INTRODUCING

MISS NAVAJO NATION

Jonathea Tso
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ABOUT NAVAJO MINISTRIES

Navajo Ministries was established in 1953 for the purpose of caring for dependent children, regardless of race, religion or national origin, and for printing and distributing Navajo tracts and hymnals.

The ministry has expanded over the years to include: a non-commercial Christian radio station, KNMI Vertical Radio 88.9 FM; Counseling Center; Navajo Nation Outreach, providing spiritual, emotional and material encouragement to those living in Navajoland.

When a donor expresses a preference as to the use of donated funds, Navajo Ministries will make every effort to honor their request and in most cases this is done in exact compliance with the donor’s wishes. However, the Board of Directors, in ensuring that Navajo Ministries carries out its exempt purposes required by law and effectively uses available funds, accepts the responsibility of applying funds in accordance with objectives of the ministry.

Views and opinions expressed in Navajo Neighbors by those interviewed are not necessarily those of Navajo Ministries.

Navajo Ministries is a Charter Member in good standing with ECFA (Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability).
For more than three decades it has been my privilege to see little ones come into our homes and grow and develop into capable, self-sufficient young adults. Cassie was one of those little girls who along with her younger sister, Sonya was placed in our care. A year later their little brother, John joined them.

These three siblings experienced many adventures over the years. Like all kids they laughed, played, and sometimes cried. Loving houseparents provided guidance and learning experiences, including chores in the houses, grounds and barn. They learned much about life and responsibilities, including the importance of committing their lives to Christ.

Here are some reflections from Cassie, in her own words as she looks back on her days at the Ministry:

“There are three memorable days that I have in my life...

“June 9, 1993...My younger sister and I moved from Salt Lake City, Utah to Farmington, New Mexico to live at Navajo Missions. What we thought was going to only be a couple of months turned into years. During that time, I had three sets of houseparents, and after all those years each of them still has a special place in my life.

“May 21, 2001...This day I became an honor graduate at Farmington High School. During my school years, I learned to play the viola and piano, which I still enjoy to play today. I challenged myself with advanced placement classes and science fair projects which led me to have a passion in science. I remember getting the goose bumps as they called my name to receive my diploma, and as I sat in my chair I could not have been happier.

“December 15, 2007...Several years after my high school graduation, this cold wintry day I walked across the platform, shook the chancellor’s hand and officially became a college graduate with a degree in Microbiology from the University of North Carolina-Charlotte. I looked to the stands, and there were my siblings, Sonya and John, my mom, Fran, and my new friends and family in North Carolina.

“I am so proud of myself, but I can’t take all the credit. I have to thank my Mission family and friends. In the years at the Mission, my “family” grew instantly to 12, we had regular family suppers, traveled to many places across the country, but most of all I learned to love and be loved. So I say, ‘Thank You’ Navajo Ministries, sponsors, houseparents, friends, and family for your encouraging words and endearing love.”

As you can tell from the picture, “little” John is now bigger than his sisters. He’s on the Farmington High School football team and a member of Junior R.O.T.C. Sonya is now part of our childcare staff, serving as assistant housemom in the same homes where she grew up.

JAMES D. BAKER
PRESIDENT
**Spring Break Teams**

Our friends from Trail Christian Fellowship in Eagle Point, Oregon brought a team of youth to work with us in March repairing pens in the barn and staining decks on two of our homes. This was the “maiden voyage” of their new church bus, which will be a great blessing to this missions minded church.

We are always delighted when a group of students from Spring Arbor University in Spring Arbor, Michigan join us during their Spring Break week. One of their jobs included repainting the interior of one of our homes along with the staining of fences and wooden shelters.

**All Aboard**

Kids and some staff members from the Four Corners Home for Children, a program of Navajo Ministries, got the opportunity to ride the Durango-Silverton Narrow Gauge Train in February. Kids and adults alike were amazed at the amount of snow that fell this past winter in the Colorado mountains.

**Soup’s On**

We are proud to announce the newest addition to our NMI family. She is Brenda Spencer and she holds a special place in our hearts. She is our new cook.

Brenda is no stranger to us. She was in our Moms Too Program in 2000 and 2001, where she enjoyed phenomenal success as a young mom. She is precious to us, along with her three children and we are blessed to have her working here. She is keeping us well fed and we look forward to each new day with her!
Introducing **MISS NAVAJO NATION**

2007-08: Jonathea D. Tso

Earlier this year Miss Navajo Nation, Jonathea Tso visited Navajo Ministries. She was invited by Jim Baker to come and speak to the children living at the Four Corners Home for Children and appear on his daily radio program, Four Corners Spotlight. As she began the interview, she formally introduced herself to the listeners, first in the Navajo language, then in English.

“Yá’át’éeh, good morning ladies and gentlemen. I am Miss Navajo Nation, Jonathea Tso. I’m from Cove, Arizona, part of the Red House Clan, born for the Bitterwater Clan. My maternal grandfather is of the Red Running into the Water Clan. My paternal grandfather is of the Tobacco Red Running into the Water Clan.”

Then she went on to elaborate, “I am 26 years old and my parents are Irene and Jonathan Tso, living in Kayenta, Arizona. I’m residing in the beautiful mountainous area of the Navajo Nation in Cove, Arizona, with my grandmother. I have five younger sisters who are all taller than me!”

After her graduation from Aztec High School Dormitory [just 13 miles east of Farmington] in 2000 she went on to Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire and graduated in 2004 with a dual major in Native American Studies and Environmental Studies. She says, “When I was at Dartmouth, the surroundings were similar to those in Cove (out in the middle of nowhere with trees and mountains). And, the community was similar to Aztec, too. I think they have one of the best Native Studies Departments with maybe ten different classes relating to history, religion, etc. I actually learned more about myself there and found myself reaching back to my homeland to Diné College, asking the instructors about myself as a Diné individual – our stories and history. That experience led me to pursue a solid foundation as a Diné citizen first before continuing on my career journey.”

After graduation she returned to the home of her grandmother, who is a dialysis patient. While helping with the sheep, cows and horses, her grandmother taught her much about Navajo life and traditions. Jonathea reflects, “She taught me how to make blue corn mush, how to butcher a sheep, and all about the mountain songs. These were all things I needed to learn before I could run for Miss Navajo Nation. I also needed to learn the Navajo language.”
The competition for the title of Miss Navajo Nation takes place each fall during the Navajo Nation Fair in Window Rock, Arizona, the capital of the Navajo Nation. Jonathea was competing with three other contestants for six days for the title. Jonathea says, “It all begins on Sunday night. We had to bring all our items and clothing we would need for the week. If we forgot our fry bread pans, that was too bad.

“Keep trying, do your best. Don’t ever give up! When you have good communication within your family, you’re not afraid to go to school and you make good grades. Someday you will be moms and dads and I know you will want to take good care of your children and your Navajo people. Try to speak your language. Even if you say the words wrong and your elders laugh, just keep on trying. Don’t let anyone stop you from learning your language.”

~ Miss Navajo Nation, Jonathea Tso ~

On Monday we got right into it with the butchering of the sheep. This was the most difficult part. As we butchered we had to demonstrate how the sheep parts are used in ceremonies and for a food source. We also had to tell the audience how the sheep is part of our culture, with the wool being used for the rug weaving, etc.”

On Tuesday of the competition week the contestants are required to participate in intense interviews in the English language concerning contemporary issues such as domestic violence and the various branches of the Navajo Nation government. Then they sit down with a traditional panel including former Miss Navajos to answer questions in the Navajo language regarding the history of the Navajo including The Long Walk and stories they heard from their grandmas. On Thursday Jonathea says the process intensifies. “In the contemporary portion we have to do a talent, a skill, an impromptu question, public speaking and evening gown. Then we do the same thing in Navajo. A total of thirty judges are involved and give points for the various aspects of the competition.”
The coronation takes place on Saturday of the Fair. Many Native American dancers perform the ribbon dance, basket dance and warrior dance; and then they have the Miss Navajo Nation crowning. Jonathea says she hopes to continue her education at Diné College after her year of service as Miss Navajo is over. “I plan on staying in Navajoland, continuing to teach what I learned to others, especially the young people. I don’t think my responsibilities are over when my reign ends. The Navajo youth are really into pop culture and the ideas that it holds. They struggle day to day with so many negatives – methamphetamines, drugs, alcohol and domestic violence. They forget about their culture, but they must learn to find a proper balance between the two.”

Jonauthea continues, “Our elders teach us that our children are like the growth of corn. They need constant attention – water, air, sunlight, soil and prayer. Our Diné teachings and values, from our parents and relatives, are essential nurturing tools to ensure strong corn stalks to withstand all types of weather. This inner strength and strong sense of self-identity is to protect our children from all types of obstacles they may encounter in life. These teachings begin at home.”

Former resident of the children’s home, Sonya, poses with Miss Navajo Nation. Sonya is now part of the Childcare staff.

Miss Navajo Nation

Some of the Contestant Eligibility Criteria

• Must be enrolled female member of the Navajo Nation
• Must be 18-25 years of age, never married, have no children
• Must speak fluent Navajo and English
• Must be knowledgeable of Navajo culture, history and tradition
• Must possess a high school diploma or GED by date of ceremony
• Submit a 1500-2000 word essay and PowerPoint presentation of:
  “Contributions I would make as the new Miss Navajo Nation”

Some of Benefits as Miss Navajo Nation:

• Represent the Navajo Nation as the Goodwill Ambassador for the Navajo people
• Travel reservation-wide, state, national and international levels on behalf of the Navajo Nation
• Upon successful completion of her reign, Miss Navajo Nation will receive an educational scholarship of $7,500 if an Undergraduate or $15,000 if a Graduate

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Window Rock: Home of the Navajo Nation

Near the border of New Mexico and Arizona on the Navajo Nation you will find a cluster of massive redstone rock formations. One of the rocks has a weather worn hole resembling a round window. This beautiful creation overlooks the headquarters of the Navajo Nation. Here you will find government offices that were reorganized in 1991 to form a three-branch system [executive, legislative and judicial].

The Navajos have one of the most sophisticated forms of American Indian government in the country. While the 88 Council delegates [representing 110 Navajo Nation chapters, or communities] discuss important issues and enact legislation, you will likely hear the delegates conduct business in their traditional Navajo language. Inside the circular, hogan shaped Tribal Council Chambers, the walls depict the colorful history of the Diné, (the Navajo people). While the building is showing its age, you will also notice a modern computer at each desk as well as a large flat screen on the wall.

A beautiful Navajo Veteran’s Memorial Park circles the lovely area by the Window Rock, remembering the many Navajos who have served in the U.S. military. A statue commemorating the Navajo Code Talkers has been erected in recent years. Historians credit the Code Talkers for helping to win World War II.

Window Rock, Arizona is one of the stops on the annual Navajoland Tour. While there, we often take a group photo in front of the rock and statue. The group also receives a tour of the Administrative offices, sometimes even getting to greet one of the chief executives. A tour of the Tribal Council Chambers is also included, making this a very memorable part of the tour.
What a Blessing Accepting Christ!

Some of you know Arron, but for those of you who don’t, let me explain. Arron came to live at Navajo Ministries when I was a houseparent. Through a series of unusual events, I became his guardian. I guess you could say I am responsible for him. Oh my. Those are strong words and somewhat frightening because Arron is a bit of a character.

Arron is sharp. He is a fast learner and very much on top of things. He doesn’t miss a beat and he is quick to point it out if you do! He is a particular challenge for his teacher, Miss Diane. The very first day of Kindergarten he announced to her that “it would probably be better if you organize the books on the shelf a little neater.” Great. It’s the first day of school and Arron is showing his well-educated teacher a “better way.”

Arron answers all the questions; it doesn’t matter if Miss Diane is asking the first graders or the fourth graders. If Arron hears the question, he is going to supply the answer. The thing is - he is usually right and he knows it.

We’ve spent a lot of time and effort trying to figure Arron out and I think, after this past weekend, we have a good clue. At least we’ve found a starting place.

We were sitting down at the table to enjoy dinner after church on Sunday. Arron requested the privilege of praying and thanking God for the food. We gladly gave him the honor. It went something like this, “Dear God, I bless this day. I bless this house and I bless this food. I bless Navajo Ministries and I bless Mom. Amen.”

After the prayer, Ben and I looked at each other and smiled but Bekah looked Arron straight in the eye and said, “Arron! You are NOT God!”

We joke about Arron but what a blessing to have our children at Navajo Ministries wanting to pray. What a blessing it is to be able to teach our children about God at home and at school.

Our childcare staff has been learning so much about relationships through trainings with Bill and Linda Eubank, as well as our New Mexico Christian Childcare Association. These trainings can be intense and emotional as we look in-depth at, not only how to care and provide for the children, but also how to relate to them. Open communication is so important and is best achieved through trust relationships. That is something most of our children have rarely experienced and as we strive to build relationships with them we know that we have the very best model as our example.

Jesus Christ desires a relationship with us above all else and I am thrilled to report that since our last issue of Navajo Neighbors, three of our children have accepted Christ. The first was a thirteen-year-old in the Moore home who prayed with Bill Eubank during a counseling session. It was apparent to all of us that God had been working in his heart for some time. He is a precious young man and his example led his eleven-year-old sister to begin asking questions. Shortly following her brother’s decision, this sweet girl prayed with her housemom, Monica. She then led her six-year-old brother to the Lord. What a joy to see these precious souls saved!

So keep praying, Arron, God hears your heart no matter the words you utter.
Since 1999, with the cooperation of the Farmington Municipal School District in Farmington, New Mexico, our On-site School has been providing specialized education to the children of Navajo Ministries. Research has shown in previous years that the children, who reside at the Four Corners Home for Children, a program of Navajo Ministries, had fallen behind academically in the traditional public school systems.

These kids often are victims of neglect, abuse, and abandonment. Being shifted from family to family, then to a home for children hinders academic growth. The result… these kids fall between the cracks, and teachers in public schools who are already teaching 20 or more children at a time, do not have the resources nor the time to devote all their attention to these special circumstances.

Diane Hebbard, the teacher of the On-site School shared “most of the kids in my class are needy, not economically, but emotionally. They have a difficult time adapting to any subtle change, for example, when a houseparent has time off and is away from the home. Even when I’m not around, the kids shut off, and their learning capabilities are compromised for the moment.”

Our On-site School takes these kids with disadvantaged pasts to scholastic levels that are equivalent to their peers in public schools. It has been reported by Mrs. Hebbard that this past year two first graders are now reading at 2nd grade levels. One of these first graders came from a very abusive background. At the beginning of the school year, he only knew a few sounds, and did not recognize letters and numbers. Today he is fully confident about the alphabet, numbers, and he can read at 2nd grade level. He is also learning math skills, including adding and subtracting double digits.

The 4th graders are excelling in math and geography, as they learn how to read maps and the geography of the United States. The fifth grader is preparing to enter middle school by learning how to type and use a computer more proficiently.

In addition to the academic requirements, the kids at our On-site School also have the opportunity to learn about the world that surrounds them. The play was a glimpse into the year 1907, and the struggles between the Navajo, Hopi, and missionaries who opened schools on these reservations at the turn of the 20th century. The kids were intrigued to learn of the history of their ancestors. We continually pray that the students who come and go from this school will soar scholastically, and continue to build their confidence in their education.

In cooperation with Farmington Municipal Schools, Navajo Ministries operates a school for children in kindergarten through fifth grades. This unique on-site school, with one teacher and a teacher-aide, has proven to be of great benefit to the children who are residents at Four Corners Home for Children.
Many young girls dream about being in a “Beauty” contest. Our society puts so much emphasis on outer beauty that sometimes we feel ashamed to acknowledge it. The Navajo people stress inside beauty, the beauty of life itself and the beauty of nature. They may not give credit where credit is due (to our Creator), but at least they are not emphasizing outer physical beauty.

This past year my oldest granddaughter participated in a pageant for Miss Princess Oklahoma, as a six year old. She won in June of 2007. Then she began the rehearsals for the National Pageant in California in November. I remember our conversations leading up to that moment of competition. “Remember Jordan,” said Grandma, “What God looks on is the heart. It doesn’t matter how beautiful you are on the outside; if your heart is mean or dirty you are not acting like a good person.”

She was crushed when she got no further than the top ten at nationals, but it was a good learning experience for a beautiful little brown eyed blond.

Part of our message to the children and adults that we work with is about valuing themselves, not in a narcissistic way or in a manner that makes them better than others. It is really about seeing yourself as God sees you - His creation, capable of sustaining life with His care. Doing the right thing and being the right ‘person’ is really what self-esteem is all about. Isn’t it time we started to take responsibility for our actions, responsibility for our children, responsibility to be the right kind of employee, responsibility to be the best spouse we can be, etc.? Beauty is about doing and being the right person; then others can look at us and exclaim “Wow”! Because we would be so different from the norm, the world, the accepted in society! Wow!

Wouldn’t it be nice to hear the Lord say, “Wow, they are doing it, being it! Wow!” This is the self-esteem the Lord cares about.

Linda Eubank counselor at Navajo Ministries contributed this article.

“It is really about seeing yourself as God sees you - His creation, capable of sustaining life with His care.”
When I was a child, my mom would take me out to my grandma’s house, located nine miles west of Shiprock in Rattlesnake, New Mexico.

My grandparents, Amy and David Kindle, had many acres of land, with two sheep camps. The two sheep camps were named the Winter Camp and the Summer Camp. After my grandfather passed away, my grandmother continued care for the sheep. She would move the sheep between the two camps, named according to the season and grazing. Everyday, she would herd the sheep for grazing, using her noisemaker (a tin can with rocks, harnessed on a stick) so the sheep would not stray away too far.

Her winter camp was enclosed by mesa walls, kept the bitter winter winds away; hence the name winter camp. Her summer camp for sheep was set on a higher elevation of the plateau, and she would take the sheep there when summer would set in. The summer camp was also closer to grazing grounds.

One of my fondest memories of my grandmother is the way she took pride in how she cared for her sheep. I remember when I would chase the lambs around the corral, just to give them a good scare; and my grandmother would stand there and yell at me in Navajo. To this day, I still don’t have any idea what she was saying, but I can only imagine!

For many Navajo people, sheep have served as a way of sustainability for life. Not only do the sheep provide nourishment as food, but they also serve as a means of income. Many Navajo people raise and breed sheep for wool. The wool is mainly used for rug weaving. In turn, the beautiful rugs created by these talented artisans are sold at local trading posts and gift shops.

When a sheep is butchered by Navajos, every part of the sheep is used, nothing is wasted. There are a variety of dishes that are made from not only the meat, but from other parts of the sheep. One popular dish is ‘ach’ii’, which is made of the sheep intestine and fat that is rolled into one, and is usually grilled on an open fire. Today, there are a few remaining butchers in business who sell this delicacy, or when the time is right, you can find it at local fairs around Navajoland. This cuisine is usually preferred by the older Navajo generation.

Although, ‘ach’ii’ is an acquired taste, nothing beats the taste of a mutton sandwich, made with fry bread and green chili, another local favorite. The tradition of herding sheep and butchering continues as younger generations are taught that sheep are a way of life for the Navajo.

Amy Dickson, Director of Communications, contributed this article.
It’s Going to be a Vertical Summer

What a busy time of year it has been here at Vertical Radio! From our recent Power Upgrade Project, to a busy basketball and baseball season for our Vertical Sports broadcast team, to an amazing Vertical Share-a-thon earlier this month, we certainly have been very active around here. It seems to never really slow down, though. We are now setting our sights on another busy summer as we participate in various activities. We are so excited to be able to impact our community through the music we play and also through the amazing On-Air Personalities. Truly, we have a talented team here at Vertical Radio. We serve an amazing God!

Our recent Vertical Share-a-thon was an amazing opportunity to go out into our surrounding community and meet those listeners who support us with their financial resources. These individuals are the people that God uses to keep us on the air, and it was such a joy to share time with them. We took the Vertical Share-a-thon Road Team to 5 different communities in two days and met listeners from all walks of life as they came out to pledge their support for Vertical Radio for the coming year! It was a rewarding opportunity to hear from everyone who enables us to do what we do. We are humbled that so many people choose to make Vertical Radio their music radio station.

Vertical Radio has been on the air for over 28 years and we are excited to see what God does this coming year. We have begun making plans to see our Vertical Sports Broadcasts become more professional than ever before. We also are looking forward to broadcasting this year’s “Road to the World Series” season in June and also broadcasting “The Connie Mack World Series” this coming August.

We are the Official Broadcast Station of the Connie Mack World Series for the next 4 years, and we anticipate an exciting and competitive Connie Mack World Series this year. During this time, both families and friends of team players tune into Vertical Radio from all over the world, online at our website, VerticalRadio.org. Our Vertical Sports Broadcast announcers have received numerous accolades for their on-air professionalism as sports broadcasters. God truly has blessed us with an amazing Vertical Sports broadcast team.

The work here is ongoing and is in some ways still just beginning. We continue to trust God for the funds that are needed, not only to keep us in operation but also the funds that will allow us to grow and further the ministry here. Consider how you can play a part in the ongoing ministry of Vertical Radio. If you would like to become a part of what God is doing through Vertical Radio, please pray for us and please consider how God may want to use you financially to support the work here as well.
A Volunteer For Jesus

We want to give special honor and remembrance to a wonderful servant of God, Sharon Atson. Sharon is the mom to Shayne Tsosie, who is in charge of our Accounts Payable and other accounting at Navajo Ministries. We became acquainted with Sharon several years ago when she volunteered as a receptionist at our front desk. She was a faithful, friendly greeter of both our guests who came in the front door and those who called our phones. She was always ready to praise the Lord or share a smile. We sure have missed having her in the building during the past two years as she bravely battled cancer. But, when she did stop by for a visit she was always positive and full of the joy of the Lord.

Many of our staff attended her funeral in February in Shiprock, New Mexico at her beloved house of worship, the Four Corners Community Church, pastored by Eric Lee. It was a wonderful service with a great salvation message given to those who packed the pews. Our Director of Administration, Kelly Karlin, put together a lovely slide show that showed the joys of her life.

Sharon invested her life in others. She made Four Corners Community Church her second home. Sharon and her husband Gilbert cleaned this church just about every Saturday night. They vacuumed, cleaned the restrooms, mopped the floors and after cleaning they would always pray upon the pews that God’s Word would fall upon the congregation the next morning. Sharon devoted her time serving the Lord as a prayer intercessor, and led children’s ministry, jail ministry, and dance ministry as part of the praise and worship team.

Perhaps you have a loved one like Sharon that you would like to remember. If they have passed on you can provide a Living Memorial Gift in their memory. If they’re still living you can show your appreciation with a gift in their Honor. Your gift will benefit the children living at the Four Corners Home for Children.

After receiving your gift, a lovely remembrance card will be sent to the family of the one you are memorializing or honoring. No amounts will be mentioned.

All gifts are tax deductible and will be receipted. Please use the enclosed envelope to designate your Memorial gift along with the names and addresses of those to be notified.
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