



Bringing Navajo History to Washington D.C. Classrooms

WASHINGTON, D.C. – This week, students at the Petworth Campus of Center City Public Charter Schools spent one of their class periods learning about Navajo history, governance, and the legacy of the Navajo Code Talkers. The 7th and 8th grade classes were already reading *Code Talker* by Joseph Bruchac, a novel that follows a fictional Marine named Ned Begay. Although the book is fictional, the themes provided the Navajo Nation Washington Office an opening to share accurate history and present-day context.

Government and Legislative Affairs Associate Tim Benally walked the students through and answered questions on the origins of the Navajo language, the Treaty of 1868, the structure of Navajo government, and the role that NNWO plays in representing the Navajo people on the federal stage. The session ran more than 75 minutes due to the level of student engagement. Many shared that they had never met a Navajo person before, yet they demonstrated strong knowledge of boarding schools and the experiences of other Tribal Nations. Throughout the presentation, they asked many thoughtful questions about daily life on the Navajo Nation and were especially curious about the Code Talkers. One student asked, “If their work stayed secret for so long, what else do people not know about Navajo people?”

This outreach follows a recent NNWO presentation to a senior community audience of about 150 participants where Benally and Communications Officer Marlena Forster provided a similar presentation. These efforts support the NNWO’s broader goal to share Navajo history and priorities with diverse groups across the Washington region. The school ultimately welcomed NNWO staff back for future sessions, and we extend appreciation to Ms. Zellee Jones and the Petworth team for the invitation.