



The Navajo Nation  
Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:  
Jared Touchin, Communications Director  
(928) 274-4275

Crystalayne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer  
(928) 274-2758

[nnopvp.communications@gmail.com](mailto:nnopvp.communications@gmail.com)

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**Diné athlete Patterson Yazzie III to compete in  
the season premiere of “American Ninja Warrior”**



**PHOTO:** Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez with Patterson Yazzie, III in Window Rock, Ariz. on April 14, 2021.

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer congratulate 20-year-old Patterson Yazzie, III, a member of the Navajo Nation, for being selected to compete against some of the most elite athlete in the world in the season premiere of “American Ninja Warrior,” a nationally televised show that is scheduled to air on Monday, May 31 at 6:00 p.m. (MDT) on NBC.

Yazzie is originally from Rock Springs, N.M. He is Áshijhi born for Naaneesht’ezhi, his maternal grandfather’s clan is Táchii’nii and his paternal grandfather’s clan is T’ízi táni. As a child, Yazzie said he was inspired as he watched American Ninja Warrior with his father and knew that he wanted to one day compete on the show, but as a child he was bullied for being overweight.

“At times I wanted to call it quits and give up on my weight loss journey, but consistency and self-love go a long way. Learning to accept yourself for who you are and what you want to be is truly amazing. I used the words I was called as motivation and fuel for my fire to get to where I wanted to be. Three to five years later I’m a marathon runner, officially a ninja warrior and a weight lifter. It’s a dream come true. There is a lot of Native American talent out here and it goes unnoticed. I wanted to set the bar and be an example for others. No matter where you come from, who you are, what you look like. You can do almost anything. I did it to prove myself that I’m capable of anything and my family was so proud. I’m glad and happy with all the kind words and support. This definitely will always be a thing I’ll remember,” said Yazzie.

After he was selected to compete, Yazzie had the opportunity to invite special guests to cheer him on virtually as the show was filmed without a live audience due to COVID-19 restrictions. He contacted the Office of the President and Vice President and extended an invitation to President Nez to join him as his special guest.

“I am honored to be Patterson’s guest and his cheerleader as he competes on American Ninja Warrior. He is truly an inspiration because he grew up on the Navajo Nation just like many of our young people do and he pushed himself, followed his dream, and never gave up. I had the opportunity to meet with Patterson and his parents and he shared his story, his upbringing, and the challenges he faced while training to compete. As a competitive runner myself, I understand the will and the sacrifices it takes to stop yourself from quitting and to persevere. He has a big heart and I hope that our people watch the show, cheer him on, and be inspired by his journey. Our people can accomplish anything that they put their mind to,” said President Nez.

Yazzie’s parents, Joanne and Patterson Yazzie, Jr., will also be supporting their son during the season premiere of American Ninja Warrior on Monday.

“Life isn’t easy and trust me it’s going to beat you down. Regardless, get up and be the best you can be. Your bodies are capable of more than you know. You can do almost anything you want to, just believe in yourself regardless of what others think. It’s going to be tough, I guarantee it, but be who you want to be. Set your goals high and follow your dreams. Fight for it and it will fight for you. Stay safe, stay healthy and hydrated but most importantly stay consistent,” added Yazzie.

During Monday’s airing of American Ninja Warrior, Yazzie will compete against other top athletes as he makes his way through obstacle courses for his chance to win the top prize of being the American Ninja Warrior champion and \$1 million. President Nez will be in the virtual audience offering his support for Yazzie.

“We will be praying for Patterson as he competes. We encourage all of our Navajo people to tune-in this evening and cheer on our Diné ninja warrior. He’s come a long way to reach this point. His journey is inspiring and he is a role model for our young people. We wish him continued success, good health, and many blessings in the future,” said Vice President Lizer.

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