

**RESOLUTION OF THE
NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**Supporting the Proposal to have the Diné Bizaad is the Official Language
of the Navajo Nation**

WHEREAS:

1. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §920 and §921, the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission (“Commission”) is established within the Legislative Branch as an entity of the Navajo Nation government to operate as a clearinghouse to address discriminatory actions against citizens of the Navajo Nation; and to interface with the local, state, federal governments and with national and international human rights organizations in accordance with the Commission’s plan of operation and applicable laws and regulations of the Navajo Nation; and
2. It is the indigenous human right of the Diné, that will be born today and the one that will pass on tonight, to speak Diné bizaad. It is through means such as declaring Diné bizaad as the official language of the Navajo Nation to preserve, revitalize and promote Diné bizaad. Diné bee’í’ooljįł doo bibeehaz’áanii taught in Diné bizaad is the only way to fully understand, appreciate, respect and protect the Diné lifeway. When Diné bee’í’ooljįł is explained in the English language, the context and content of the Diné lifeway is not captured and conveyed appropriately and justly; and
3. Diné have been coerced to assimilate into the western society. Based on history, the U.S. education system forced Diné students to speak only the English language and if they spoke Diné bizaad in school they were harshly punished. In 2000, the citizens of Arizona passed proposition 203 that requires all students in public schools learn to speak English; 23 years later, Diné bizaad is still not considered a fundamental right of all Diné students in Arizona. In Utah, while the English language is declared as the official language, languages other than English can be used to transact government business and considered official actions (Senate Bill 214 of the 2021 General Session); and
4. By Resolution NNHRCOCT-12-22, the Commission recommended the recognition and acknowledgement that the Diné fundamental laws serve as the foundation and guiding principles when amending codified written laws of the Navajo Nation; and
5. Diné bizaad is sacred. The Navajo Supreme Court examined the use of Diné bizaad in *Navajo Nation vs. Crockett*. The Navajo Supreme Court stated that one cannot freely talk about certain narratives when these narratives can only be recited during a specific time of the year. Every person that speaks the language takes responsibility for the Diné bizaad he/she utters. Former Associate Justice of the Navajo Supreme Court, Hon. Raymond Austin, stated in his dissertation that “In the Navajo world, knowledge is power and that means knowledge expressed through thought through language through words can be used, among other goals, to coerce, control, destroy, manipulate, or persuade. The avenue through which the ends are achieved follows this pattern: knowledge precedes thought; thought precedes language; and language precedes words; thus, words as the ultimate

manifestation of knowledge is sacred and powerful.”; and

6. Diné bizaad was placed in the midst of the four sacred mountains by the Deities. Diné bizaad identifies the Diné as distinctive people, with distinctive culture, traditions and values. Diné bizaad is one of over four thousand indigenous languages in the world. It is one of the indigenous languages that is in urgent need to be preserved, revitalized and promoted. It is indeed up to the Navajo people to ensure that future Diné generations speak Diné bizaad; and
7. The Commission believes that the Diné have embraced the western culture through education, speaking the English language, and wage-earning conditions. These factors undoubtedly placed the Diné to disengage in their culture and language. It is indicative of the Diné to reverse the trend that leads the Diné becoming monolingual English speakers; and
8. By Resolution A/74/396, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed, “the period 2022–2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, to draw attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages.” UNESCO reports 3,000 languages will be extinct at the end of the century at a rate of one every two weeks.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission hereby supports the proposal to have the Diné bizaad as the official language of the Navajo Nation. This designation must be thought through and carried out in a manner that effectuates k'é principles to respect and recognize conditions as follows:
 - a. Significant proportion of the Diné do not speak the Diné language while they respect and live the Diné lifeway in their communities;
 - b. Properly infuse the Diné bizaad in the operation of the Navajo government so that non-Diné bizaad speakers are not displaced abruptly or discriminated against;
 - c. Proper training to be instituted to revitalize Diné bizaad through free and accessible training at the workplaces of employees and be provided anti-discrimination training; and
 - d. A timeframe be established to ensure nonproficient speakers become proficient.
2. The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission further hereby directs the Office of Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission to communicate the intent of this resolution to the Navajo Nation Council, President and Vice President of the Navajo Nation and Chief Justice of the Navajo Judicial Branch.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission as a duly called meeting at St. Michaels, Navajo Nation (AZ), at which a quorum was present and the same was passed by a vote of 2 in favor and 0 opposed,

this 8th day of November 2024.



Dr. Wendy S. Greyeyes, Ph.D, *Chairperson*
Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission