Introduction

The Navajo Nation extends into the states of Utah, Arizona and New Mexico, covering over 27,000 square miles of unparalleled beauty. Diné Bikéyah, or Navajoland, is larger than 10 of the 50 states in America.

Visitors from around the world are intrigued and mystified when they hear the Navajo language – so, too, were the enemy during World War II. Unknown to many, the Navajo language was used to create a secret code to battle the Japanese. Navajo men were selected to create codes and serve on the front line to overcome and deceive those on the other side of the battlefield. Today, these men are recognized as the famous Navajo Code Talkers, who exemplify the unequaled bravery and patriotism of the Navajo people.

Navajo Nation Government

Today, the Navajo Nation is striving to sustain a viable economy for an ever increasing population that now surpasses 250,000. In years past, Navajoland often appeared to be little more than a desolate section of the Southwest, but it was only a matter of time before the Navajo Nation became known as a wealthy nation in a world of its own. The discovery of oil on Navajoland in the early 1920's promoted the need for a more systematic form of government.

In 1923, a tribal government was established to help meet the increasing desires of American oil companies to lease Navajoland for exploration. Navajo government has evolved into the largest and most sophisticated form of American Indian government. The Navajo Nation Council Chambers hosts 88 council delegates representing 110 Navajo Nation chapters. See the Navajo Nation government in action as the 88 Council delegates (representing 110 Navajo Nation chapters, or communities) discuss critical issues and enact legislation to determine the future of the Navajo people. Reorganized in 1991 to form a three-branch system (executive, legislative and judicial), the Navajos conduct what is considered to be the most sophisticated form of Indian government. While the Council is in session, you'll likely hear delegates carry on the tradition of speaking in Navajo, providing a perfect example of how the Navajo Nation retains its valuable cultural heritage while forging ahead with modern progress. When the Council is not in session, legislative work is done by 12 "standing committees" of the Council. Inside the circular Council Chambers, the walls are adorned with colorful murals that depict the history of the Navajo people and the Navajo way of life. For more info about tours, call 928-871-6417 or write to P.O. Box 1400, Window Rock, AZ 86515.

Navajo Code Talkers

Navajo Code Talkers At Iwo Jima, Major Howard Connor, 5th Marine Division signal officer, declared, "Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima." Connor had six Navajo code talkers working around the clock during the first two days of the battle. Those six sent and received over 800 messages, all without error.

In May 1942, the first 29 Navajo recruits attended boot camp. Then, at Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California, this first group created the Navajo code. They developed a dictionary and numerous words for military terms. The dictionary and all code words had to be memorized during training. Navajos could encode, transmit, and decode a three-line English message in 20 seconds. Machines of the time required 30 minutes to perform the same job. Approximately 400 Navajos were trained as code talkers.

Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Peleliu, Iwo Jima: the Navajo code talkers took part in every assault the U.S. Marines conducted in the Pacific from 1942 to 1945. They served in all six Marine divisions, Marine Raider battalions and Marine parachute units, transmitting messages by telephone and radio in their native language -- a code that the Japanese never broke. Long unrecognized because of the continued value of their language as a security classified code, the Navajo code talkers of World War II were honored for their contributions to defense on Sept. 17, 1992, at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Excerpts taken from a Fact Sheet prepared by the Navy & Marine Corps WWII Commemorative Committee.

Flag

The Navajo Nation Flag, designed by Jay R. Degroat, a Navajo from Mariano Lake, New Mexico, was selected from 140 entries, and was officially adopted by the Navajo Nation Council on May 21, 1968 by Resolution CMY-55-68.

On a tan background, the outline of the present Nation is shown in copper color with the original 1868 Treaty Reservation in Dark Brown. At the cardinal points in the tan field are the four sacred mountains. A rainbow symbolizing Navajo sovereignty arches over the Nation and the sacred mountains. In the center of the Nation, a circular symbol depicts the sun above two green stalks of corn, which surrounds three animals representing the Navajo livestock economy, and a traditional hogan and modern home. Between the hogan and the house is an oil derrick symbolizing the resource potential of the Tribe, and above this are representations of the wild fauna of the Nation. At the top near the sun, the modern sawmill symbolizes the progress and industry characteristic of the Navajo Nation's economic development.

http://www.navajo-nsn.gov/history.htm
The small park near the Navajo Nation Administration Center features the graceful redstone arch for which the capital is named. The Navajo Nation headquarters and other government offices were built in close proximity to this mystical rock formation.

More recently, the Navajos have built a Veteran’s Memorial at the base of Window Rock to honor the many Navajos who served in the U.S. military. Many Navajo soldiers are recognized in the annals of history for their role as Code Talkers, whereby they used the native language to create a code that was never broken by the enemy. Historians credit the Navajo Code Talkers for helping to win World War II. The park has many symbolic structures: a circular path outlining the four cardinal directions, 16 angled steel pillars with the names of war veterans, and a healing sanctuary that is used for reflection and solitude that features a fountain made of sandstone. Open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more info call 928-871-6647 or write to Navajo Nation Parks & Recreation Dept., P.O. Box 9000, Window Rock, AZ 86515.

The modern Navajo Museum is dedicated to preserving and interpreting the rich and unique culture of the Navajo Nation. Native displays, a book and gift shop, snack bar, auditorium, outdoor amphitheater, information kiosk, library and on-site authentic Navajo hogan complete the center. The Museum is open from 8am to 8pm Tuesday through Friday, and 8am to 5pm on Monday and Saturday. For more info call 928-871-7941, or write the museum at: P.O. Box 1840, Window Rock, AZ 86515.

Information and Photos for this page provided courtesy of Navajo Nation Tourism Office’s "Discover Navajo: The Official Navajo Nation Visitor Guide." http://www.discovernavajo.com

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