, and expand opportunity. While the rollout of this funding has been slowed by the shutdown, I look forward to reconnecting with the Secretary and her team to get our share of these funds to Navajo.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture began holding public sessions on its efforts to reorganize under the Trump Administration. Missing from these sessions, however, were consultations with tribes. The United States has an obligation based on its treaty and trust relationship to consult with tribes anytime it seeks to make a decision that could impact tribes, and the USDA was not meeting its obligations. In response, I met with Deputy Secretary of the USDA to discuss the importance of USDA on Navajo and the importance of consulting with tribes. The Deputy Secretary promised me that USDA would hold off on making any decisions until it gave tribes an opportunity to be consulted and that he personally would attend the consultations. Just last week, the USDA held those consultations both in person and virtually, where the Navajo Nation was able to share its comments. Even through the shutdown, we have maintained close connections with USDA officials and I look forward to continuing to develop this relationship and bringing more resources to our farmers and ranchers.

Construction began on the new water treatment plant, pipeline and pumps and other facilities to treat water from the former Navajo Generating Station Lake Powell intake and deliver it to the



Antelope Canyon region and the LeChee Chapter. A project like this is a vital engine for economic development and public health. Delivering clean water to communities is how cities like Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Phoenix, Tucson, and Albuquerque have become the economic engines they are. Let's do the same for our communities on the Navajo Nation.

The Division of General Services completed the acquisition of our fleet owned vehicle replacements. The bulk of the purchase was for the Law Enforcement patrol units. Thereafter, purchases were made for the Department of Water Resources (one-ton pickup trucks), facility maintenance (¾-ton pickup trucks), Department of Resource Enforcement (¾-ton pickup trucks), Judicial Branch (SUV), Office of the Speaker (SUV), Department of Justice (SUV), Miss Navajo Nation (SUV) and Vice President Montoya (SUV). Thank you to the team that is keeping our tribal vehicles operating and available as we provide critical services to our Navajo people.

In July 2025, the Navajo Nation applied for BEAD funding in New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah, requesting over \$300 million. Through diligent efforts of the Navajo Nation Broadband Office, over 30,000 Broadband Serviceable Locations (BSLs) were made eligible for funding. This is a significant increase from the initial federal and state agency identification of only over 8,000 BSLs. This increase of BSLs ensures broader access to critical broadband resources. The three states have notified the Navajo Nation of the pre-award of funds. The award is pending federal approval through the Nation Telecommunications and Information Administration.

The Navajo Nation Broadband Office (NNBO) conducted an in-depth financial and technical review of the initial vendor proposals. Through detailed clarifications, corrections to technical assumptions, and direct negotiations, ending in more accurate pricing that lowered total costs from \$49.30M to \$22.26M—a savings of \$27.06M—and reduced the Nation's match from about \$5M to about \$2.2M.

Delivery continues – 81 Category-2 LAN installations are complete with 29 more scheduled. Approximately 52 chapters are operating under E-Rate fiber; all Chapters have awards for future fiber implementation except Tuba City (declined E-Rate) and Alamo (planned to bid in 2026). To keep services running while fiber is built, interim connectivity is being put in place at 55 locations via LEO satellite and two locations via point-to-point wireless, with contracts underway.

In partnership with DODE, DCD, and the Navajo Nation Library, NNBO has certified 99 active Chapter libraries that provide public access to books, computers, eBooks, and the internet, and is working with all stakeholders to complete the remaining certifications.

The Tribal Community Action Plan (TCRP) addresses the crisis of Missing and Murdered Dine Relatives (MMDR). The Executive Branch continues to implement this plan. This past quarter, the Department of Emergency Management (NDEM) supported the execution of training and coordination sessions designed to strengthen community awareness, response protocols, and interagency collaboration on this sensitive issue. By engaging chapters, local law enforcement, and community leaders, NDEM helped commit resources and attention to a framework that



uplifts families, improves reporting and tracking mechanisms, and ensures that prevention and response efforts are community-driven.

Vital Records has been working with Arctic IT as one component of the Governmental Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System to replace the old enrollment database with an enrollment database called Tribal Platforms. Planning has been done since the beginning of the year with the Go-Live date of August 4, 2025. Vital Records has been using Tribal Platforms for two months now and seeing positive results.

Last week, it was reported that Arctic IT was going to stop working on the ERP project because it was owed payment. Ms. Alva Tom became aware of this and knowing how important the new ERP system will be, she is prioritizing this matter to ensure the invoices are paid.

The Uranium Leadership Team has been meeting and working throughout the fourth quarter on several issues, including projects related to Abandoned Uranium Mine (AUM) waste disposal. The team members include Navajo EPA Director Stephen Etsitty, NDOJ Attorney Dan Moquin, DURAC Director Nona Bahashone and Eastern Navajo Land Commission Director Leonard Tsosie. The team has met with Energy Fuels, BHP and DISA Technologies to develop a partnership for AUM mine waste remediation. Additionally, we have met with federal officials at U.S. EPA, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, U.S. Geological Survey, and others to move forward with the public-private partnership. The Phase 2 Verification Study has been agreed to and funding has been secured for the Old Church Rock Mine waste removal using High-Pressure Slurry Ablation (HPSA) as part of the Time Critical Removal Action. Discussions are ongoing with BHP and Energy Fuels regarding the removal of uranium waste off the reservation.

The team will continue working on drafting of the High-Pressure Slurry Ablation (HPSA) regulations as a section in the Navajo Nation CERCLA regulations. Navajo EPA has advocated for private companies to conduct a Validation Testing as possible treatment technology to reduce the quantity, toxicity, and mobility of radionuclides from the AUM sites. If HPSA is approved, the regulations would regulate the use of the HPSA while in operation.

The Diné Action Plan Advisory Group held its three-day Quarterly Meeting in late September at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort. There were several speakers including Department for Self-Reliance's Assistant Department Manager, DAP Co-Chair and Navajo Division of Public Safety Director Michael Henderson, Office of the President and Vice-President MMIR Advocate Yolanda Azua, among others. A moment of silence was held for murder victims which set the tone for the National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims. Navajo DCFS Executive Director Thomas Cody also spoke about the "Preserving Navajo Families Initiative" and how it relates to DAP efforts. He also announced that DCFS will seek funds for the DAP Advisory Group. Dr. Jami Bartgis of One Fire Associates, LLC delivered the DAP Evaluation Report and explained how the evaluation is an evolving process and noted that people were beginning to own DAP and become more aware of the work in addressing the nayéé'. Dr. Bartgis also outlined opportunities for the



DAP including the need to be more responsive to suicide crises, develop a tribal community response plan and use rehabilitation as a core source of justice. The work session included action planning among the task force groups, DAP Advisory Group representatives, other stakeholders, and partners.

As of June 30, 2025, the Navajo Indian Child Welfare Act Program (NICWAP) has 437 cases involving 821 children, across 29 states.

The following states have the highest case load:

- Arizona: 93 cases involving 181 children
- Utah: 48 cases involving 98 children
- California: 23 cases involving 44 children
- Colorado: 16 cases involving 30 children
- Nevada: 8 cases involving 12 children

As of June 30, 2025 the NICWAP has 522 children placed with family, relatives, or a Native American Foster Home, while 299 children are placed in a non-relative, non-Native American Foster Home, Group Home, or Residential Treatment Facility. This means that 64 percent of our Navajo children in state custody are currently placed in an ICWA Preferred Placement.

From April 1, 2025, to June 30, 2025, the Navajo Department of Justice and the NICWAP has legally intervened in 33 cases in the State of Arizona. This initiative was a collaboration between the NDOJ and NICWAP to ensure the Arizona Department of Child Safety is complying with the ICWA of 1978 and ensuring recommendations from the Navajo Nation are heard by the judges presiding over these cases.

The Division of Children and Family Services continues to collaborate with Native Community Capital (NCC) in assisting homeowners with mortgage reinstatement, monthly mortgage assistance, home repairs, mortgage principal reductions, or clearing titles. As of September 26, 2025, NCC deployed \$6,988,935.65 and obligated \$7,717,459.68 in funds. A total of 669 households has been assisted with most qualifying for mortgage reinstatement, monthly mortgage, or home repair assistance. With the approval of changes to the term sheet, NCC will be able to increase its assistance per household and make more applicants eligible for assistance. DCFS is assisting NCC with recruiting homeowners, especially recent retirees who have a mortgage balance. DCFS continues to monitor the Memorandum of Agreement between NCC and Navajo Housing Authority and will be looking at alternate ways to assist NHA homeowners.

Housing access and availability remains the top priority of my Administration. To date, we have delivered 265 between the Division of Community Development, our Veterans Administration, and the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission. Under the 1,000 Home Initiative, the goal is plain and simple – get shelter to our relatives.



- Navajo Nation Veterans Administration: There are sixty-eight (68) in construction, seventeen (17) homes have been completed with utilities pending, and thirty (30) turnkey homes.
- Navajo-Hopi Land Commission: The first work order is expected to drop eighty-four (84) homes. In total, fifty-seven (57) homes have been delivered and set, and eleven (11) are scheduled for shipping.
- Division of Community Development:
 - HIP – Out of original contract of 30, all 30 homes are built and delivered. Another contract was recently signed for twenty-six (26) additional homes with five (5) completed foundations ready for homes to be delivered.
 - CHID –
 - Work Order #1 (50 units) – Sixteen (16) homes have been delivered and set, and thirty-seven (37) homes have been built.
 - Work Order #3 (150 units) – One-hundred and fifteen (115) homes have been delivered and set, and all 150 homes have been built.
 - Pending signage for these work orders is installation of woodfire stoves and accessibility ramps for 110 homes.

I remain hopeful that we will be able to work together to ensure that the Executive Branch has adequate funding for operations. Some Delegates have asked me to move funding from personnel to operating. As you know, in order to move money from personnel to operating, the Navajo Nation Council has required a two-thirds vote of the Council. If there is a different way to move funding from personnel to operating, please inform me. Even if legislation is passed to allow for these personnel to operating transfers, additional allocations will need to be made.

The best way forward is to amend the budget in the same manner that the Council amended the Judicial Branch's budget in Resolution CS-45-25. I am hopeful that we can work together to resolve the FY26 budget so that all Navajo Nation programs, offices, and divisions can continue their important work of serving the Navajo People.

We are here to create and uphold systems that serve the Navajo People. I campaigned on working with Council. I informed the Division Directors that I am committed to working with the Council. Our collective terms end in about 15 months. Let's make the most of the time we have left in office, by putting our differences aside and finding common ground as we serve our Navajo people. *Aléhee'*

