Promoting Navajo Language Immersion

Participants in the Language Immersion Camp are given a chance to clarify Navajo terms by asking questions in English for a short time each morning, after which all communication goes back to entirely Navajo language.

Instructors in the Diné Teacher Education Program (DTEP) at Diné College brought their students to a Sheep Camp high in the Chuska Mountains last week as part of their language curriculum. Students gained more experience speaking the Navajo language by learning through everyday tasks at the Sheep Camp. The Navajo language immersion experience at Diné College was held for two weeks, the first week in the classroom with the second week at the sheep camp.

“By participating in the daily activities at the Sheep Camp the students were able to learn more about not only the language but the lifestyle in which it is spoken,” said Thomas Littleben Jr., Diné Studies Instructor.

Several Navajo language immersion seminars are held throughout the year at Diné College. The immersion program is intended to foster teaching methods of the Navajo language. Learners are engaged with fluent speakers at a remote location away from modern amenities. The classes and immersion camps are well received by the participants who want to become more fluent in Diné Bizaad.

President’s Corner

Yá’át’ééh

This week I would like to highlight some of the wonderful work that our faculty and staff are doing with students and our community.

Ms. Benita Litson and the Land Grant Office staff completed two Land Grant Office Environmental Science camps. The first of the two camps was the USDA-APHIS Native Plants, Animal and Wildlife youth camp, held collaboratively with Navajo Technical College. A total of 16 students between the ages of 14-17 participated in the two-week camp. The focus of the camp was to engage students in self-awareness activities through hands-on agricultural learning activities. The second camp was the Environmental Youth Camp held in Telluride, CO from July 7-13, 2013. A total of 22 students between the ages of 9-15 participated in the camp. Students were educated about Natural Resources that involved them in activities pertaining to environmental awareness and sustainability. LGO will be hosting the next Environmental Camp July 21 - 26, 2013.

Science Faculty, Margaret Mayer will be presenting to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on the College’s Eco Ambassador grant entitled “Teaching the Relevance of Using Data For Understanding Climate Change” at the Smithsonian and American Indian Museum in DC on July 18-21, 2013. Four interns were involved in the grant: Bradley Jean, Jerry Yazzie, Emmett Tsosie, and Ernest Charley. They analyzed data from CO2 monitors at Roof Butte and conducted indoor air quality assessments of family hogans and trailers. The interns also prepared presentations and labs for Environmental classes and community outreach.

On July 11, 2013, Barbara Klein, Science Chair, and Patrick Blackwater, attended the Navajo Nation Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) meeting held in Flagstaff, AZ on the NAU campus. They shared Diné College’s input for the Navajo Nation STEM initiative. The purpose of the initiative is to create STEM based curriculum and educational opportunities for Navajo students K-12 and the two Navajo Nation Higher Learning Institutions. Common goals and objectives were developed during the meeting.

Please continue to support our staff and faculty.

Friends
Navajo Language Academy

Navajo Language enthusiasts and linguists from across the nation are at Diné College to learn and promote the Navajo language. The College is hosting the Academy for two weeks beginning July 8th through July 26th. One of the main objectives for the Academy is to revitalize an interest in the Navajo language in the three week Navajo linguistic workshop.

“This Academy brings together linguistic instructors who are experts in language pragmatics, semantics, and syntax,” said Irene Silentman, Chair of the Navajo Language Academy. “We learn about how the language is spoken through situational Navajo, an approach that teaches the language beyond alphabets and numbers.”

The Navajo Language Academy is held every year at different locations. Diné College was the site of the event in 1997, 2007, 2009. Each year the Academy selects a venue to bring together individuals who are devoted to linguistics - especially the Navajo language.

Diné College Alumnus Sylvia Jackson ’96, is participating in this year’s Academy. This year’s instructors are Ted Fernald of Swarthmore College, Peggy Spears of University of Massachusetts, Willem DeRuse of Virginia, Dr. Paul Platero of UNM, Lorene Legah of Diné College, Michelle Kiser of UNM and Elizabeth Bogal-Brightten of the University of Massachusetts.