

## Navajo Police Training Academy Class 53 graduates

Written by Staff Reports  
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CHINLE, Ariz – Despite significant snowfall hitting the Navajo Nation, the Navajo Police Training Academy Class 53 graduated on Feb. 22, in front of a large crowd who braved the weather to witness the freshman becoming Navajo Police officers.

Family, friends, community members and honored dignitaries gathered at the Chinle Convention Center to congratulate and welcome 16 new men and women in uniform. Class 53, comprised of 12 men and four women, will be assigned to several districts throughout the Navajo Nation. This is the second class of freshman officers to graduate from the Academy since it reopened in early 2018.

Throughout the course of the ceremony, Class 53 listened attentively to the Navajo Nation president, vice president and special guest speakers. The speakers offered words of appreciation and encouragement to the graduates.

Addressing the class, Chief of Police Phillip Francisco thanked the graduates for stepping up to answer the call to become Navajo Police officers.

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“You have my respect for doing that,” he said.

Then he reminded the new officers that their identities will be forever changed.

“People will treat you different because you now represent something much greater than just you,” he said. “You represent everything the uniform and badge stand for. The symbolism of the uniform and badge doesn’t automatically have meaning. What it represents today has been built by the honorable men and women throughout history who made the choice to be protectors of humanity. They selflessly put themselves in harm’s way to protect their community and maintain the thin line between order and chaos.”

During the badge pinning ceremony, each officer selected a significant person they wanted to give the honor of pinning their badge onto their uniform. This was followed by the oath of office administered by District Judge Cynthia Thompson.

“They have definitely grown since their first day. They were challenged daily, physically and mentally, which prepared them to transition from a civilian to a police officer,” Navajo Police Training Academy Lieutenant Emmett Yazzie said. “I’m confident they will make good officers for the Navajo Police Department.”

The transition from civilian to police officer called for daily three mile runs, relocation to the academy barracks to attend classroom and practical training, and weekly testing. The recruits had over 23 weeks of training that tested their agility and awareness.

In addition, they were tasked with community outreach initiatives to build a stronger relationship with the people and the community they will be serving. This is a requirement for all class recruits.

“The class embraced those activities, visiting local schools to interact with students and attending community listening sessions to understand what the community expects of them,”

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Yazzie said.

As the event came to a close and the traditional retrieval of the recruit class flag was completed, the ceremony ended with a prayer and one last call out of the class motto led by Class Leader Paige Begay.

“I will fight, I will survive, I will go home,” echoed through the center, followed by cheers of the crowd.

Officer Leah Hatathlie explained that the class motto was adopted because it encompasses the reality of the job. “We are willing to lay down our lives for our families and the people we serve, and we will survive and return home to our families.”

Officer Hatathlie credits her son as her motivation for joining the Navajo Police Department.

“I wanted to be an officer so my son and the people in the community can live in a safe community. It may take some time to reach that goal, but I’m here to make that difference” she said.

Hatathlie will be assigned to the Tuba City District.

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