

'Níwohdéé' nihi amá sání dóó nihi acheii Hwéeldi déé ahní nak'aa.'

A time ago, our grandmothers and grandfathers returned back from Ft. Sumner on foot, after years of captivity by the federal government. The Long Walk of the Navajo people was a time of suffering and sadness for the tribe.

Many of our Navajo ancestors, especially the young, old and sick, died during the march to Bosque Redondo, located southeast of Santa Rosa, N.M. Many more died in captivity.

Because of the strength and resilience of our ancestors and their Navajo leaders, the Treaty of 1868 was signed on June 1, 1868, between the Navajo Tribe and the United States of America.

Today, we celebrate the Treaty of 1868, *naaltsoos sání*.

The treaty returned our ancestors back to our tribal homelands between the Four Sacred Mountains of *Tsisnaajini*, *Tsoodzil*, *Dook'o'oosliid*, and *Dibe' Ntsaa.*

The Treaty of 1868 ended the war between the Navajo people and the U.S.

Provisions in the treaty delineated a reservation for the tribe. Other terms included land distribution, education for Navajo children, agriculture and other conditions.

The Navajo people agreed not to attack U.S. citizens or their belongings. After the Treaty of 1868 was signed, the Navajo people were allowed to return home after years of suffering in captivity.

To this day, the Navajo language and culture survive.

We will be forever indebted to Navajo leaders such as Barboncito, Manuelito, Largo, Narbono, Ganado Mucho and others. With an X, 29 Navajo leaders signed the Treaty of 1868 with Lt. Gen. William T. Sherman.

From the small parcel of land that was allotted the Navajo people as their reservation, the Navajo Nation today has the largest land base in the country. Moreover, we have preserved our language and culture, our songs and prayers that have been held in reverence since time immemorial.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez send a message of unity and strength for Navajo Nation Treaty Day.

It is a day to remember those who came before us, our Navajo ancestors, many of whom suffered and died to allow the survival of our tribe to become the thriving nation it is today.

This afternoon, President Begaye and Vice President Nez visited the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., where they toured the exhibit of the Treaty of 1868.

Speaking in Navajo, President Begaye said, “Today, we celebrate this treaty across the Navajo Nation.”

“This exhibit talks about the Navajo people being moved off Navajo land and marched to Ft.

Sumner. The Treaty of 1868 is the authority and according to it, we are the Navajo people of today," President Begaye said.

Our ancestors suffered at Ft. Sumner.

Vice President Nez said it is because of their strength and perseverance that Navajo people are survivors of the highest caliber today.

"Our Navajo people are strong. Many of them still live the old way: they haul water, chop wood, care for their livestock and make a living from the land. Today, we acknowledge the sacrifice of our forefathers and pay tribute to their strength and leadership," Vice President Nez said.

The intestinal fortitude of leaders like Chief Manuelito and Chief Barboncito led to the agreement with General Sherman to end the war and allow our ancestors to return home to Navajo land.

Centuries later, the Navajo people are thriving. We have tribal members who heeded the words of Chief Manuelito to obtain their education and return home under the rainbow of Navajo sovereignty to advance our nation forward.

"My relations, my people, we stand strong by this treaty. We will stand by this treaty forever and it will not be taken from us. Thank you for observing this day and may God bless you," President Begaye said.