

## What can my church do? (cont'd)

### Communications

- Develop a newsletter to keep your church members informed about prayer requests, information about the Navajo, and other missions information such as planned trips or visits.
- Create a Navajo crafts display in your church as a hands-on learning experience.

### Mobilization

- Encourage another church to adopt this people group and then have them participate in a mission trip to Navajo reservation(s).
- Train a team to make presentations at pastor or church leader meetings in your association or state conventions to become advocates for disciple-making efforts among the Navajo.



[www.peoplegroups.info](http://www.peoplegroups.info)

If you cannot locate this people group in your community, find them online at [www.peoplegroups.info](http://www.peoplegroups.info), a site sponsored by the North American Mission Board, SBC.

## What are their needs?

The Navajo people struggle with poverty since there are few job opportunities in their communities and little to no revenue from the casinos. Many families struggle to survive in the face of extreme poverty, substandard housing, sporadic medical care, and limited educational opportunities. One Navajo leader actually called life on the reservation an “unending cycle of despair.” Some families move off of the reservation to find a better life, but a lot do not want to do that because they do not want to leave the land that their ancestors once lived on, and leave their customs and extended families. Poverty among the Navajo takes the greatest toll on those who are most vulnerable: infants and children, young mothers, and fragile elders.

## What is keeping the gospel from them?

The Navajos for the most part have long resisted Christianity. They look upon it as a “part-time” religion where a man’s god is available to him for only a few hours on Sunday and then has to be sought out in a special house where his spirit dwells. The Navajos are repulsed by the European’s disrespect for and misuse of the land. They see a society that would destroy the source of life, and worship an abstract god in a place set aside for that purpose. Thus, Christianity has historically had little to offer the Navajo.

Information may be updated by writing [peoplegroups@namb.net](mailto:peoplegroups@namb.net).

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## Navajos of North America

## Who are the Navajos?

**N**avajo Indians are the largest Native American group in North America. They refer to themselves as the Diné, meaning, “the people.” The Navajos have their own Indian reservation which is run by an independent government body called the Navajo Nation. The Navajos speak the Navajo language or Athabaskan as they call it, but most of them also speak English.

**Population in North America: 296,669 (est.)**

**Languages spoken by the Navajos: Navajo (Diné)**

**Top 5 locations with highest population of Navajos in North America:**

1. **Northeastern Arizona**
2. **Northwestern New Mexico**
3. **Utah**
4. **Colorado**
5. **California**

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## What is their heritage?

A long time ago, the Navajos dwelt in Canada and Alaska as hunters and gatherers. Over 1,000 years ago, the Navajos migrated to North America and dwelt among the Pueblo Indian farmers. They were a nomadic people until they came into contact with the Pueblo Indians. This is where the Navajos learned to farm corn, beans, squash, and melons. They also learned how to weave clothes and make art.

*“The purpose of the Navajo Way is to bring peace and harmony with the world and nature.”*

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## What are their beliefs?

The majority of the Navajo people are Christians, but the ones that are not believe in the beliefs of the Navajo way. According to the Navajo way, there is no such thing as a supreme being. They worship the wind, watercourses, sun, and a number of gods that they believe intervene in human affairs. These gods are worshiped through offerings made to them and ceremonial dances in their honor where they are represented by painted and masked men. The Navajos believe that there are two types of beings—the Holy people and the Earth people. The Holy people cannot be seen, but they are known to help or harm the Earth people. Living things such as people, plants, and animals have a spirit, and they have a purpose in this world. The purpose of the Navajo Way is to bring peace and harmony with the world and nature. They do not show much interest in afterlife because they view death as the soul going to another part of the universe and carrying on in a new way as though they are still alive.

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## What can my church do?

### **Endvisioning — beginning with the end in mind**

- Spend time on the reservation observing what their physical needs are in order to have a better in-road to reach them for the gospel.
- Visit with elders and other leaders looking for specific ways to celebrate what the Navajo are doing and progress being made among their people.
- Come up with specific ministries to meet their specific needs.
- Build a relationship with the Navajo people to where they trust you and take you into their community.

### **Prayer — focusing on the people as well as calling out workers to the harvest**

- Encourage your church to vote and adopt the Navajo people to pray for and to walk among them with the gospel message.
- Pray and fast for these people.
- Conduct weekly prayerwalks timed so that personal encounters with Navajo occur with frequency and intentionality.
- Create a Navajo prayer network and make a long-term commitment to it by creating a prayer leadership team that solicits church members and other believers in churches that will share in your church’s burden for making disciples among the Navajo.

### **Networking for Evangelism — identifying relationships**

- Use Chronological Bible Storying methods as a way of telling Bible stories, since the Navajos are an oral culture who takes pride in their own ancestral stories.
- Use storying through weaving/sewing blankets. Since this is a trade of the Navajos, storying can be shared through this trade.
- Use storying through art/painting. This is also another trade of the Navajos.

### **Starting Small Groups — that can become churches**

- Start a small group that discusses Christianity, the differences between Christianity and the Navajo way, or how God also desires peace and harmony, which is found in Jesus Christ.
- Have small groups do Bible Studies through storying, art, dancing, and weaving.
- A small group or church could meet in a traditional housing structure called a Hogan to help the Navajos feel like they’re making their church their own rather than conforming to the traditional Christian church. Ideally, this would be owned by a Navajo believer.

### **Leadership Training — identifying and equipping**

- Train leaders in the small group or church to teach and disciple fellow Navajo Christians.
- Train Navajo Christians to go out and reach their fellow lost Nation.

### **Scripture**

- Distribute a storying CD in English and in the Navajo language for them to listen to. Many of them might not be able to read or would appreciate a non-literate approach.