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# NNWO Shares Navajo History and Code Talker Legacy with Ingleside Residents

*Navajo Nation Washington Office Staff Marlena Forster-Mason and Timothy Benally hold the event poster following their presentation for the Ingleside at King Farm Lecture Series.*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – This week, Navajo Nation Washington Office Communications Officer Marlena Forster and Government and Legislative Affairs Associate Timothy Benally delivered a presentation titled "The Language That Won the War" at Ingleside at King Farm's (IKF) Engaged Living Senior Community near Washington D.C. The lecture was hosted by the IKF Lecture Committee, which invites speakers from many fields to share knowledge with residents. About 150 residents attended in person, and the presentation was broadcasted live on the community's internal channel for hundreds more.

Within their lecture, Ms. Forster and Mr. Benally offered an overview of the Navajo Nation, including its history, government structure, and the significance of Diné Bizaad, the Navajo language. Particularly in light of assimilative practices such as boarding schools, which worked to suppress the Navajo Language even though the language later played a crucial role in secure military communication. They also described NNWO's role and shared their perspective as young professionals serving in federal affairs on behalf of the Nation. This

introduction set the stage for a focused discussion on the Navajo Code Talkers and the national and international impact of their service.

The presenters explained how Navajo Marines developed an unbreakable code during World War II, drawing on relatable examples that showed the unprecedented precision and speed the language offered to commanders in battles like the Guadalcanal campaign in the Pacific and the infamous battle on Iwo Jima. They noted that the code was so effective that it remained classified for 23 years after the war. Additionally, formal recognition for the Code Talkers came much later when Ronald Reagan issued a presidential proclamation in 1982 designating August 14 as Navajo Code Talkers Day.

The residents remained engaged throughout the lecture and stayed well after the presentation ended, asking a steady stream of questions that ranged from Navajo language revitalization to modern oil and gas issues on the Nation. Many asked for book and film recommendations and raised questions about current Navajo representation in media, including interest in the AMC series "Dark Winds."

Ms. Forster and Mr. Benally were able to share additional context, including comments from Navajo leaders such as Peter MacDonald's 2017 remarks at the White House, and offered clear explanations about the Navajo Nation's ongoing efforts in language, governance, and federal affairs. They noted that they were grateful for the engagement and for the chance to speak during Native American Heritage Month and Veterans Day week while advancing the mission of the NNWO.