



Diné Bizaad Bee
Na'nitin Yíhooł'aah
Mentor + Apprentice Program

Senate Indian Affairs Committee

Presentation by: Dr. Geneva Becenti, NISN Director of the Dine' Language Initiatives and Policy Program

October 21, 2025



Committed to uplifting the genius that has always existed in our communities.

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So much is possible when education reflects the needs of our communities.



NISN is building an environment for systemic transformation in education systems for Indigenous youth through supporting Indigenous leadership, creating community-based schools, and advocating for policies and resources to help long-term change.

[NISN Intro Video](#)





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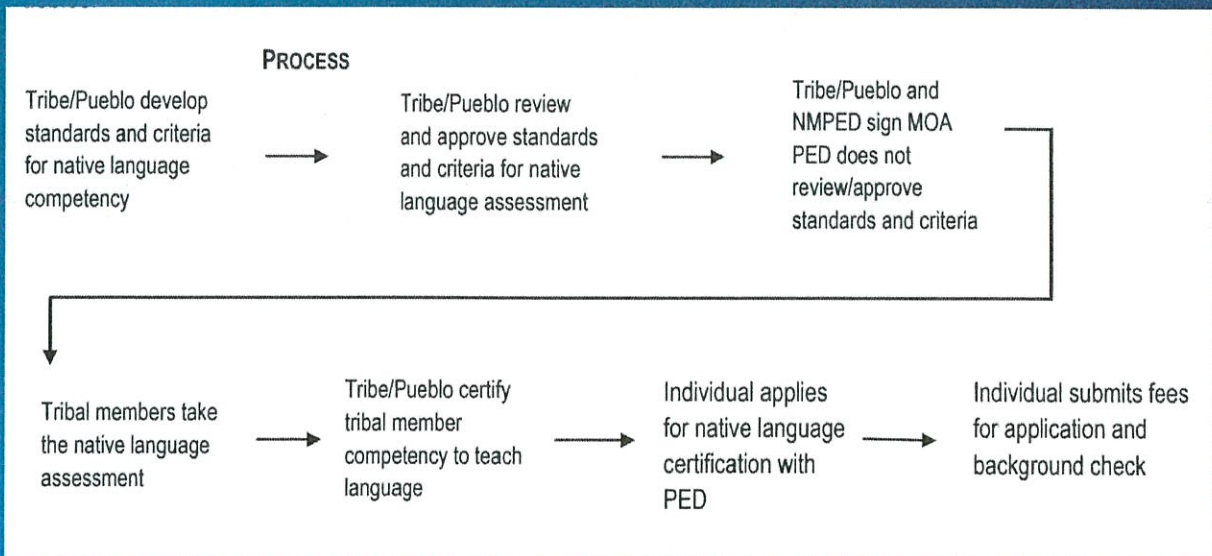
Mentor/Apprentice Testimony

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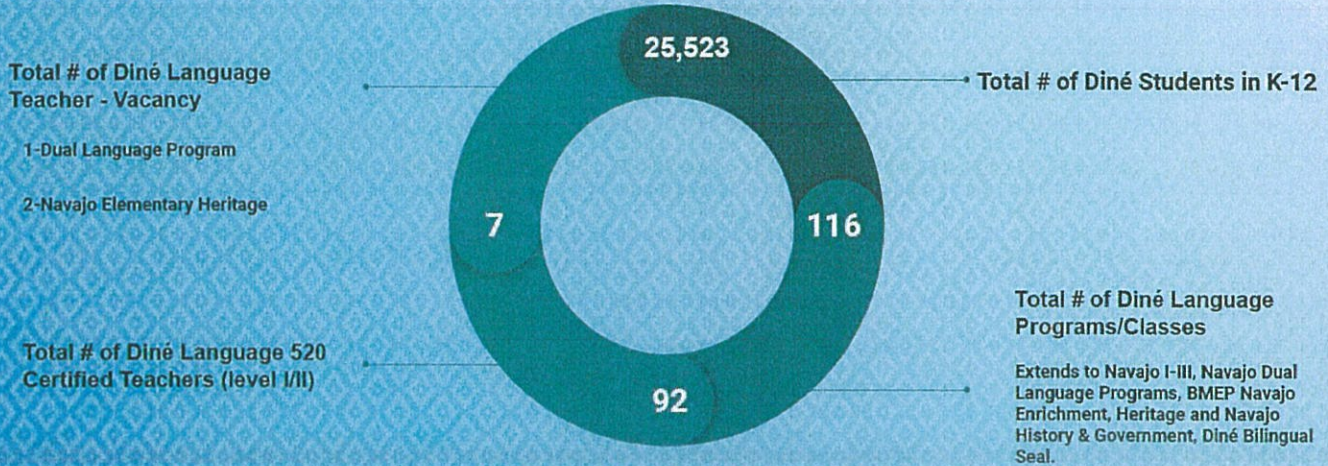
Issues

Next Steps

What is 520 Native American Language and Culture Certification?



New Mexico Schools with Diné Bizaad Students/Teachers/Classes + Programs (2024)



Profile of Each School District in New Mexico (2024)

| Location | School District | # of Diné Students | # of Diné Language Programs/Classes | # of Diné Language Teachers (520 certified) | # of Diné Language Teacher (Vacancy) |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Urban | Albuquerque School District | 4,500 | 14 | 9 | 1 |
| Border Town | Aztec Municipal School District | 493 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| Border Town | Bloomfield School District | 1,010 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| Border Town/Rural | Central Consolidated School District (PreK-12) 5 regions: Ojo, Kirtland, Shiprock, Newcomb, Naschitti 8 Elementary 3 Middle Schools 4 High Schools | 4,246 | 34 BMEP Navajo Heritage, Enrichment, and Navajo Dual Language programs K-12 | 16 | 3 1 English K/1st Navajo Dual Language program 2 Navajo Elementary Heritage |

Profile of Each School District in New Mexico (2024)

| Location | School District | # of Diné Students | # of Diné Language Programs/Classes | # of Diné Language Teachers (520 certified) | # of Diné Language Teacher (Vacancy) |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Rural | Cuba Independent School District Cuba Elementary, Middle and High School | 549 | 3 | 8 | 0 |
| Border Town | Farmington School District 20 Schools <u>2 PreKs:</u> PreK-West, Pre K-East, <u>10 Elementary Schools:</u> Apache, Animas, Bluffview, Country Club, Esperanza, LaDera, McCormick, Mckinley, Mesa Verde, Northeast, <u>4 Middle Schools:</u> Heights, Hermosa, Mesa View, Tibbetts <u>4 High Schools:</u> Farmington, Piedra Vista, Rocinante, San Juan College | 3,693 | 4 1. BMEP Navajo Heritage language, Enrichment 2. Diné Dual language program-1 school 3. Navajo History & Government 4. Diné Bilingual Seal | 12 | 0 |

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| Location | School District | # of Diné Students | # of Diné Language Programs/Classes | # of Diné Language Teachers (520 certified) | # of Diné Language Teacher (Vacancy) |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Rural | Dream Diné (K-5)- Shiprock (Supported by NISN Diné Bizaad Na'nitin Yihoof'aah) | 21 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Border Town | Six Directions Indigenous School - Gallup (Supported by NISN Diné Bizaad Na'nitin Yihoof'aah) | 33 | 4 Navajo I Navajo II Navajo III Navajo Government | 1 2 recently, passed NN-DLC | 0 |
| Urban | NACA - Albuquerque (Supported by NISN Diné Bizaad Na'nitin Yihoof'aah) | 206 | 9 | 2 | 0 |
| Border Town/Rural | Gallup McKinley School District <u>Elementary</u> Catherine A. Miller, Chee Dodge, Crownpoint, David Skeets, Del Norte, Indian Hills, Jefferson, Lincoln, Navajo, Ramah, Red Rock, Stagecoach, Thoreau, Turpen, Tohatchi, and Twin Lakes <u>Middle Schools</u> Chief Manuelito, Crownpoint, Gallup, John F. Kennedy, Navajo, Thoreau, and Tohatchi. <u>High School</u> Crownpoint, Gallup Central, Gallup, Miyamura, Navajo, Ramah, Thoreau and Tse Yi Gai. | 10,772 | 35 1. BMEP Navajo Heritage language, Enrichment 2. Navajo History & Government 3. Diné Bilingual Seal | 36 | 0 |

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K'é: PARTNERS (Key Stakeholders)



- **5 MOAs with Network Schools**
- Native American Community Academy (NACA) - 1 Apprentice
- Six Directions Indigenous School (SDIS) - 1 Apprentice
- Dream Diné (DD) 1 Apprentice
- Dził Dítłoo'í School of Empowerment, Action, & Perseverance (DEAP) 2 Apprentices
- Saad K'idilyé (SK) 2 Apprentices
- **1 MOA with Out of Network School**
- Shiprock Associated Schools Inc. (SASI) 1 Apprentice
- **External Partners to co-host Information Session:**
 - Farmington Municipal Schools (co-share)
 - SIPI, IAIA, Diné College, NTU and UNM-Navajo Language Program (presentations)
 - Diné Language Teachers' Association (co-share)
 - Navajo Nation - DODE, OSCAD and HESC (encourage apprentices/mentors and guidances)

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NISN PROGRAM TEAM MEMBERS



Anpao Duta Flying Earth, *Lakota, Dakota, Ojibwe, Akimel O'odham*, **Dr. Geneva Becenti**, *Diné*

Ojibwe, Akimel O'odham

- Executive Director

- Director, Adjunct, and Independent Consultant

Bino Gracia, *Lakota, Apache and Mexican*

- Director of Indigenous Epistemology

Chael Moore, *Diné*

- Program Coordinator

Nita Looks Twice, Finance Director

Curriculum Development Team: Dr. Audra Platero, Primary and Dr. Berlinda Begay, Secondary

Juanita Abeyta, *Santo Domingo Pueblo*

- Grants and Procurement

Diné Community Recruitment and Retention

Specialist: Nathaniel Brown

Cultural Educator: VACANT

Nizhoni Becenti, *Diné*

- Accountant

Ben Calabaza, *Santo Domingo Pueblo*

- Director of Communications



**Diné Bizaad Bee
Na'nitin Yíhooł'aah**
Mentor + Apprentice Program

Anpa'o Locke

- Communications Coordinator

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Diné Bizaad Bee Na'nitin Yíhooł'aah

Mentor + Apprentice Program

NISN Diné Language Mentor + Apprentice Program Website Information

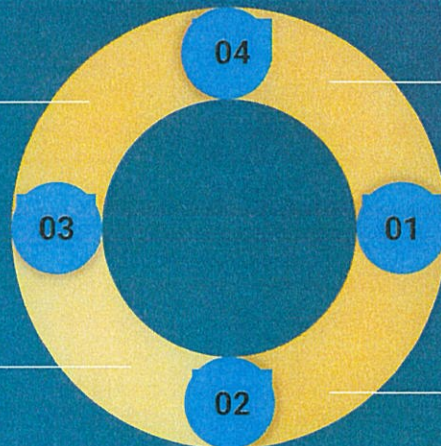
Testimony from Our Site Partner

Four-Core Principles



3. **liná (Life. Living. Applying):** Include Students, Families, and Communities in problem-solving and celebrating wins.

2. **Nahat'á (Planning):** Acknowledge Organizational Challenges/Create Customized Approaches.



4. **Siih Hasin (Hope. Reflection):** Provide Ongoing Professional and Leadership Development and Technical Assistance to Sites, Mentors, Apprentices, and Partners.

1. **Nítsáhákees (Thinking):** Share, Respect, and Practice Diné Lifeways through K'é.



**Diné Bizaad Bee
Na'nitin Yíhooł'aah**
Mentor + Apprentice Program

► **WE'RE HIRING** ◀

Join our team of Diné Bizaad professionals dedicated to carrying our language forward.

CONTRACT POSITIONS

Diné Language Apprentice

GALLUP AREA (SIX DIRECTIONS INDIGENOUS SCHOOL)

Diné Language Mentor

SHIPROCK AREA (DREAM DINÉ CHARTER SCHOOL)

Program Facilitator

OPEN UNTIL FILLED

PART-TIME POSITION

TERM LIMITED

Diné Language Cultural Educator

OPEN UNTIL FILLED

For more information:

(505) 803-7360

chael@nacainspiredschoolsnetwork.org

Apply online at:
nacainspiredschoolsnetwork.org



Recruitment Highlights

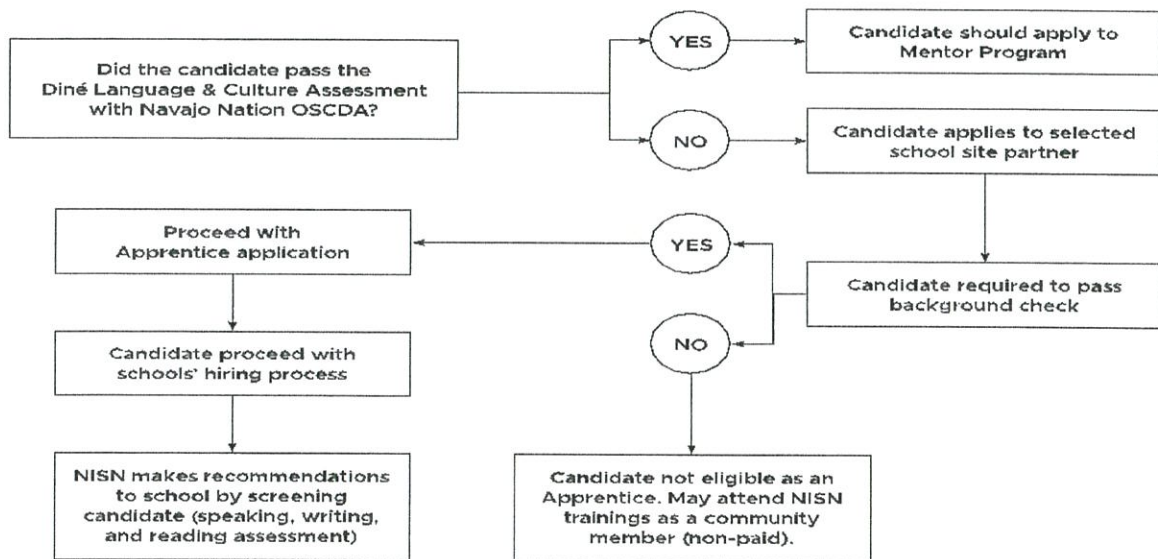


- ✓ Community-Based outreach
- ✓ Emphasis on professional growth
- ✓ Collaborative review process
- ✓ Social Media/Facebook
- ✓ Monthly Newsletter (200+ subscribers)
- ✓ New hire: Diné Community Recruitment & Retention Specialist



**Diné Bizaad Bee
Na'nitin Yíhooł'aah**
Mentor + Apprentice Program

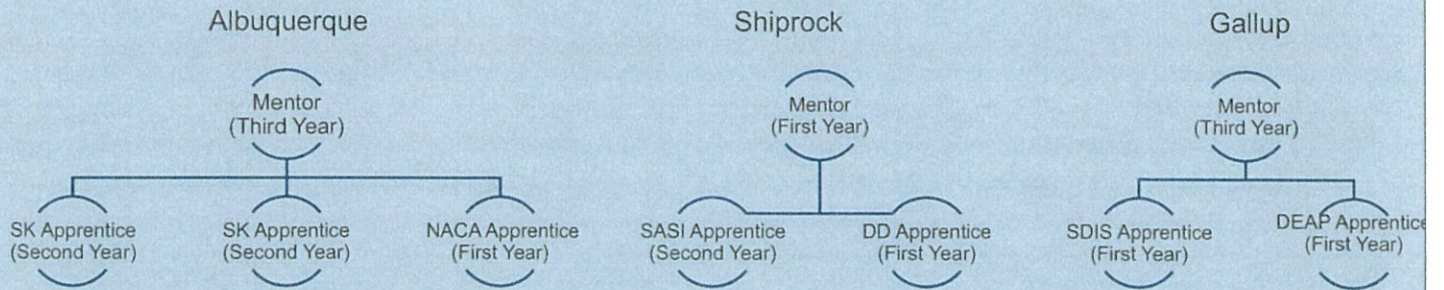
**Eligible Criteria for
Apprentice, Non-Certified, and Substitute**





Diné Bizaad Bee
Na'nitin Yihool'aaah
Mentor + Apprentice Program

Program Facilitator



September 2025 Diné Language Program Convening (from left to right): LaRosa Dawes (Program Facilitator, Dawnlei Ben (Apprentice), Justine Jones (Mentor), Genevieve Sherman-George (Apprentice), Melvin Chico (Mentor), Shawna Nez (Mentor), Anesha Yazzie (Apprentice), Malachi Daw (Apprentice), Dewayne Upshaw (Apprentice)



Seeking Prospective Diné Language Teachers



Diné Bizaad Bee Na'nitin Yihoo'aaah
Mentor + Apprentice Program

PREP TRAINING FOR DINÉ LANGUAGE & CULTURE ASSESSMENT

June 8 • 8 am – 5 pm
In-Person (Gallup, NM)
Cultural Foundation
with Łł'ł' Biił Na'anish

June 11 • 8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Hybrid (Zoom/SDIS, Gallup, NM)
KWHL - Diné Fundamental Law,
Diné History, Treaty of 1868

June 10 • 8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Hybrid (Zoom/SDIS, Gallup, NM)
Lesson Planning for Pre K-12 &
Hané/Oral Presentation



SCAN TO REGISTER & FOR MORE INFO!

For questions, contact:
Chael Moore, Program Coordinator
(505) 803-7360
chael@nacalinspiredschoolsnetwork.org



Funding provided by NMFED-SED RFA #23-92400-5000B and NISN.

Professional Development Events



Diné Bizaad Bee Na'nitin Yihoo'aaah
Mentor + Apprentice Program



Join Us!
Online & Onsite
Registration

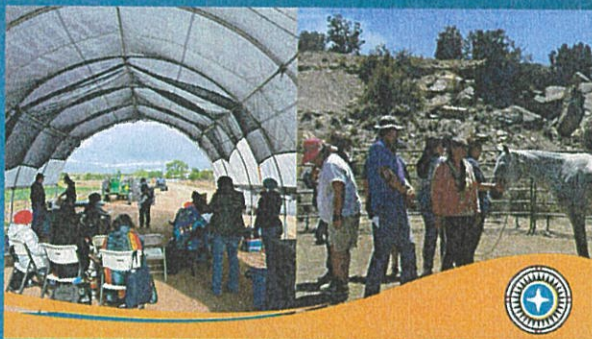
Diné Shoe Game

NOV 14 5PM

Késhjée'
with Bennie Begay

APM City Center
Two Months Plaza, Suite 1010, 1115 Hampton Boulevard
6400 Uptown Blvd SE, Albuquerque, NM

For more info, contact: Chael Moore
chael@nacalinspiredschoolsnetwork.org
Registration link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ND23417>



LESSON DEMONSTRATION WITH Łł'ł' BIŁ NA'ANISH PRESENTATION

Join us for this educational and cultural opportunity hosted by the NISN Diné Bizaad Bee Na'nitin Yihoo'aaah Mentor + Apprentice Program!

- ✓ When: Saturday, May 24th, 2025
- ✓ Where: Miyamura High School, 680 Boardman Ave. Gallup, NM 87301 (Next to softball field/behind the District Office Building).
- ✓ Time: 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM
- ✓ Scan QR code or use registration link to sign up today!
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZXXHCTM>

SCAN ME TO REGISTER!



Event sponsored by NISN.

Questions?
• (505) 803-7360
www.nacalinspiredschoolsnetwork.org/dine-language



Diné Bizaad Bee Na'nitin Yihoo'aaah
Mentor + Apprentice Program

Professional Development Events



Diné Bizaad Bee Na'nitin Yihoo'aaah
Mentor + Apprentice Program



Office of Community
Commitment &
Assessment Development

Information Session for Prospective Diné Language Teachers

September 27, 2025
8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Tibbetts Middle School
3500 Twin Peaks Blvd, Farmington, NM



Still District School of
Empowerment, Action,
& Performance

Integrating Diné History and Government Stories into a Lesson with Dr. Donald Denetdeal (Diné Practitioner/Consultant)



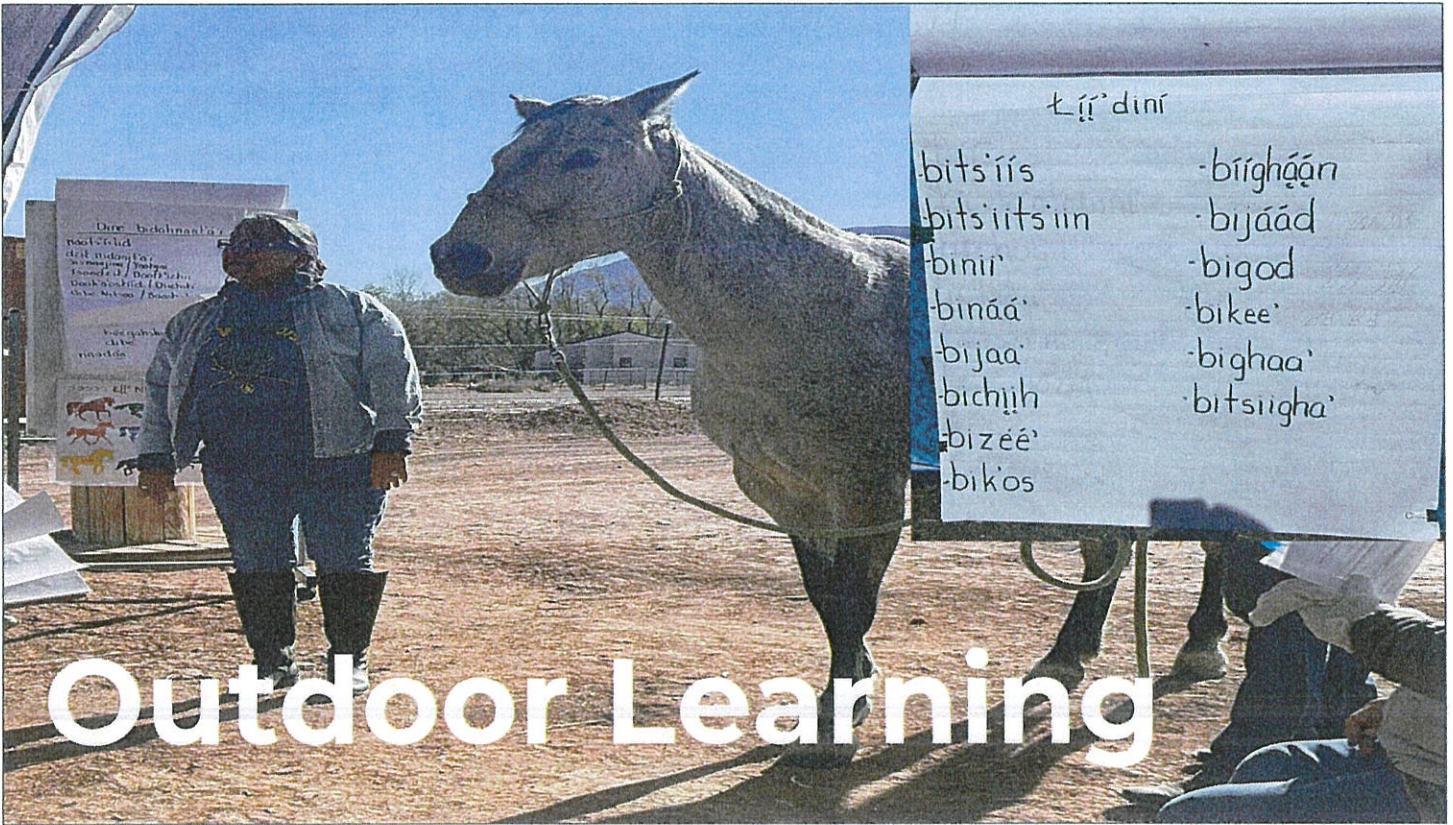
Dr. Donald Denetdeal is Neaneesh'eehí Tachéelí, born for Kinyaa' aani, maternal grandfather is To'ich'í' Níí, paternal grandfather is Tsingí kini. His prior work experience includes 11 years with the Navajo Area School Board Association (NASBA) trained local BIA school board members on education policy, education philosophy, Personnel & Budget Policies in the Navajo Language. Taught Diné Studies Program for Diné College and the Navajo Technical University. In 2021, Diné College conferred him an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters. He is also a Hoohóóí practitioner (Blessing Way Singer).

Lesson Demonstration Navajo Cultural Significance of Łł'ł' - Stories, Language, and Song with Dr. Audra J. Platero



Dr. Audra J. Platero is Bitter Water, born for the Mexican Clan, adopted by the Tangle People Clan. Her maternal grandfather's clan is Big Water, and her paternal grandfather's clan is the One Who Walks Around. She is originally from Mary Farms, AZ. Dr. Platero received her Doctor of Education in Educational Administration & Supervision from ASU. For the past 22 years, Dr. Platero has taught and worked only in the immersion setting with Window Rock Unified School District. She wholeheartedly supports and advocates for our Diné language and culture, our way of life, so that our children can have a sense of identity and self.

Register at nacalinspiredschoolsnetwork.org or scan the QR code



Outdoor Learning

| Date/Time | NISN Diné Bizaad Na'nitin Yíhoo'aaah Mentor + Apprentices Program Workshop/Training/Testing | Non-Certified 520/Level I-II 520 Certification/Community Members/Fee |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10/18/2025 8am - 4pm | Diné Language Teachers' Association Conference in Window Rock, AZ Register information on DLTA website (in-person) | Non-Certified 520/Level I-II 520 Certification/Community Members/Free |
| 10/26/2025 8am - 4pm | Diné Bizaad Lesson Plan with OSCAD Standards Professional Development Workshop at Apache Elementary School in Farmington, NM Register information on NISN website (in-person) | Registration is limited. Non-Certified 520 (6) /Level I-II 520 Certification/Community (18) Members/Free |
| 11/15/2025 | Diné Fundamental Law Professional Development Workshop at Apache Elementary School in Farmington, NM Register information on NISN website (in-person) | Registration is limited. Non-Certified 520 (6) /Level I-II 520 Certification/Community (18) Members/Free |
| 12/6/2025 | One-day Prep-Training at NISN Community Hall in Albuquerque. Register information on NISN website (in-person) | Registration is limited. Non-Certified 520 (10)/Free |
| 12/12/25 | Navajo Nation OSAD Language and Culture Assessment at NISN Community Hall in Albuquerque. | Registration is limited. Non-Certified 520 (8) \$35.00 test fee to NN-OSCAD |

MENTOR/APPRENTICE TESTIMONY



As of 10.13.25, 20 Diné Bizaad Na'nitin apprentices passed the NN-OSCAD test.

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DRAFT: Program Budget

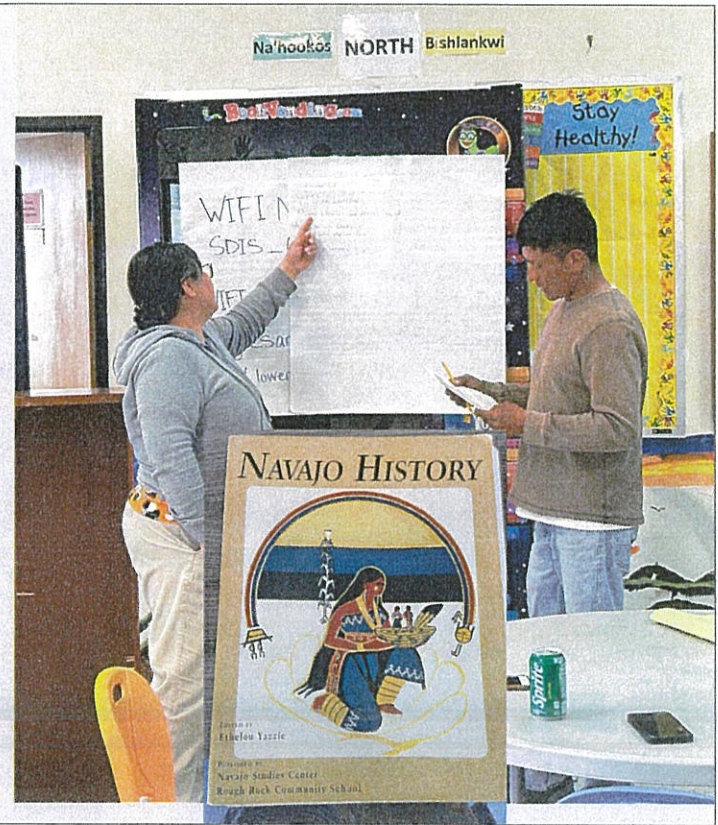


| Budget Category | Amount | Narrative |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NISN Personnel | \$ 183,261.38 | Staff for program operations, administrative, communication, leadership and finance. |
| Fringe Benefits (21%) | \$ 38,484.89 | Fringe expenses for personnel. |
| Program Personnel | \$130,848.06 | Curriculum development specialist, strategic planner, cultural educator, and recruitment. |
| Travel & Training | \$ 47,676.00 | Site PD sessions, testing, conference and meetings. |
| Supplies | \$ 22,374.69 | Training materials, report, IT, and audit. |
| Contractual | \$ 63,774.48 | Fellows; mentor and program facilitator. |
| In-direct 5% | \$ 25,000.00 | |
| TOTAL: | \$ 511,419.50 | |

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Issues

1. Organization Structure
2. 520 Certification framework and process.
3. Pathways for advancement
4. Integration into the bilingual and multicultural education system.



NEXT STEPS

Short-Term

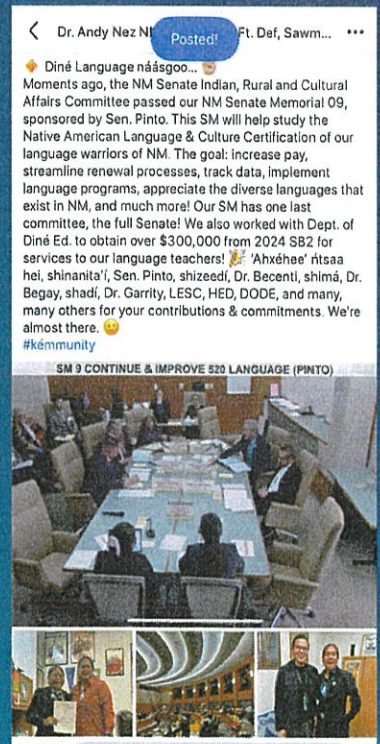
- Plan and develop holistic-approach related to language and culture with partners.

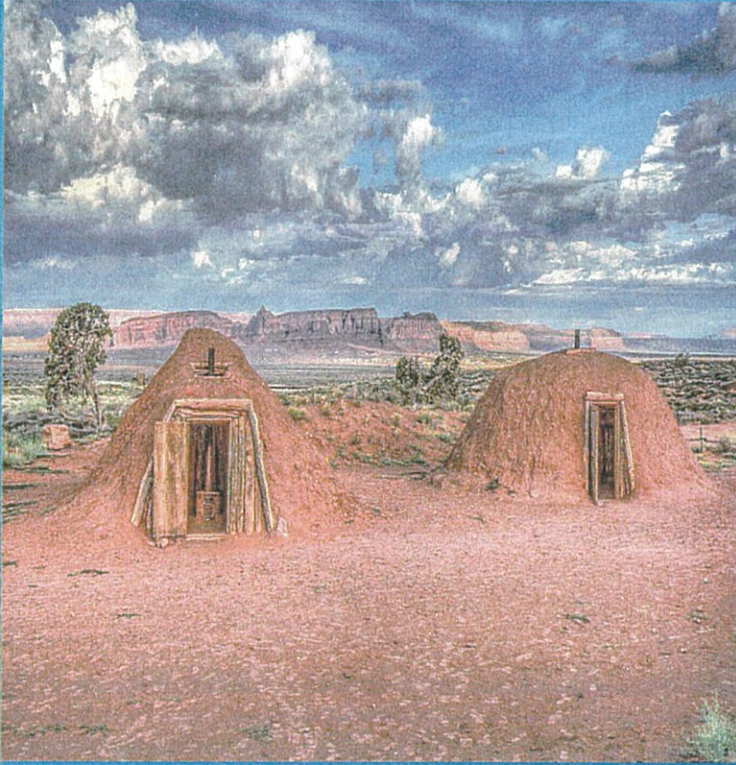
Continuous

- K'é = Develop relationship + To establish in-person relationships with site partners.
- Develop a work session on the Diné language and culture assessment with the Navajo Nation - DODE Office of Standards Curriculum & Assessment Development, DODE Board, and Tribal Council/OPVP.
- State Partnership with NMPED-IED, LESC, and Senate Committee to develop policy awareness through SM9 (2025).

Long-Term

- Discuss a work plan to develop three HUB sites in Northern and Eastern Agency of the Navajo Nation including Metro (ABQ).





Contact



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Nathaniel Brown, Diné
Diné Community Recruitment and Retention Specialist
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(928) 856-9089

Facebook: facebook.com/nisn.dlmap/

Sign up for our program newsletter!

Visit nacainspireschoolsnetwork.org/dine-language

