

# NAVAJO LANGUAGE PROGRAM

A Program for the Study of the Navajo Language and  
for Research on Navajo Linguistics



Navajo Language Program  
Department of Linguistics  
Humanities 526, MSC03 2130  
1 University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001

(505) 277-6353

navajo@unm.edu

<https://ling.unm.edu/navajo-language-program/index.html>



# Diné Bizaad Bíhwíídííł'ááł

## ❖ Navajo at University of New Mexico

Navajo has been taught at UNM for nearly 50 years under the sponsorship of the Department of Linguistics. During this time hundreds of students have completed basic and advanced Navajo courses. Our students have become educators, health professionals, administrators, and linguists.

We offer a minor in Navajo. The Department of Linguistics also offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in Linguistics with a focus on Navajo in a Concentration on Native American Languages of the Southwest. The University of New Mexico is committed to the advancement of the study of Navajo language, linguistics, history, and culture. We provide a full complement of core Navajo language courses as well as Navajo Linguistics, Basic Medical Terminology, and Navajo Verbs I and II. The needs of the Navajo communities throughout the Southwest shape the Navajo Language Program and drive the Linguistics Department faculty and staff towards greater leadership in the study of Navajo language.

The official release by the U.S. government of top-secret codes used by Navajo Code Talkers during World War II brought a surge of students who wanted to learn Navajo. National pride filled our classrooms with students, native speakers and non-speakers alike. The UNM Navajo program welcomed the greater enrollment.

## ❖ Working with Communities


The Navajo Program at UNM works closely with institutions across the Southwest in improving Navajo language engagement. We are particularly pleased to welcome students from UNM-Gallup, Diné College, Navajo Technical College, San Juan College, Northern Arizona University, and others.

The Department recognizes the important contribution that Navajo language studies at Diné College can provide to the program at UNM. Credit for approved coursework at Diné College transfers automatically for the equivalent Navajo courses at UNM and can be applied towards the Navajo minor.

## ❖ Navajo Coursework

Conversational instruction in Navajo is taught at the undergraduate and graduate level. As students progress into higher level courses, they are encouraged to read and write, and to conduct original research on the Navajo language.

UNM has a large enrollment of Navajo students, many of whom have grown up hearing Navajo. Upon return to their home communities, our students will be confident in applying their language skills in various ways. We encourage students to continue to use Navajo and to support Navajo language research, instruction, and learning.





## ❖ Robert W. Young Scholarship Fund

Each year the Department awards the Robert W. Young Scholarship to undergraduate and graduate students working to foster our understanding of the Navajo language. Support the Robert W. Young Scholarship Foundation at:

<https://www.unmfund.org/fund/robert-w-young-scholarship-fund/>

## ❖ Navajo Linguistics

At UNM, you will study and learn about the structure of the Navajo language. Courses focusing on the Navajo verb, syntax, phonology, and discourse are consistently offered. These studies follow the great tradition set by both the late Dr. Robert W. Young and Dr. William Morgan whose life's work of documenting the Navajo language remains unparalleled in scope.

Research on Navajo language at UNM includes the comprehensive dictionaries and grammars of Drs. Robert W. Young and William Morgan. Past UNM graduates whose research focused on Navajo include Drs. James Kari, Clay Slate, Wayne Holm, Sally Midgette, Jay Williams, Michelle Kiser, and Melvatha R. Chee.

Recent graduate students have researched Navajo adverbials, language change, grammaticization, and child language acquisition.

## ❖ The Navajo Program Outside the Classroom

Our faculty is actively involved in Navajo language organizations such as the Diné Language Teachers Association, the Navajo Studies Conference, the Navajo Language Academy, Inc., and the Athabaskan Language Conference. Our faculty regularly participate via presentations at various conferences as well as offering them our support.

The UNM Navajo Program offers Basic Navajo Medical Terminology to serve students in UNM's Health Sciences Center programs, such as pharmacy, nursing, and medicine.

## ❖ Navajo Language Program Faculty

Dolly Manson, Lecturer II

Esther Yazzie-Lewis, Navajo Language Tutor

Mary Ann Willie, Professor of Linguistics

Melissa Axelrod, Professor, Emerita

Melvatha R. Chee, Asst. Professor of Linguistics, Director, Navajo Language Program

## ❖ Graduate Assistants

Jalon Begay, PhD candidate

Tamera Yazzie, MA candidate



## ❖ Minor in Navajo Language

The minor requires 18 credit hours of Navajo language and Navajo linguistics courses. Fifteen of those credits must come from the courses offered in the Navajo language program with one elective course from Navajo, Linguistics, Native American Studies, or Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies.

## ❖ Required Courses – 18 Credit Hours

NAVA 2110 Navajo III	3
NAVA 2120 Navajo IV	3
NVJO 311 Navajo Verbal System I	3
NVJO 312 Navajo Verbal System II	3
NVJO 401 Navajo Linguistics	3
Elective	3


## ❖ Suggested Electives

NVJO 315 Advanced Navajo	3
LING 331 Language in Society	3
LING 359 Language and Culture	3
LING 401 Topics: American Indian Lang I	3
LING 402 Topics: American Indian Lang II	3
LING 415 Native American Languages	3

(Or from approved electives in LLSS or Native American Studies)

## ❖ Additional Courses Offered in Navajo

NAVA 1110 Navajo I	3
NAVA 1120 Navajo II	3
NVJO 203 Basic Medical Navajo	3
NVJO 495 Undergrad Problems	1-6
NVJO 595 Graduate Problems	1-6





## ❖ **MA in Linguistics with Concentration on Native American Languages of the Southwest**

Candidates who have fulfilled linguistics course requirements may choose from three focus areas:

- 1) Field research of Native American languages,
- 2) Issues in bilingual education,
- 3) Navajo language studies, or
- 4) Language endangerment, revitalization, & documentation.

## ❖ **Revitalization and Documentation**

Courses on revitalization and documentation of indigenous languages are taught by Linguistics Department Professor Emerita Melissa Axelrod, and Associate Professors Chris Koops and Rosa Vallejos.

## ❖ **Department of Linguistics**

The UNM Department of Linguistics is the only degree-granting linguistics program in one of the most multilingual and multicultural states in the U.S. As such, it bears particular responsibility both to the field of linguistics and to the residents of the region it serves. The department thus has two concerns: (1) teaching and research on language structure and use, and (2) service to society on language-related issues. More information is available at the Linguistics Department website:

<https://ling.unm.edu/>



**UNMdi Shizaad Bidziil**

