

Fact Sheet: The Navajos

- Today, the Navajos number about 225,000 people—the second largest Native American tribe in the United States. Most of them live on the Navajo-Reservation of 64,000 square km in the corner area of Utah, New Mexico and Arizona
- originally 4, there are more than 75 distinct clans now
- the Navajo Nation is governed by the Navajo Tribal Council

History

- settled in the Southwest between 900 and 1200 AD;
- were greatly influenced by the Pueblo Indians with whom they came into contact;
- were traditionally nomadic; lived in hogans in summer and earth-covered lodges in winter;
- In the 17th century they lived in the area between San Juan River and Little Colorado River in Northeast Arizona but also spread beyond that area;
- After the occupation of New Mexico by the Americans (ca. 1846), the Navajo resisted this domination;
- 1863 U.S. government sent Kit Carson to subdue them, resulting in the destruction of herds and crops and the imprisonment of many Navajos at Fort Sumner (“the Long Walk,” during which about 200 people died of starvation and cruel treatment) for four years, 1864–1868;

- Treaty of 1868 allowed the Navajos to return a 3.5 million acre reservation in the corner of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah; There were about 9,000 Navajo left;
- irrigation projects by the federal government to increase agriculture in the 1930s.

Culture and Contemporary Life

- Navajos call themselves “Dineh”—“the people”
- Navajo language is a Apachean language of the Athabaskan family since they are related to the Apaches (the language was used to create cryptographic codes during World War II)
- live in extended kinship groups, inheritance is still through the mother’s line;
- farming (corn, beans), hunting (antelopes, deer) and after the introduction of sheep in the 17th century, shepherding superseded farming and hunting
- today also lumbering, mining (coal, gas minerals), metalworking, weaving, pottery
- The tribe owns enterprises and runs schools, the Navajo Community College, and newspapers
- Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park, Antelope Canyon Park and Four Corners Monument are tribal parks operated by the Navajo Tribal Council

(compiled with the help of www.britannica.com, www.infoplease.com and other, private sources)



The Left and the Right Mittens, two rock formations at the Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park in New Mexico



A Navajo tour guide at the Monument Valley