

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

Prior to the occupation of the Southwest by the United States, the Navaho existed as groups of people, ^{usually} either clans, ^{containing the} or ^{custom of} groups of ^{family of} ~~clans~~, ^{They were only} united by language and by tribal culture, ^{they had} but ~~with~~ no political entity, ^{or sense of responsibility to unrelated groups.} There were chiefs, or head men, chosen by each group, but there seemed no need for any further government. Certainly the Spanish Government of the 17th ~~and~~ ^{to the} early 19th centuries did not realize the independence of these Navaho groups, nor did the Mexican Government during its 25 year duration. Nor was it fully comprehended by our Government until the time of the exile to Fort Sumner. It was during these years that General Carlton tried to establish a simple form of self-government, but the old order of family and clan seemed unchangeable and any other form was incomprehensible to the Navaho. There were many notable characters among the chiefs of the early 1800s, most of them destined to become prisoners of war, exiles to Fort Sumner. Their names appear on the treaty of 1868, signed by General Sherman for the United States, and by twenty eight Navaho leaders, including Barboncito, Manuelito, Narbona, Ganado Muchos, and others.

After the return to the reservation in 1868 and the establishment of the U.S. Agency at Fort Defiance, the old order continued. The civil First Agent to the Navaho was Captain Henry L. Dodge who had much ^{ing} understand^x of and sympathy with these Indians. He utilized these Navaho leaders to ~~help him in his work~~ assist him in maintaining law and order. As time went on and more agents appeared on the scene, they found it necessary to be more autocr^{atic}.

By 1901 the Bureau of Indian Affairs divided the Navaho Country into six districts (including the Hopi) with an agency in each.

This system of smaller areas of jurisdiction greatly facilitated the work of each agency, but it did nothing to bring the tribe together as a whole. Communication was still difficult, and in many areas, travel was still only possible by foot or on horseback. Each political change in Washington brought a new Commissioner of Indian Affairs and each had new ideas and adopted changes in policy that must have been bewildering to the Navaho.

1 In 1927 Superintendent John Hunter of the Leupp Agency, in the Southwestern part of the reservation, developed ^a local community organizations^a called chapters. These chapter meetings made it possible to bring the people of the region together where representatives from the Bureau of Indian Affairs could bring about a better understanding of the Bureau's efforts ^{for the} ^{interest of} to improve agricultural conditions, the improvement of livestock and the necessity for schools. ~~And at the~~ ^{the people themselves could get together to discuss any problem.} This Chapter plan proved most beneficial and the idea spread rapidly to the other districts., with the result of better understanding ~~on both sides.~~ ^{between the Bureau of Indian Affairs & the Navaho}

2 But it was the discovery of oil on the reservation in 1921, that brought to focus the need for a Tribal Government for all the People. This discovery was located in the San Juan district near Shiprock, and the discussion immediately arose as to whether oil leases were to be executed by this district or by the Tribe as a whole. Article ~~ten~~ ^{to determine the opinion of any part of the reservation} of the 1868 treaty, required the consent of at least three quarters of all adult male Indians of any part of the reservation. Therefore the Department of the Interior ruled that these oil leases should be for the benefit of the whole tribe., and authorized the Commissioner to sign oil and gas leased in their behalf.

3 The establishment of a governing body, however, was a slow process. The Department of the Interior notified the Commissioner of

Indian Affairs that a Council of Navaho men from all districts must be created whose members were qualified to act on matters concerning the Tribe. Thus began the task of developing a democratic representative Tribal Government for the Navaho People. The first council was elected in 1923 and held its first meeting on July 7th of that year. The Chairman was chosen outside the Council Membership with ^{one} of the delegates being chosen as Vice Chairman. ^{Tribal agent} of the tribe, rather than the Com. on Indian Affairs. Meetings were called by the Commissioner, and could not be held except in his presence. ^{concerning the council}

Other changes were made during these formative years, one a provision for voting by both men and women and the calling of meetings by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs rather than the Commissioner of the Tribe. Terms of office were established at four years. By 1936 the Council Membership was criticized as allegedly not representing the leadership of the tribe. The people still could not comprehend leadership beyond the local level. It was the issuance of grazing controls that brought home to each locality that the Council rather than the local head men were making the decisions.

More Within a few years the Tribal Organization was to undergo revisions and enlargements as its members learned the technique of government.

The members of this early council were more or less selected by the B. I. A.

PART III
A.
TRANSITION

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

PART III
A.
TRANSITION

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

PART IV
TRADITION