



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 24, 2022

Navajo Nation recognizes high school graduates for achieving Navajo language proficiency



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Navajo Nation Superintendent of Schools Dr. Harold Begay, Navajo Nation Board of Education Member Andrea Thomas, and Miss Navajo Nation Niagara Rockbridge with four of the six graduates who achieved Navajo language proficiency in Window Rock, Ariz. on June 24, 2022.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Friday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Miss Navajo Nation Niagara Rockbridge joined the Department of Diné Education and Navajo Nation Board of Education member Andrea Thomas, in recognizing and congratulating recent high school graduates for successfully completing the Navajo Nation Seal of Bilingual Proficiency Assessment, demonstrating their proficiency of the Navajo language. The ceremony was hosted by the Department of Diné Education at the Veterans Memorial Park in Window Rock, Ariz.

Of over 30 students who took the bilingual language assessment in January, six demonstrated Navajo language proficiency. The six students are Tomilethia Chee, Rydale Largo, Justin Castillo, Alexandria Begay, Adiiidiin Jones, and Natiana King. The Office of Standards, Curriculum and Assessment Development administers the assessment each year to graduating high school seniors who voluntarily register to participate.

Proud parents looked on as President Nez congratulated the students for taking the initiative to learn their language and spoke about the importance of carrying on the teachings of their elders as they move forward with their education.

“As Navajo people, we are born with our Diné language within us and it is up to us to bring it out by practicing and learning from our parents and grandparents. We have many young Navajo people who don’t speak or understand our language, but we shouldn’t ridicule them or look down on them. We should encourage them to keep learning and to pray and ask our Creator to help them to speak and understand our sacred language,” said President Nez. “Looking back to the time when our people were taken on the Long Walk, it was our language and our prayers that gave our people the strength to persevere and return to our homelands. The power of our language helped to win World War II and it can help you to achieve what you want in life.”

During the event, each student introduced themselves and briefly spoke about the importance of learning and carrying on the Navajo language. Each of the students was also presented with a plaque and an honorary blanket from the Department of Diné Education for their achievements.

During the oral assessment, students must use the Navajo language to appropriately introduce themselves by stating their name and clans, introduce their parents and grandparents, and speak about their personal interests, hobbies, and goals. They must also complete an oral presentation on a given topic, respond to questions from the Office of Standards, Curriculum and Assessment Development, and summarize and analyze a video clip on a cultural topic.

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