



Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council

NNYAC FY 2026 Quarter 4 Oral Report For Fall Session

TO: President, Vice-President, Navajo Nation Council and Chief Justice



From: Aryiah C. R. James, Chair

Date: October 12, 2026

Subject: Oral Report of the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council (NNYAC) –
Legislative Branch

Central Agency Representatives: Aryiah James & Vydell Willie

Eastern Agency Representatives: Kendri Kinlacheeny & Vacant

Fort Defiance Agency Representatives: Starr Joe & Makyle Dan

Northern Agency Representatives: Daelyn Benally & Vacant

Western Agency Representatives: Yanabah Smith & Vacant

At-Large Representatives: Kaylee Bahe & Vacant

Purpose

This report serves as an updated status of how the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council (NNYAC) has been running since the Quarter 2 report. The report given will address the plans and actions completed, announcement of new Interim Executive Director, and our Pillar of Priorities. With the mention of further planning for future upcoming events for the NNYAC – Legislative Branch.

Reporting Period

The Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council has continued to make meaningful progress through consistent engagement, leadership development, and youth advocacy. Throughout this reporting period, the Council has remained committed to representing the voices of Native youth across the Navajo Nation by holding regular meetings, special meetings, establishing organizational priorities, welcoming new leadership, and participating in community outreach efforts focused on mental health awareness.

Meetings

The Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council has maintained a consistent schedule of regular meetings to discuss ongoing initiatives, review community concerns, and collaborate on projects that directly impact Native youth. These meetings have provided members with opportunities to share updates from their respective agencies, develop action plans, and strengthen communication among council representatives. In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, the Council also held special meetings to address urgent matters, strategic planning, and upcoming events. These special meetings allowed members to respond efficiently to emerging needs while ensuring that important decisions were made in a timely and collaborative manner. The combination of regular and special meetings has strengthened the Council's ability to remain organized, responsive, and focused on its mission of serving Navajo youth.

National UNITY Conference

The Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council had the opportunity to attend the 50th anniversary of the National UNITY Conference held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. This milestone gathering

brought together Indigenous youth from across the country to connect, share experiences, learn from one another, and strengthen their commitment to serving their communities. Attending this historic conference was a meaningful and educational experience for our council, providing opportunities for personal growth, leadership development, cultural exchange, networking, and community outreach.

Throughout the conference, our council gained valuable knowledge and insight into youth leadership, community involvement, advocacy, and the importance of preserving Indigenous cultures and traditions. We learned from other youth leaders, listened to different perspectives, and explored new ideas that we can bring back to the Navajo Nation.

The conference encouraged us to think about how we can continue strengthening our council, creating opportunities for Navajo youth, and making a positive impact on our communities. We were reminded that young people have an important voice in shaping the future of our Nations and that our ideas, experiences, and cultural knowledge are valuable.

Being part of UNITY's 50th anniversary made the experience even more special. It gave us an opportunity to recognize the importance of Indigenous youth coming together across generations to build stronger communities while continuing to honor our identities, languages, cultures, and traditions.

One of the most valuable aspects of attending the conference was the opportunity to meet and connect with numerous youth councils and Indigenous youth from different tribes and communities. Through conversations and shared experiences, we learned about the different projects, programs, challenges, and accomplishments of other councils.

These interactions allowed us to exchange ideas, build relationships, and discover new ways to support youth leadership. We were able to learn from one another and recognize that, although our communities may have different needs and priorities, we share many common goals. These include empowering young people, preserving our cultures, encouraging community involvement, and creating positive opportunities for future generations.

The networking and outreach opportunities helped our council establish connections that can continue beyond the conference. These relationships may open doors for future collaborations, cultural exchanges, and partnerships with other youth councils. We returned with a greater understanding of the importance of working together and maintaining connections with Indigenous youth across the country.

An important highlight of the conference was the opportunity to share our culture through the introduction of Hand games. Hand games are a meaningful traditional activity within many Indigenous communities, bringing people together through teamwork, observation, strategy, and friendly competition.

Our council had the opportunity to learn Hand games from other youth and share this cultural tradition with participants who may not have been familiar with it. We also had the chance to play Hand games with members of other tribes, creating an enjoyable environment for cultural exchange, relationship-building.

These experiences demonstrated how cultural traditions can bring Indigenous youth together, regardless of where they come from. Sharing Hand games allowed us to represent our culture, learn about others, and strengthen the connections between our communities. It was a reminder that our traditions are not only important to preserve but are also powerful tools for building relationships and bringing people together.

Attending the National UNITY Conference allowed the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council to represent our Nation and share our perspectives with Indigenous youth from across the country. We were proud to participate in a gathering that emphasized leadership, unity, cultural identity, and youth empowerment.

Our participation also gave us an opportunity to learn how other youth councils operate and how they encourage young people to become involved in their communities. By exchanging knowledge and experiences, we gained ideas that we can adapt to our own work and used to strengthen our efforts in serving Navajo youth.

This experience reinforced the importance of being active representatives of our communities, building relationships with other Indigenous leaders, and continuing to create opportunities for our youth to learn, grow, and lead.

The Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council's attendance at the 50th anniversary of the National UNITY Conference in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, was a valuable and memorable experience. We learned a great deal about leadership, advocacy, community involvement, and cultural preservation while building connections with youth councils and Indigenous youth from across the country.

The conference provided meaningful opportunities for networking, outreach, and cultural exchange. Introducing Hand games and playing with other tribes was a particularly memorable experience that allowed us to share our traditions while learning from others. These interactions helped strengthen our understanding of the importance of unity, collaboration, and cultural pride.

Overall, we returned from the conference with new knowledge, stronger connections, fresh ideas, and a renewed commitment to serving the Navajo Nation. The experience reminded us that Indigenous youth have an important role in shaping the future of our communities. As a council, we look forward to applying what we learned, maintaining the relationships we developed, and continuing to empower Navajo youth through leadership, outreach, and cultural engagement.

NNYAC Leadership Orientation

During August, the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council participated in training at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort. The training provided Youth Advisory Council members with an opportunity to strengthen our understanding of how meetings should be conducted, the responsibilities of each member, and the foundations of Navajo Fundamental Law. It also gave us a chance to look more closely at the structure of the Youth Advisory Council and the expectations that come with serving as representatives of Navajo youth.

One of the biggest takeaways from this training was learning how we should properly, orderly, and officially conduct our meetings. We gained a better understanding of meeting protocols, procedures, and the importance of following the correct process when discussing agenda items,

making motions, voting, and conducting official business. This was especially helpful because it gave members a clearer picture of how the Youth Advisory Council should operate and how we can remain organized, respectful, and consistent during our meetings. It also showed us why having clear procedures matters when decisions are being made on behalf of the youth we represent.

Youth Advisory Council members also had the opportunity to hear from individuals involved in the Navajo justice and peacemaking process. Their input helped connect proper procedures with Navajo values such as respect, accountability, communication, and working together. The training reminded us that leadership is not only about speaking up, but also about listening, understanding the process, and making sure our actions are respectful and responsible. It also reminded us that the way we conduct our meetings reflects the professionalism and integrity of the Youth Advisory Council.

Overall, the training served as an important refresher and gave the Youth Advisory Council clearer directions moving forward as a Title II entity. It helped us better understand not only our individual responsibilities, but also the protocols and procedures we are expected to follow as a group. The training also gave us a stronger foundation for how we can improve communication, conduct official business more effectively, and hold ourselves accountable to the responsibilities we accepted when joining the Youth Advisory Council.

Moving forward, the knowledge gained from this training will continue to guide us as we work to strengthen our meetings, improve communication among members, and represent Navajo youth in a professional and respectful way. Most importantly, it reminded us that our work should always be grounded in Navajo values, proper procedure, and our responsibility to serve the youth and communities of the Navajo Nation.

NNYAC Resignation

Four members of the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council have resigned from their positions: At-Large Member Louvannie Tsosie, Northern Navajo Agency Representative Tewakeedah

Martin, Western Navajo Agency Representative Kaya Dickson, and Eastern Navajo Agency Representative Nikko Yazzie.

These individuals stepped down from their terms to balance work and academic priorities, with one previous member also noting that the council no longer aligned with her personal path. Managing school and employment schedules alongside council duties has highlighted a distinct financial strain, creating scheduling conflicts that make advanced planning difficult for our youth leaders.

In response, the NNYAC leadership is working to address these structural challenges while actively advertising the four vacated seats to ensure full representation. This transition has served as an important learning experience, reinforcing our commitment to communication, proactive leadership, and mutual accountability. We deeply appreciate the time, dedication, and advocacy these individuals contributed, and we thank them for their service to Navajo youth.

Navajo Fair Parades

The Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council had the opportunity to participate in several parades throughout the Navajo Nation, including the Kayenta Parade, both Gallup Intertribal parades, the Eastern Navajo parade, the Central Navajo parade, and the Navajo Nation Fair Parade. Participating in these events allowed our council to represent the Navajo Nation, connect with community members, and show our commitment to serving and engaging with Navajo youth and families.

These parades provided meaningful opportunities for our council to travel to different communities, experience the diversity of our reservation, and strengthen our relationships with the people we serve. Each event gave us a chance to meet community members, share our presence as youth representatives, and celebrate the culture, traditions, and unity of the Navajo people.

One of the most valuable aspects of participating in these parades was the connection we built with communities throughout the Navajo Nation. Parades bring together families, elders,

children, local organizations, and community leaders, creating opportunities for people to gather and celebrate together.

By participating in these events, our council was able to engage with community members and increase awareness of our role as representatives and advocates for Navajo youth. Being present at these gatherings helped us strengthen our connection with the people we serve and reminded us of the importance of remaining involved in community activities.

These experiences also allowed us to see the pride community members have in their culture, traditions, and communities. The encouragement and support we received reinforced the importance of youth representation and the value of having young leaders actively participate in events that bring our people together.

Attending parades in different areas of the reservation gave our council the opportunity to travel through and experience many parts of the Navajo Nation. From Kayenta to Gallup and throughout the Eastern and Central regions, each trip allowed us to see different communities, landscapes, and local traditions that make our Nation unique.

Traveling to these different locations helped us develop a greater appreciation for the size and diversity of the Navajo Nation. Although our communities are spread across a large geographic area, these events demonstrated how connected we remain through our shared culture, values, traditions, and identity.

Visiting different communities also helped us better understand the importance of reaching youth and families throughout the reservation. It reminded us that our responsibility as a youth advisory council extends beyond our own communities. We must continue finding ways to connect with Navajo youth across all regions and ensure that young people have opportunities to feel represented, supported, and involved.

Kayenta Parade

Participating in the Kayenta Parade gave our council an opportunity to connect with community members in the northern portion of the Navajo Nation. It allowed us to represent our council, interact with residents, and experience the community's pride and enthusiasm. This event

contributed to our understanding of the importance of being present and involved in communities throughout the reservation.

Gallup Inter-Tribal Parades

Attending both Gallup Intertribal parades provided opportunities to celebrate Indigenous cultures and connect with people from different tribal communities. These events highlighted the importance of cultural pride, representation, and unity among Indigenous peoples. Our participation allowed us to represent the Navajo Nation while engaging in gatherings that recognize the rich cultural traditions of the region.

Eastern Navajo Parade

The Eastern Navajo parade allowed our council to travel into another region of the reservation and strengthen our connection with the communities there. Participating in this event helped us recognize the importance of reaching people across different areas and remaining engaged with the families and youth who make up our Nation.

Central Navajo Parade

Participation in the Central Navajo parade provided another opportunity to represent the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council and engage with community members. Traveling to this area allowed us to experience another part of the reservation while continuing to build relationships and demonstrate our commitment to youth leadership and community involvement.

Navajo Nation Fair Parade

The Navajo Nation Fair Parade was another meaningful opportunity for our council to participate in a major gathering that celebrates Navajo culture, traditions, and community pride. Being part of this event allowed us to represent Navajo youth among community members and visitors while celebrating the unity and identity of our Nation.

Participating in multiple parades throughout the Navajo Nation strengthened our council by giving us firsthand experience in community outreach and public representation. Each event

required us to come together as a group, work toward a common purpose, and represent our council in a positive and respectful manner.

These experiences helped us recognize that leadership involves more than attending meetings or organizing programs. It also means showing up for our communities, building relationships, listening to the people we serve, and making an effort to be present in different parts of the reservation.

Through these opportunities, we were able to strengthen our teamwork, broaden our perspectives, and develop a deeper appreciation for the communities that make up the Navajo Nation. The connections we built and the places we visited gave us valuable experience that we can carry into our future work as youth representatives.

The Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council's participation in the Kayenta Parade, both Gallup Intertribal parades, the Eastern Navajo parade, the Central Navajo parade, and the Navajo Nation Fair Parade provided valuable opportunities for community engagement, cultural appreciation, and relationship-building.

Traveling throughout the reservation allowed us to experience different communities and develop a greater appreciation for the land, people, and traditions that connect us as Diné. These events also strengthened our relationship with community members and reinforced the importance of youth leadership, outreach, and representation.

Overall, participating in these parades was a rewarding experience that allowed our council to remain connected with the community while representing Navajo youth across different regions. We are grateful for the opportunity to take part in these events and look forward to continuing our involvement in community gatherings throughout the Navajo Nation. Through our participation, we were reminded that strong communities are built through connection, representation, and a shared commitment to our people. As the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council, we will continue working to strengthen these relationships and ensure that Navajo youth remain an active and valued part of our Nation's future.

Navajo Nation Kid's Day

During the Navajo Nation Fair, we participated in the Window Rock Kids Day activities with the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council. We had Zumba dancing under the tent and operated a hydration station where we served electrolyte drinks to children, families, and other members of the public. With the weather being very hot and the fair being busy, it was great to help provide drinks for people who needed to cool down and stay hydrated. We also gave T-shirts to participants. As the youth council members, we introduced ourselves and we played a Simon Says game and danced with them!

Kids Day was a great opportunity to engage directly with Navajo youth and families while promoting physical activity, hydration, and community involvement. We enjoyed being able to greet and engage with our people in a simple but meaningful way and represent the Youth Advisory Council at one of the Navajo Nation's largest community events.

Navajo Nation Elderly Fest

The Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council had the honor of attending Elder Fest Day at the Navajo Nation Fair alongside members of the Navajo Nation Council. This event provided a meaningful opportunity to recognize and celebrate our elders while strengthening relationships between our tribal leadership, youth representatives, and the community.

Throughout the event, the Youth Advisory Council participated in activities designed to bring joy and engagement to the elders. One of the highlights was hosting bingo, which allowed elders to come together, enjoy themselves, and participate in a fun and welcoming environment. In addition, the council helped serve hydration drinks provided by Desert Nutrition, a business based in Page, Arizona. This contribution helped support the well-being and comfort of the elders throughout the day's activities.

An important part of our participation was introducing ourselves as members of the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council and sharing our roles as youth representatives. This allowed us to connect with community members, engage in conversations, and demonstrate our commitment to serving the Navajo people. Through these interactions, we were able to build relationships,

exchange ideas, and gain a greater appreciation for the importance of maintaining strong connections between our elders, youth, and tribal leaders.

The presence of the Navajo Nation Council also highlighted the importance of collaboration between tribal leadership and the younger generation. Seeing council members interact with community members demonstrated the value of being present, listening to the concerns and experiences of the people, and maintaining meaningful relationships throughout the Navajo Nation. These connections serve as an important reminder that leadership is not only about representation but also about being accessible, involved, and connected to the community.

Overall, Elder Fest Day was a successful and meaningful event with a great turnout. The positive atmosphere, community participation, and opportunities to engage with our elders made the experience memorable for everyone involved. As the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council, we were grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside the Navajo Nation Council and contribute to an event dedicated to honoring our elders.

Through our participation, we were reminded of the importance of respecting our elders, strengthening community relationships, and creating opportunities for Navajo youth to become actively involved in serving our people. We look forward to continuing these efforts and building stronger connections across generations to support the future of the Navajo Nation.

Sheep Butchering Workshop

Sheep Butchering was approved by the NNYAC to bridge cultural knowledge of traditional food and ensure the vital teachings of our Elders are passed down to the next generation. NNYAC provides all the essential resources to make this workshop a success, creating a powerful space where local youth can connect deeply with their heritage and school community.

This collaboration brings cultural education directly into schools, offering students invaluable hands-on experience in traditional food preparation and sustainability. By participating in this process from beginning to end, youth learn the practical life skills necessary to sustain their

families. More importantly, the workshops instill a profound understanding of *K'é* (kinship) teaching students to work cooperatively, respect one another, and honor their responsibilities to the community and the land.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our community partners who made this impactful learning possible. A total of seven sheep were donated to the workshop, a generous contribution brought to life through the vital support of Black Streak Canyon Tours, Ken's Tours, and the Page USD American Indian Education Program. Together, we are investing in our youth, strengthening our schools, and keeping our cultural traditions thriving.

Window Rock High School Sheep Butchering Workshop

The Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council (NNYAC) completed a traditional sheep butchering event at Window Rock High School (WRHS) on Thursday, August 20th, 2026, in Fort Defiance, Arizona. The event started at 9:00am but youth council members and staff Ariyah James, Chair (Central Agency), Daelyn Benally (Northern Agency), Starr Joe and Makyle Dan (Fort Defiance Agency), and Desiree Fowler (OOS) arrived early to help in setting up. The event occurred at the WRHS's Welding Shop. The event consisted of butchering two sheep, cleaning the organs, slicing the meat, cooking the meat and preparing traditional foods such as *dił* (blood sausage), *atoo'* (mutton stew- vegetable), *k'íneeshbízhii* (dumpling stew), *dah díníilghaazh* (frybread), and *náneeskaadí* (tortillas). Throughout the butchering cultural teachings were shared by the WRHS Principal and former Miss Navajo, Dr. Audra Platero, youth council members and staff, along with a variety of teachers at WRHS. Tens of students were released from class with permission from their teachers to witness this cultural teaching event. Students crowded around the center watching in awe, as space ran out, students were sitting and standing on bleachers just to catch a glance at the butchering event. Youth council members, teachers, welding students, and home health aide students from WRHS all assisted in the event throughout the day with students coming in and out from classes to help slice some meat, cook some meat, clean the organs, or just get a bite of the finished food.

Before the sheep butchering started, teachings were shared with students that included the brushing of the hide to remove any poop or hay as well as the journey that the sheep will make to *Dibé Ntsaa* (Mount Hesperus) after a quick cut is made. Timely, at 9:00 am, the butchering commenced with the first cut of the sheep. Students and council members then surrounded the

sheep to remove the kági. Once kági was removed, students lifted up the sheep to then remove the intestinal organs. Once removed, students flooded at the chance to learn how to clean the abid and ach'íí. Several students worked thoroughly cleaning and dumping each part of the intestines and stomach: a student poured water with a funnel, another opened the intestines and another was dumping the contents into a 5-gallon bucket. Once the meat was separated, students and teachers hurried to another table to hold the ak'ah łani (fat surrounding the inners of the sheep), cut the meat for stew or to fry, and separated and cut the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys to cook. After the first sheep was finished, the blood was covered with dirt, the same process started again with the second sheep. The remainder of the day was spent cooking the entire sheep to feed the school students and staff. Students learned to make traditional foods such as dił (blood sausage), atoo' (mutton stew- vegetable), k'íneeshbízhii (dumpling stew), dah díníilghaazh (frybread), and náneeskaadí (tortillas) from one another or through questions aimed at youth council members.

During the event, youth council members and staff had the chance to directly interact with the youth and those who serve the youth. We asked questions, created conversations, and opened a safe space for young people to explore their cultural identity with no shame or expectation. After conversations and witnessing the event, the youth council had reflected on ideals present in our youth today.

- Youth need a safe space to interact with others and to experience their cultural traditions. (Pillar 1)
 - Many students noted that their families did not share this teaching with them and that they were grateful for this opportunity as they saw another side of their culture that they never knew existed before.
 - Students highlighted the lack of community and culture events within the area, such as sheep butchering for youth or other cultural practices.
- Youth have an amazing ability to work closely with one another to solve problems and can learn so much from one another. - Development of peer-to-peer workshops or programs.
 - Witnessing the event, I noticed that students were teaching one another how to make bread or how to clean the stomach, because so many students showed up to just learn!

- Students also asked so many questions about the process of butchering and the Navajo language as a whole.
- The youth are so eager to learn but often do not have a space to learn cultural and traditional knowledge.

This event was the first butchering completed by the youth council! We received so many recommendations for future events and how to improve.

- Recommendation to host a Thanksgiving dinner for youth and families who are unsheltered or unable to afford a Thanksgiving meal.

This event was a definite success in promoting cultural awareness, cultural preservation, Diné teachings and values, and the Diné language in Diné youth. It is clear that the youth are so eager to learn traditional and ecological Diné knowledge, and it is up to youth leaders to preserve that change and develop spaces for opportunity and growth.

Page High School and Tuba City Sheep Butchering

NNYAC had sponsored traditional sheep butchering at both Page High School and Tuba City High School, with Page's event being held on Thursday September 17th, and following the next day with Tuba City High School on Friday September 18th.

The traditional sheep butchering was organized and sponsored by NNYAC to push forward cultural revitalization, which is a part of the pillars that is important for the NNYAC and how its actions are founded on. Cultural revitalization is important especially for Navajo youth who feel like their roots within their identity aren't very strong. Through this hands-on activity of being able to see in person these traditional sheep butchering and the significance of why our people continue to keep that tradition alive is important for our people

During the event, members of the NNYAC who participated were NNYAC Chair Ariyah James (Central Agency), NNYAC Vice Chair Makyle Dan (Fort Defiance Agency) and Desiree Fowler. We endeavored a 5-hour journey to Page, Arizona for this event and prepared weeks in advance for supplies that we may even need for this event. We started at 8am at Page High School where we were greeted by many students who were surrounding the pavilion. We had already observed many students part of the American Indian Education Program dressed up in aprons and enthusiastic to get this event started. Before we started, NNYAC members had introduced

themselves to the participating and interested students who were within the event. NNYAC Chair Ariyah James started off by doing an introduction and her significance of why the traditional sheep butchers are important to our culture, and traditions.

Through butchering we observed different patterns of action that showed that we have been impactful to students and created an environment where they felt safe and supported. Many students were working together and were collaborative with one another, helping also to make the space more welcoming for students to be part of the event happening.

After the fact, NNYAC asked students how impactful and fulfilling the event was to themselves and their culture, and after a few questions, we know that we helped the community, in the fact that it helped create a stronger root into their identity. Many of them had suggested that they don't do this practice ever or much often, that now being done as a community we gave them the opportunity to share this important aspect of being able to adopt the traditions and cultures that were passed down.

Navajo Nation Department of Dine Education Tribal Consultation – Arizona Schools

A Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council (NNYAC) member and staff, Starr Joe (Fort Defiance Agency), and Desiree Fowler (OOS) attended the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education Tribal Consultation for Arizona Schools held on Wednesday, August 26th, 2026, at the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education (NNDODE) building in Window Rock, Arizona. Tribal consultations are held to understand the use of funding within school districts on the Navajo Nation and their implementation of Diné Language and Culture education. This subject primarily involves the NNYAC as the NNYAC is focused on preserving and empowering Diné youth to learn and practice Diné language, culture, and fundamental values. This education is often taught in the home, but it is especially taught within schools. As a result, the public education and the value of Diné traditional teachings, culture, and language are crucial to be taught in schools with quality and value. These consultations are delivered in a presentation format with the addition of a Q&A section after the presentation concludes.

The NNYAC attended a total of three presentations from Tuba City Unified School District (TCUSD), Piñon Unified School District (PUSD), and Chinle Unified School District (CUSD). The bullet points present key ideas and takeaways from each school's presentation.

The **Tuba City Unified School District (TCUSD)** Presentation highlighted some key issues pressing Diné youth including:

- Students often jump back and forth between boarding schools.
- Many students are homeless, which is also defined as students living with multiple families in one homestead or rely on others for support.
- Gaps in student learning are present because families may keep their children out of school.
- Funding cuts have an impact after school tutoring.
- Navajo & Hopi Teachers are non-negotiable and crucial.
- Hands-on instruction around Diné traditions and culture.
 - In Navajo Language and Culture courses, there is a lab day where students do activities outside to connect with the land, such as harvesting Navajo tea.
- A lack of certified teachers leads to long-term substitutes.
- TCUSD listens to teacher's concerns and promotes community conversations and dialogue and is very intentional on improving instruction.
- Navajo Language and Culture is prioritized.
 - 1 Student awarded the Bilingual Seal of Proficiency
 - Students are faced with real life scenarios in the classroom to promote fluent speaking.
 - Middle schoolers focus intently on reading and writing.
- TCHS teaches Hopi, Navajo 1, and Navajo 2
- TCHS has plans for a potential youth symposium.
- TCUSD plans to incorporate Diné language culture with science and other subjects.
- TCUSD is centered on the Diné ways of knowing - epistemology through the Diné language and culture curriculum that often includes:
 - Themes
 - Seasons
 - Speaking the language at home

- Speaking in real-life scenarios
- Supplemental Programs
 - School Supplies
 - Glasses
 - Clothes
 - Hygiene
 - Saturday/Summer/After School Tutoring and Schooling
 - Academic Tutors
 - Leadership Support
 - McKinney Vento - Homelessness Program: ~ 200 Participants

The **Piñon Unified School District (PUSD)** Presentation highlighted a high-quality Diné Language and Culture curriculum and school environment:

- Focus on teaching Native history along with other histories.
- 100% Free/Reduced Lunch
- English Language Learners (ELL)
 - 78/80 are Navajo
 - Purchasing updated equipment to teach English.
 - Many students are fluent in Navajo from their homelife and are learning English.
- Multi-lingual students in English & Navajo so PUSD is focusing on utilizing multiple languages in the classroom.
- Decrease in student enrollment.
- Many students transfer back-and-forth between schools.
 - It is difficult to track students who transfer between BIA/BIE school.
- The PHS Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program tracks student plans and progress at the end-of-year, which may include: 2-year college, 4-year university, trade school, work, military, etc.
- School/District Ratings:
 - Piñon Unified School District (PUSD): B
 - Piñon High School (PHS): A
 - Piñon Accelerated Middle School (PAMS): B
 - Piñon Elementary School (PES): C

- Average bus ride home is over 1 hour - Rural Area
- Many students live in unsafe home situations
- Support Programs
 - Homeless Students - McKinney Vento Program
 - 43 Students - 19 Families
 - 1 Student is Unaccompanied
 - School Supplies
 - Clothing
 - Hygiene Products
 - Graduation Supports - Caps & Gowns
 - Diné Bá'ádeit'í - Wood Project
 - Hearts of America - Solar Power
- Many students and families face a lack of running water.
 - PUSD provides camping shower bags for showers.
 - PUSD also provides wood for warmth.
- PUSD supports training staff to become trauma informed, especially in relation to situations regarding family circumstances.
- PUSD is well rounded and has hands-on activities that include:
 - Indigenous STEM
 - Art
 - Weaving
 - Beading
 - Sewing
- PUSD focuses intently on Diné language, culture, and government with it's own Chief Manuelito Pathways that include:
 - Dual Credit Courses with Diné College
 - 9th Grade: Navajo I
 - 10th Grade: Navajo II
 - 11th Grade: Navajo History & Government
 - 12th Grade: Foundations of Navajo Culture
- PUSD has a focused Diné Immersion School.

- PUSD utilizes the Diné Language Proficiency Assessment
- PUSD has had 2 Diné Biliteracy and Bilingual Seal Recipients this past year.
- PUSD has had 6 Chief Manuelito Scholars this past year.
- PUSD hosts workshops that include the following:
 - Traditional Story Nights
 - Planting
 - Natural Plants Workshops
 - Skirt/Sewing Workshops
 - Seed Workshops
 - Beading Workshops

The **Chinle Unified School District (CUSD)** Presentation highlighted technological advancements and its impacts on Diné Youth, along with a request for funding for the Chinle Community, especially focused on youth populations:

- CUSD has 7 Navajo Language & Culture Teachings.
- Utilizes summer school and extended learning opportunities.
- College & Career Academy for Parents & Students
 - Promotes college and career activities for students to promote higher education for families.
 - Educate students about future educational and career opportunities.
- McKinney Vento Program for Homeless Students
 - 20-30 Student Participants
 - Provides Shower Support, Laundry Support, and Documentation Support.
- Robust robotics, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Programs, Engineering, and Cyber Security.
- Predominantly Diné teachers promote and provide role models to students.
- Pre-K Students are taught coding.
- Professional Learning and Development opportunities for staff by including grading and lesson plans.
- Staff Surveys to take Staff input into consideration such as within reallocating resources.
- 80% of students and staff feel mentally and physically safe.

- CUSD focuses on student outcomes and growth.
- Students feel the need to learn and do better.
- CUSD is starting the testing of the Diné Language and Proficiency Assessment in the 2026-2027 school year.
- CUSD Superintendent, Quincy Natay, established a Superintendent Scholarship Fund of \$2500 sent to the top 15 students within the last year.
- CUSD has had 3 Diné Biliteracy and Bilingual Seal Recipients this past year.
- CUSD has had 5-6 Chief Manuelito Scholars this past year.
- CUSD believes that all students deserve a quality education.
- Teacher salary is ranked 2nd-3rd in the State of Arizona and ranges from \$86k - \$100k
- CUSD focuses on high technology and connectivity and utilizes electric buses which is especially helpful in muddy roads, solar panels, and has an energy management contract to conserve energy.
- Faces high rates of chronic absenteeism and truancy, often due to home situations, especially homelessness.
- Family expectations are increasing and have an increased role in expectations and accountability.
- Exceeds the state average in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math testing.
- 115 students are currently enrolled in the dual enrollment program.
- Navajo Nation Police Department & Juvenile Detention (Pillar 1)
 - The closing of the Juvenile Detention Center has led to an increase in student offenses because it was easier to address student offenses, especially in relation to substances when the juvenile detention center was occupied.
- Request for thought into investing \$20 Million for the renovations to reopen Chinle Community Center, which was previously utilized by the Navajo Nation during COVID-19.

This tribal consultation allowed the NNYAC to listen in on educational business on the Navajo Nation to gain a greater perspective on public school education apart from their own home communities. This presentation allowed for the thoughtful development of ideas helpful in planning future events related to Diné language and culture focused on Diné youth. Diné language and culture are a priority of many, especially the youth, and it is crucial to have role

models and teachers to promote this ideal. These consultations represent the continual relationship building between Navajo Nation Offices and Diné youth voices and concerns centered on community engagement and k'é.

Conclusion

The Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council has continued to demonstrate leadership, dedication, and service through regular and special meetings, the appointment of Interim Executive Director Desiree Fowler, the establishment of four strategic Pillars of Priority, and meaningful community engagement efforts such as the Sheep Butchering Workshop, Navajo Nation Department of Dine Education Tribal Consultation, Parades, the Navajo Nation Fair Kid's and Elderly Day were meaningful for the NNYAC. As the Council continues to grow, it remains committed to empowering Native youth, preserving Diné values, protecting the environment, promoting health and education, supporting vulnerable relatives, and creating opportunities for future generations to thrive. Through collaboration, advocacy, and service, the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council will continue working toward positive and lasting change for youth throughout the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council (NNYAC) has continued to demonstrate unwavering leadership, dedication, and service through regular and special meetings. Driven by four strategic Pillars of Priority and guided by the appointment of Interim Executive Director Desiree Fowler, the Council continues to expand its reach. This term has been a period of profound growth and reflection. Following the recent resignations of At-Large Member Louvannie Tsosie, Northern Navajo Agency Representative Tewakeedah Martin, Western Navajo Agency Representative Kaya Dickson, and Eastern Navajo Agency Representative Nikko Yazzie due to academic, career, and scheduling priorities, the NNYAC is actively opening recruitment to fill these four vacant seats. This transitional process has served as a valuable learning experience, reinforcing our foundational commitments to communication, proactive leadership, and mutual accountability.

Despite these changes, the Council's community engagement efforts have proven highly meaningful and impactful. Recent milestones—including the cultural revitalization of the Sheep Butchering Workshops (made possible through the generous support of Blackstreak Canyon Tours, Ken's Tours, and the Page USD American Indian Education Program), the Navajo Nation

Department of Diné Education Tribal Consultation, local community parades, and the Window Rock Kids Day health initiatives—underscore the Council's deep connection to the people. As the NNYAC enters its next chapter, it remains fiercely committed to empowering Native youth, protecting the environment, promoting health and education, and preserving essential Diné values rooted in *K'é* (kinship). Through proactive collaboration, systemic advocacy, and grassroots service, the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council will continue building a brighter, more sustainable, and unified future for the next generation across the Navajo Nation.