



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation Council honors the life of esteemed Navajo weaver Helen Charley



Helen Charley. Photo courtesy of Carol Tsosie.

Window Rock, Ariz. - On behalf of the 25th Navajo Nation Council, Speaker Crystalyne Curley offers her sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of Helen Charley, an esteemed Navajo woman weaver from the community of Chilchinbeto, Arizona.

Helen Charley passed away on Friday, June 30, at the age of 93-years-old. She was Tábaqahá, born for Tó'aheedlíinii, her maternal grandfather was Deeshchii'nii, and her paternal grandfather was Honágháahnii.

She had one son, the late David J. Charley. She also adopted and raised four of her sister's children and three of her aunt's children. From the children she raised, she has 31 grandchildren.

"Her contributions to the Navajo Nation as a weaver and a resilient member of our community will always be remembered and cherished. We honor her role as one of the eleven women from the Chilchinbeto community who wove the world-famous Big Sister Rug, Ádí, and also one of ten women who wove the Little Sister Rug. These rugs have gained a place in Navajo history and are recognized throughout the world," Speaker Curley said.

Ingrained in the grand visual of these tremendous rugs is hard work, meticulous effort, complex mathematics and geometry, and the sheering, carding, and dyeing of wools.

Charley's niece, Jane Begay said her aunt was assertive and stern in her teachings about attaining one's livelihood.

"She would tell you exactly what she expected from you. She would say, 'It's up to you. This is how it is. Don't just stay home and do nothing,'" Begay said. "She helped the community of Chilchinbeto with her earnest opinion. She showed excellent leadership, had good judgment, and she was a blessing to many."

The 25th Navajo Nation Council and the Office of the Speaker offer their prayers and condolences to the family, friends, and community of Helen Charley. In honor of Helen Charley and all her accomplishments, the Office of the Speaker will present Charley's family with a Navajo Nation flag in remembrance of her life and legacy.

"Nihimasání, our grandmother, Helen Charley contributed to teaching and preserving our Navajo culture, tradition, and language," Speaker Curley added. "May her legacy bring you comfort during this difficult time."

Charley's graveside service will take place on July 7, at 10:00 a.m. MDT, at the Chilchinbeto Community Cemetery. The Big Sister Rug will be on display at the Chilchinbeto Community School Gymnasium where her reception will take place.

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