Name of Marker: Dr. Annie Dodge Wauneka (1910–1997)
"Legendary Mother of the Navajo Nation"

County: McKinley (Navajo Nation)

Review: □ Original Text/Replacement Marker    □ Revised Text
□ Move of Existing Marker  □ New Marker

NMDOT District: 6

NMDOT Highway: To be determined

Suggested Site for Installation: To be determined

Existing or Proposed Text:

Dr. Annie Dodge Wauneka was elected to the Navajo Tribal Council in 1951 and served for three terms. She worked tirelessly to improve the health and education of the Navajo people and led the fight against tuberculosis on the reservation. Among her many distinctions, she received the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963 and was inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame in 2000.

Word Count: 66

Previous Title and Text: □ N/A
Researcher/author: Judy Martin, Kim Suina

Source(s):

Text Approved by CPRC on Date: August 8, 2008
CPRC Comments: No
For Referral to: NMHMWI, Dee Beingessner, NMDOT GO
I concur. Please proceed with the sign.

Karren

Karren Sahler, Director
New Mexico Historic Women Marker Initiative
505-501-1385
k.sahler@comcast.net

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Drake, Tom, DCA" <tom.drake@state.nm.us>
Date: January 11, 2010 3:41:44 PM MST
To: "Karren Sahler" <k.sahler@comcast.net>
Subject: RE: Revised Text for Dr. Annie Dodge

I verify the text on the proof of the marker from Dr. Annie Dodge is identical to that approved by the CPRC on August 8, 2008.

Tom

p.s. Karren,

Since we’re at this stage with those markers, does it mean they’re about to be built and installed? Can you let me know any approximate dates when they’d go up. Once these are completed, My tally says 29 will have been installed (not including the disputed Manzanares marker).

Begin forwarded message:

From: Karren Sahler [mailto:k.sahler@comcast.net]
Sent: Monday, January 11, 2010 2:54 PM
To: Drake, Tom, DCA
Subject: Fwd: Revised Text for Dr. Annie Dodge

please proof and approve.

Thanks,

Karren

Begin forwarded message:

From: "P&M Signs, Inc." <general@pmsignsinc.com>
Date: January 11, 2010 1:02:42 PM MST
To: Karren Sahler <k.sahler@comcast.net>
Subject: Revised Text for Dr. Annie Dodge

Here you go.

--
Aimee Watts
P&M Signs Inc.
Phone: 505-847-2850
Fax: 505-847-0007
Email: general@pmsignsinc.com
From: "Beingesser, Dee A., NMDOT" <Dee.Beingesser@state.nm.us>
Subject: RE: I can't locate Wauneka In McKinley
Date: July 27, 2009 9:59:37 AM MDT
To: <k.sahler@comcast.net>

NM 134 is about halfway between Gallup and Shiprock off of US 491. The marker is nine miles away from the junction of those two roads and the city at the junction is Sheep Springs.

From: k.sahler@comcast.net [mailto:k.sahler@comcast.net]
Sent: Friday, July 24, 2009 3:22 PM
To: Beingesser, Dee A., NMDOT
Subject: re: I can't locate Wauneka in McKinley

Hi Dee,

I have Annie Wauneka, Navajo going on NM 134, mm 9.2

I can't find this on the maps you gave me. Can you help me locate or correct location if I have it wrong?

Thanks,

Karren

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On behalf of the Navajo Nation, I hereby approve the marker text and location as indicated in the attached document.

Dr. Joe Shirley Jr.

Print Name

Signature

President of the Navajo Nation

Title

JUN 16 2006

Date
Annie Dodge Wauneka
"Legendary Mother of the Navajo Nation"
1910-1997

Annie was first elected to the Navajo Tribal Council in 1951. Annie fought tirelessly to improve the health and education of the Navajo people. Among her many distinctions, Annie received the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963; and was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 2000.
Tribe: Navajo Nation
Marker: Annie Dodge Wauneka
Location: NM 188 W6 min 33 2 (TENATIVE)
Approved by: President Joe Shirley, Jr.
Current Administration:
Navajo Nation
President Joe Shirley, Jr.
Vice President Ben Shelly
P.O. Box 9000
Window Rock, AZ 86515
Phone (928) 871-6352/6357
Fax (928) 871-4025
Contact:
Judy Martin, Cultural Specialist
Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department
Phone (928) 871-7153
Fax (928) 871-7886
Email jamartin_hpd@yahoo.com
Additional Contacts:
Notes:

Done

NM 134 MP 9.2
Subject: Fwd: Women's Marker Project
Date: Sunday, June 25, 2006 8:25 AM
From: PATGFRENCH@aol.com
To: <k.sahler@comcast.net>
Cc: <karren.sahler@sothebysinternationalrealty.com>

Karren, Please add these names to our master list that I hope you can put in some form to distribute at our meeting. Thanks, Pat

From: Laura Marcus <lauraruth@earthlink.net>
Date: Sun, 25 Jun 2006 08:35:29 -0600
To: <patgfrench@aol.com>
Subject: Women's Marker Project

Hello Pat,

I hope you are well.

I wanted to follow up on our conversation about the Women's Marker project. Two notable Navajo women who come to mind are Annie Dodge Wauneka and Kay (Kaibah) Bennett. Annie Wauneka was the daughter of Chee Dodge - one of the first Navajo statesmen following the formation of the Navajo Reservation in 1868. She was herself very involved in Navajo civic affairs and I think very highly regarded by Navajo people. To me, she really stands out as a possibility for your project. I believe she lived in the Crystal area - so would have been a New Mexico resident.

The other person who came to mind is Kay (Kaibah) Bennett. She was a fixture at the Gallup Intertribal Ceremonial - a singer who accompanied herself on the drum - and she was among the first people to have recorded records of her music. I believe she was something of a role model for Navajo women - because her talents encompassed Navajo traditional culture - but she also found a way to share this with a wider audience through recordings and radio - I think she may have had her own radio show at one point. She died within the past ten years, I think. She was based in Gallup.

I imagine you will want to check directly with Navajo people on this. For some reason, Zonnie Gorman comes to mind - she is the daughter of Carl Gorman - who was a Navajo statesman and Code Talker - and sister of R.C. Gorman - both of whom are gone now. I've not met Zonnie personally - but have seen her speak publicly - and I believe she might be a good resource. She is a film maker and lives in Gallup.

Hope this is helpful!

Also - I've been in touch with a former classmate of mine from the folklore program at Indiana University, Cathy McAleer. She lives in Taos and has made New Mexico her home for a long time. I have not seen her in quite a while, but we plan to get together before leave NM. She was interested in learning more about your project, so you can contact her at (505) 737-9166 or at cathymci@yahoo.com. If I think of anyone else, I'll let you know.
Thanks again for contacting me - I am so disappointed not to have the opportunity to participate in this great project! Just so you have these names in one place, the person I was thinking of at New Mexico Arts - part of the Cultural Affairs Department - is Carol Cooper, who is the rural outreach person - and is very involved with the development of the fiber arts trail in NM - working with folks around the state. Because of her familiarity with the farther reaches of the state, she would probably be a good contact for you. For the same reason, our state folklorist, Claude Stephenson, also at NMA, would be a good contact.

Best of luck with this fabulous project!

Laura
Great, another nomination! I will follow up on this. Thanks for checking into the word count for the olla dancers and looking at the release form.

Kim

-----Original Message-----
From: Judy Martin [mailto:jamartin_hpd@yahoo.com]
Sent: Mon 4/21/2008 3:59 PM
To: patgfrench@aol.com
Cc: Sahler, Karren
Subject: Historic Women's Marker - 2006

Ya'at'eeh, My name is Judy Martin, Cultural Specialist. I work for Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department. I am forwarding a name of a candidate for the New Mexico Historic Women's marker Initiative 2006. A relative of this candidate assisted me with the text. I hope you will use the information. Thank you. Judy Martin phone#: (928) 871-7153, FAX#: 871-7886 and email address is: jamartin_hpd@yahoo.com.

Be a better friend, newshound, and know-it-all with Yahoo! Mobile. Try it now. <http://us.rd.yahoo.com/evt=51733/*http://mobile.yahoo.com/_ylt=Ahu06i62sR8H DtDypao8Wcj9tAc>
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------- End of Forwarded Message

April 8, 2008

Tony Joe
Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Office
PO Box 4950
Window Rock, AZ 86515

Dear Mr. Joe,

It’s amazing that not one of New Mexico’s 500 Official Scenic Historic Markers has as its central subject a woman, although dozens of men from the valiant to the shameful are commemorated with markers around the state. That has changed with the New Mexico Historic Women Marker Initiative (the Initiative) led by members of the New Mexico Women’s Forum and with First Lady Barbara Richardson as the honorary chairwoman of its Selection Committee.

The Initiative seeks to install fifty-four markers representing the contributions of women to New Mexico history in each county and for every pueblo and Indian tribe in the state. To date, three markers recognizing the historic contributions of Pueblo women have been approved by the Cultural Properties Review Committee (CPRC): Esther Martinez (Ohkay Owingeh), Susie Rayos Marmon (Laguna), and a group marker dedicated to the role that Cochiti women played in the Storyteller tradition in this pueblo. The Ohkay Owingeh marker is scheduled to be installed in early June 2008.

Anyone can submit a nomination, but often committees have formed and worked with tribal or county governments to develop nominations. Under the established criteria, individual or groups of deceased women can be the subjects of markers. The final deadline for nominations is June 30th, 2008.

Submitted markers are first reviewed by the Selection Committee of the Initiative. Final selections are then given to the state’s Historic Preservation Division for presentation and acceptance by the CPRC. All pueblo and tribal submissions should be accompanied by a letter or resolution from the tribal council or government accepting the submitted text as the official, final version. If the CPRC has any questions or changes to the text, tribal officials will be consulted before any changes are made. The Department of Transportation will work with tribal governments to select the best location for marker installations. Markers are typically installed on state-owned highways.

Sincerely,

Kim Suina
An application form and additional information are available at http://www.nmhistoricpreservation.org/women_markers.php, or contact kim_sui@hotmail.com or via mailing address at:

Kim Suina c/o Pat French  
New Mexico Historic Women Marker Initiative  
216 Washington Avenue  
Santa Fe, NM 87501
An Interview with Dr. Annie Dodge Wauneka
Author(s): Shirley Hill Witt
Published by: University of Nebraska Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3346218
Accessed: 03/07/2008 10:16

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An Interview with Dr. Annie Dodge Wauneka

Shirley Hill Witt

Out of the forests and deserts that for centuries have nurtured the Diné, the Navajo People, one strong and powerful woman exemplifies the special traits that describe so many of her tribal sisters: strength, determination, perseverance, indomitability. She is Dr. Annie Dodge Wauneka, of whom Stan Steiner has said, "If there were a queen in the United States, it would have to be this woman."1

Leadership responsibilities are nothing new to women of the People. The matrilineal clan and homestead organizations are built upon women's ownership of hogans and herds. The women are responsible for the family land, for this generation and the generations yet to come. They must respect Ground Mother. The decisions that they must make can only be pragmatic: there is no room for sentimentality in the beautiful but harsh world of the People. The women decision makers are guided by natural laws learned from their spiritual antecedents in this and the previous three worlds through which the People have come. White Shell Woman and Spider Woman gave them gifts and guidance and set the Navajo on the path toward their destiny.

Dr. Annie Dodge Wauneka is the daughter of Henry Chee Dodge, the last tribal chief and the first tribal chairman of the Navajo. Born in 1913, she grew up in a livestock-raising household in which horses, donkeys, mules, sheep, and goats were herded. In the 1930's, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (B.I.A.) made the judgment that there must be a reduction in the number of animals being grazed on the Navajo reservation because, it maintained, the lands were being overgrazed.

This was the second livestock reduction for the People: the first occurred when U.S. soldiers removed the Navajo from their lands along the "Long Walk" into relocation camps at Bosque Redondo, New Mexico. "Kit" Carson used both U.S. troops and "volunteers" to clear the People, their animals, and their crops, off the land which, it was incorrectly rumored, contained gold. For three years they languished in despair on starvation rations. Their return home was bittersweet: their eyes were met by scorched earth and dead animals.

The stock reduction that Dr. Wauneka experienced in the 1930's came into being, as has been said, because the B.I.A. determined that the land was being overgrazed by too many herds on too little land.

One Native explanation for the loss of grass in the 1930's targets the B.I.A.'s parent structure, the Department of the Interior, as the villain. In an attempt to eradicate endemic bubonic plague in the Southwest, Interior launched a plan to kill off the prairie dogs. Such spraying as was done killed an enormous array of small burrowing animals, say some Navajo, far more than just prairie dogs. When small rodents are destroyed, the burrows they excavate soon cave in, no longer holding rain water near ground level; it runs off or it evaporates. The loss of thousands and millions of tiny catchments in the

Shirley Hill Witt (Akwesasne Mohawk) is the Director of the Rocky Mountain Regional Office of the United States Commission on Civil Rights. She has held this post since 1975 after serving as an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Colorado College. Prior to that, she taught at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Witt obtained her B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Michigan and earned her Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico in sociobiological anthropology and genetic demography. She has devoted herself to civil, tribal, and human rights, having worked with a variety of communities including urban and reservation Native Americans in Canada and the United States, blacks and whites in Appalachia, blacks in Omaha, and Hispanics in New Mexico. She participated in the International Women's Year in Mexico City and was a delegate-at-large to the Houston Women's Conference. She has served at the international level as human rights expert during the NGO Conference on Discrimination against the Indigenes of the Americas in 1977; for UNESCO; and for the U.S. International Communication Agency. Witt has lectured in North and Central America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa on human rights issues.

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ground causes soil desiccation and the destruction of natural grasses. Some of the People attribute what the B.I.A. called "overgrazing" in the 1930's to this shortsighted sequence of events.

Caution aside, what the People and the B.I.A. disagree about is what is to be done when forage is diminished. Dr. Wauneka described how the People viewed the role of humans. "In the 1930's, we didn't understand the concept of 'overgrazing' that the government brought forth, nor the charges that we were damaging the forage. Overgrazing was their explanation for the cycles of the forage. The older Navajos say that the spiritual beings have the responsibility for the forage. If it rains, it makes the grass grow for the animals to eat. If it snows and kills the livestock, the spirits are still handling the responsibility for the forage. The government has no [moral] authority to be making such decisions."

She explained that in the stock reduction program of the 1930's, a family was affected by how large or small a grazing area it had in customary usage. "If you had a small area, you were in trouble; if you had a larger area, you had more room to operate. The B.I.A. made the Navajo get down to carrying capacity as they defined it. My father was allowed 350 sheep units then for grazing permits, but now that area has only twenty-five units granted. I don't know how they make such judgments. It seems that the decisions then and now depended upon what the family had by way of livestock the day that the agent came by.

By misjudging many things. The household head was called the 'owner' of the livestock even though the herd may have had several owners who were running their livestock together as is customary."

Dr. Wauneka described how the livestock was cut back. "The B.I.A. range riders in the 1930's rounded up all our livestock and put paint on each one of our horses, mules, burros, donkeys, cows, goats, and sheep. They put paint on them. They assigned a code. Red paint meant that the animal had to go, had to be culled out, sold off, or killed. There were other colors depending on their determinations. The horses, burros, donkeys, and mules were the first to be taken away, especially the older horses."

The loss of the draft and transportation animals was particularly damaging then because there were few who could afford cars or trucks. The People depended upon the horses and mules to ride or to hitch up to wagons, Dr. Wauneka explained. "The B.I.A. supervisors sold off as many of the livestock as they could, and when they couldn't sell any more, they killed and burned them. Thousands of them. We saw them drive the sheep and animals into the canyons and burn them. Such a waste! It was horrible."

As she grew into womanhood in her father's shadow, he carried her along at a pace and set her upon a road that she might not have chosen if left to herself. She said that it was in those troubled 1930's that her public commitment was born. "My father was a great leader. I saw him work. And he always said, 'Now look, if you see problems within the community or individual Navajo ..., you interpret for those people; now don't just look at them. That's why I put you to school.' So I would get up there and interpret. So, first thing you know, they picked me as chapter secretary."

From general duties, she soon focused on specific problem areas. "In 1947, as a chapter spokesman in Klagetoh, I became a member of one of the first grazing committees. By then, the government had passed a law allowing the tribes to hire attorneys to work for them on the land claims. It also allowed us to hire attorneys to help us with our grazing problems, too.

"Our first wish was to get rid of the B.I.A. range riders. The grazing committee I served on was for the purpose of mediating the confusion over livestock and all the rules and regulations.

"Then came the welfare checks. The lives of the Navajo were ruined by the stock reduction and then the welfare checks that came afterward."

Dr. Wauneka's career next went in the direction of public health. The National Indian Health Board speaks of her as "The First Lady of Indian Health." In 1951, she won a seat on the Navajo Tribal Council, the first woman to do so. Before long, she was appointed to assist a medical team seeking to eradicate tuberculosis on the reservation—tuberculosis which was running wild through the People. She counseled. She investigated. For ten years, she broadcast a radio program from Gallup, New Mexico in which, "I talked about everything under the sun about health that pertains to my People. I went with the cycle of the weather, like in the winter I'd be talking about pneumonia: how to take care of yourself, how you must be dressed; and then when the spring came, I'd talk about flies and diarrhea."

She continued to serve as the lone woman on the Tribal Council for twenty-seven years. Twice during that time, she had her husband for an opponent for the Klagetoh seat. Her recognition went far beyond the borders of the Navajo reservation: she was awarded the John F. Kennedy Peace Prize; in 1976 she was chosen as one of ten Women of the Year; and she received an honorary doctorate degree. She strove to obtain the best possible health care for the People, to see that they received materials and opportunities to improve their homes and sanitation methods, and paid special attention to the needs of the elderly and the young. She once commented that "housing is so critical on this reservation we don't have housewives here; we have shack wives." About the youth, she observed, "It's a sad situation in the summertime that our young people wander across our land begging for jobs. They want to work. They want opportunity."

Dr. Wauneka still serves Klagetoh chapter today, some thirty years after her historic step into the public eye. But in the face of so much change for the Diné in the ensuing years, not only do major problems remain, but old problems thought to be banished have risen once again.

In 1882, the Hopi reservation was established in Arizona under Executive Order for the exclusive use of the Hopi "and such other Indians as the Secretary of the Interior may see fit to settle thereon." Even at that time, numbers of Navajo homesteads existed in that territory. Over the years, the Hopi and the Navajo lived side by side, the Hopi pursuing a horticultural way of life with occasional stock raising, while the Navajo were primarily engaged in livestock raising, with casual crop growing.
The Hopi concentrated their settlements on and near the high mesas; the Navajo spread themselves thinly throughout the remaining ecological niches. A symbiosis developed out of need through the succeeding decades, and both shared the ceremonial places that abound in that awesome space.

A series of legal and political actions over the last decade have brought these neighbors to the end of coexistence in a geographical area centering upon the Hopi reservation and taking in an area fifty miles wide by sixty miles long. Many thousands of Navajo will be required to leave the area over the next five years under the terms determined by Congress in Public Law 93-531. A foretaste of the future took place on April 18, 1981 when the B.I.A. began an impoundment of Navajo livestock on what is now considered to be exclusive Hopi property.

Dr. Wauneka was on the Navajo Tribal Council when the storm clouds began to gather. “When the question of stock reduction came over the Diné again like a black cloud, I tried to advise the People as best I could. P.L. 93-531 is a cold set of decisions. It will be worse than the stock reduction plan of the 1930’s because then there was no fence; only the district lines were set, but they weren’t monitored except at the beginning by the B.I.A. range supervisors.”

Two of the Diné groups which are feeling the first blows of impoundment and the fear of removal from their homesteads are those living at Big Mountain and at Black Mesa. Dr. Wauneka spoke of their circumstances with quiet force. “Big Mountain is a difficult area to live in, an area shared between the Hopi and the Navajo people under the 1882 Executive Order. The Hopi have their land and the Navajo have theirs. The Big Mountain Navajo are self-sufficient on sheep and livestock, and have no cash economy. They share and share alike. That was the worst mistake the judges and Congress made in all the recent crisis: assuming that the Hopi and the Navajo can’t share. They have been sharing for generations.

“The fence that partitions the land between what will be Hopi and Navajo areas is supposed to go through, as determined by Congress. Its decision is wrong. And the ones who passed the law (P.L. 93-531) are still sitting there in Congress, so there isn’t much hope that the law can be changed.

“There is a ‘life estate’ program which can allow the older Navajo residents to live where they are until they die, under certain circumstances. It is run by the Navajo-Hopi Relocation Commission. But that concept is very alien to the Navajo—death and dying. They tell each other that if you stay here, when you die, the Hopi will dig up your bones and throw them over the partition fence.” She laughs and then shrugs.

Vast mineral wealth was discovered beneath much of the land under question. Coal and oil companies made explorations, and coal stripmining was begun energetically in the Black Mesa area. Recently Dr. Wauneka took the long journey to speak at the Black Mesa eighth grade graduation ceremony. Her reaction to the experience was strong. “The Navajo people out at Black Mesa are so poor! Even though they live on all that coal. I told the People there to get some support from the mine, the Peabody Coal Company. I told the graduates to get into high school because they need to come back into this area to take care of their People.

“They are so traditional at Black Mesa that almost no one ever went to school before. Those poor three students—there were only three of them—had no gowns of any kind. They graduated in their everyday clothes. They should have had gowns. They need that recognition from the Navajo People.”

An idea came to Dr. Wauneka concerning the benefits of coal and mineral development in that area. “The Navajo in the Big Mountain and Black Mesa area should pay attention to what has happened in the Aneth area, Utah. The Utah State Legislature voted to assign 37.5 percent royalties on all natural resources extracted from their land to the Aneth chapter. This is a good model for the rest of the Navajo in those coal mining and other resource areas. The Black Mesa and Big Mountain Navajo should get this done by the use of their own attorneys and not wait for something bad to happen to them. That whole area is on a coal bed. They will need to get this money for the ones who won’t be relocated. The Arizona State Legislature might be willing to do something like the Utah State Legislature did.”

Not only does Dr. Wauneka think forcefully and hold dynamic views about what needs to be accomplished by and for her People, but she also challenges the received wisdom of the outside world about the role and future of Native women. At the first Southwest Indian Women’s Conference, she addressed more than 800 attendees with the following words:

Ever since the development of political machinery and bureaucratic organizations among Indians, there has been a sudden perspective of women—and the roles of women—as second-class citizens. The basic reason for discrimination against Indian women stems from the Federal government’s intervention in Indian affairs.

To offset the second-class role, Indian women must become more active in politics and become aware of the educational opportunities open to Native American women.

But she does not shrink from setting priorities in matters of Indian rights and women’s rights, and the place of culture in the world to come. She observed that, “Modern Indian women are being forced to decide whether the fight to retain an Indian identity is more important than the battle for equal rights.” Her answer is that “the struggle to maintain Indian tribal self-identity sometimes does become more important than equal opportunity for Indian women. Basic beliefs must remain unchanged.”

In view of the difficult days ahead for the Diné who are confronting the onslaught of energy developers and the specter of removal—the “Second Long Walk”—the strength of women like Dr. Wauneka may make the difference between a new kind of colonization and the blossoming of the Navajo Nation into its full possibility. She speaks to the younger Diné women, telling them that Indian women cannot escape involvement in political and decision-making roles. . . We cannot afford to sit with our
arms folded and wait for responsibility to come to us. Indian women must strive to share decision making.\

One can hear in these words the echoes of her extraordinary father. And we can see that his foresight has brought our generation and the next and the next the courage of this extraordinary matriarch, Dr. Annie Dodge Wauneka.

NOTES


4. *Navajo Times*.

5. *Navajo Times*. 
necas had access to good water, many households had to rely on water brought in by a fifty-five-gallon drum from places where it had been exposed to numerous sources of contamination.

By that time Annie's half sister Ann Shirley from Sawmill was living with the family, looking after the children, and helping with the cooking and other household tasks. Toward noon, Ann Shirley would pack lunches for everyone, and the head herder's daughter, Lydia, would climb on her father's old paint horse and ride out to deliver them to the other herders working on the range with the sheep. All activities centered on the ranch headquarters, and except for Annie, those living there rarely left the place.

"I felt we were away from civilization," Lydia remembers, adding that she did not leave the ranch until she was four and a half or five years old. "One year, we had sheared the sheep, and this time I got to go along to the trader's down on Highway 66. My Grandpa Wauneka had a huge truck that we used to take bags and bags of wool to market. When we brought the wool in, we got a free Coke, in those little bottles like they used to have. I was so excited, I thought, 'Oh boy!' I remember I took a couple of swallows and immediately gave it back to my mom. It was too strong! When we got there, it was the first time I had seen white people. The trader had kids about our age. They were all running around there in the store with blond hair and light eyes. I just kept looking at them. When we were going home, I asked my parents whether that kid who was so white could see with his gray eyes." The pale eyes were such a contrast to all the dark eyes she had seen previously that the child appeared blind to her.

While overseeing the ranching operations and the employees, Annie continued to work with the Klagetoh chapter as secretary, helping with the continuing problems with stock reduction and interpreting for Navajos who sought the help of the white doctors at the nearby hospital at Ganado. For four years she mulled over her father's dying wish, interpreting "Do not let my straight rope fall to the ground" as a desire to have his work for the Navajo People carried on. Tom was established in a career off the reservation; Mary was not interested in public life. That left her and Ben.

As the elections for Tribal Council approached, Annie began talking openly about her possible candidacy, asking the opinion of the men and women in her district. The women—who had been able to vote since 1928, eight years after other American women had gained suffrage—were supportive, as were some of the men. The older, traditional Navajo men, particularly some of the medicine men, told her that she needed to stay home, do her chores, and take care of her children.

ANNIE RUNS FOR TRIBAL COUNCIL

But the tide had been cast years before, and Annie decided to run, even though Lorencita was only four and Sallie was still just a toddler. Her opponents were two men, one of them a medicine man. Like any well-bred Navajo, she knew that the medicine man deserved respect. Annie did not speak against him while campaigning but just kept vowing that, if chosen, she would do her best. Of course, in this society everyone knew that she was Chee Dodge's daughter, and the memories of the late leader were still fresh.

Actually, the prospect of having a woman in a position of authority was not so unusual to Navajos. Traditionally, Navajo women owned their own flocks of sheep and controlled the home, the children, and the family's economics. The small groups that lived together and shared subsistence duties were organized around a head mother, whose opinions and desires were listened to and usually acted upon. Women were also actively involved in the decision-making process at the chapter level. Navajo author Ruth Roessle writes, "In many, if not in most chapters, it appears that men wait for the women to make motions or to determine the direction in which they feel the community should go before they enter the discussion." The fact that the Tribal Council, with only one exception, had consisted of men was not something the Navajos had designed for themselves. When the first tribal councils were constituted, they were orchestrated by Washington bureaucrats—white men living in a society where their mothers, wives, and daughters were not allowed to vote.

Roessle writes that "in the early days of Navajo history, men expected and welcomed the participation of women in roles of
leadership and decision-making. However, that excluded the top rung of leadership. A Navajo myth tells of Woman Chief, who lived in the underworld and ruled so badly that her policies led to a complete break between men and women for four years. After a wise owl brought the men and women together, the men assumed the position of rulers. Annie, however, was not running for Tribal Council chairman; she was seeking only the opportunity to be one of the council representatives.

The election was held March 5 and 6, 1951. For the first time on the reservation, formal secret ballots were used with photographs of the candidates beside their names. Those Navajos who could not read could vote by picture. Across the reservation, more than 75 percent of the eligible voters participated, some of them traveling sixty miles by driving a wagon over rugged roads or on horseback to reach the polling stations. When the votes were counted, Annie had won a seat on the Tribal Council representing the chapters of Klagetoh and Wide Ruins. She was forty-one years old—healthy, politically astute, and more than ready to move into her new life.

Although it has been widely written that Annie was the first woman on the Tribal Council, in fact she was preceded by Lily J. Neil of Huerfano, New Mexico, who had served the previous four years and had been reelected. Neil was known as “talking woman” because she was not afraid to air her views, but she was badly injured in a car accident and resigned. When Annie was installed on March 20, 1951, fourteen days after the election, she was the lone woman. Two of her half brothers were installed with her: Ben Dodge, representing Crystal, and Justin Shirley, Kee’hanahab’s son from Sawmill.

Annie was sworn into the Navajo Tribal Council in the Council Chambers built at the base of the Window Rock six miles south of Fort Defiance. The Window Rock is a towering sandstone formation with a hole, or window, through it. For as long as the Navajos have inhabited the area, the Window Rock has been an important shrine. Medicine men brought bottles to gather water for the Water Way ceremony, which was held to bring abundant rain. The council chambers are built in the shape of a large hogan, and around the interior walls runs a long mural depicting important events in history of the Navajo Tribe. Chee Dodge figures prominently in one of the sections. The chambers were built in 1936 when Indian Commissioner Collier decided that a new Navajo Central Agency was needed. Also constructed at that time were large low buildings to house the BIA offices. All the buildings are constructed of russet sandstone quarried in the vicinity.

AN ENERGETIC BEGINNING

In the years since Annie had lurked in the back of the chapter meeting, too shy to speak, she had learned to be forthright with her opinions. A review of the Tribal Council minutes over the years shows that new delegates usually do not take part in the discussions during their first months on the council. They watch their seasoned colleagues to see how to proceed. Not Annie. In her very first meeting as a council delegate, she stood up and, when recognized, launched into a relatively lengthy discussion of the Advisory Council, a smaller group that made recommendations to the larger body. She suggested a revision in the way the Advisory Council members were selected and slipped in the information that her predecessor had never brought back any information from the Advisory Council to the chapter. Her objections made the front page of the next day’s Gallup Independent, but within the council her suggestions were neither acknowledged nor acted upon.

Undaunted, the next day she was back on her feet, accusing the general superintendent of the reservation, a white BIA appointee, of approving resolutions without bothering to acquaint himself with the desires of the Navajo People. Later, she complained that the superintendent sat in the front of the council next to the chairman and continually whispered in his ear. She thought it made Chairman Sam Ahkeah look like a puppet, and it certainly did not appear as if the Tribal Council were exercising “self-government” if a white man was directing things. Soon after that, the superintendent no longer sat in front, although, of course, his real behind-the-scenes power was in no way diminished.
Awards and Acrimony

There is no indication why President Kennedy selected Annie from among hundreds of equally illustrious potential honorees suggested by his advisers. It might have been an attempt to heal relations with the Navajos, which had been uneasy. Attorney General Robert Kennedy, the president’s brother, had published a popular article attacking Indian land claims against the federal government generally and singling out the Navajo Land Claim cause for specific ridicule.¹

Waiting for Information

By September 4, Annie had still not heard the final date for the awards and needed to make travel plans. She telegraphed the White House, expressing again her deep appreciation for the nomination and concluding, “I await further instructions as to when and where the awards will be presented.”

A White House special assistant wrote back that the date of the president’s award ceremony was being postponed by one month. He promised to let her know the details in a few days but advised that it would probably occur about November 1. October 29 arrived, and she still had no further information. This was nerve wracking to someone so far away from the action in Washington. Telephones on the reservation were few and didn’t always work. Had the message gotten lost? Would the ceremony take place without her? She again telegraphed, asking, “in order that I may arrange my itinerary which will allow me to travel to Washington, if that is necessary, I would appreciate being advised as to the date that the awards will be made.”

But the ceremony had to be delayed again. This time it was set for December 6. Meanwhile, Annie set about gathering gifts to take along. She had a pair of Navajo moccasins made for the president with thick white soles and a suede vamp that came up around the ankle. A much smaller pair, almost duplicates, were made for the little boy the nation called John-John. The press sensed a good story in Annie Wauneka and her work on the reservation. Life magazine sent a photographer, who took pictures of her visiting the sick in the hospitals and shopping in a trading post to purchase the presents she would take to Washington.

Then on November 22, just two weeks before the ceremony, Annie and the Navajo Nation joined the rest of America and the world in shock and mourning. President Kennedy had been shot in Dallas.

John F. Kennedy had been popular with Navajos, and the tribe joined the nation in grief. After a week of mourning and a nation-binding funeral, it was time for Americans and their government to get back to work. President Lyndon Johnson had the Medal of Freedom recipients notified that the ceremony scheduled for December 6, 1963, would take place as planned.

Annie had a week to get herself to Washington. Her preparations included another shopping trip during which she purchased a silver and beaded bolo tie for the new president and a silver pin for Lady Bird Johnson. The moccasins she had planned to present to President Kennedy were left behind, although she did take along the gifts intended for John Jr. and Caroline. Because of its link to the tragedy, Life magazine decided not to run the feature it had planned highlighting her work.²

On her way to Washington for the presentation, Annie stopped by to see her brother Tom in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, where he was the superintendent of the Osage Indian Agency. The local paper sent a reporter to interview her and ran a long story about the Navajo woman who was going to Washington to receive the nation’s highest award. The reporter wrote that “she had a outward appearance of calm, but exploded with verbal enthusiasm with eyes that dance and an infectious laugh.” The story ran with a photograph of Annie and Tom in front of a portrait of their father.³
THE MEDAL OF FREEDOM CEREMONY

Although no one in her family accompanied her, once in Washington Annie met up with Maurice McCabe, who had served as executive secretary for the Navajo Tribal Council for twelve years, and Mrs. McCabe. McCabe was representing the tribe and was also a clan relative. In the growing antagonism between Nakai and his camp and the Old Guard of which Annie was a part, McCabe, one of Annie’s confidants, had his own private war against Nakai, who had promised during the campaign to neutralize McCabe’s power and was cutting him out of the action.

On the morning of December 6, 1963, Annie awoke in a Washington DC hotel room. She dressed in her usual sturdy oxfords and a purple velvet blouse and colorful tiered skirt of dark blue print silk made for her by her daughter Georgia Ann. She then added four matching silver concho pins to the front of her blouse, put on some bracelets and rings of silver and turquoise, and did up her hair in her typical two-lobed bun wrapped with white yarn. Lastly she slipped around her neck a heavy silver and turquoise squash blossom necklace that had belonged to her father. Though Chee had been gone for twelve years, it was a way of taking him with her. The little daughter who had been so often overlooked, who was relegated to herding sheep while her half-siblings attended private schools, was now about to receive the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the land, for following in her father’s footsteps and serving her people.

The ceremony, which began shortly after noon, was held in the state dining room of the White House. At the front of the room was a marble fireplace, its mantel and side columns draped in black. Lady Bird Johnson was on hand to greet the honorees as they arrived, and she and Annie, both Westerners, chatted briefly while others were arriving. The audience included the Supreme Court justices, members of the cabinet, and friends and relatives of the honorees. Jacqueline Kennedy, who was still in mourning, attended the ceremony seated behind a screen.

After opening remarks by Under Secretary of State George W. Ball, President Johnson came forward, saying, “Over the past two weeks, our nation has known moments of the utmost sorrow of anguish and shame. This day, however, is a moment of great pride. In the shattering sequence of events that began 14 days ago, we encountered in its full horror man’s capacity for hatred and destruction. There is little we do not now know of evil, but it is time to turn once more to the pursuits of honor and excellence and of achievement that have always marked the true direction of the American people.”

Then, as the recipients were announced individually with a very short recounting of their achievements, each stepped to the front of the room and was awarded the handsome medal attached to a red, white, and blue ribbon. Angier Biddle Duke, chief of protocol, assisted in the presentation. The Medal of Freedom—a white star encircled by six golden eagles—had been redesigned by President and Mrs. Kennedy. Each honoree also received a citation. Annie’s read: “Vigorous crusader for betterment of the health of her people, Mrs. Wauneka has selflessly worked to help them conquer tuberculosis, dysentery and trachoma. She succeeded in these efforts by winning the confidence of her people, and then by interpreting to them the miracles of modern medical science.”

LUNCHING WITH THE CHIEF JUSTICE

Afterward, the recipients were further honored at a reception and luncheon in the State Department dining room. Newspaper reports say that a small crowd gathered around Annie to congratulate her and ask about her outfit and jewelry. When it was time to eat, Annie was seated at a table with Chief Justice Earl Warren. Then, it was on to a reception given by Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall in his office. Annie and Secretary Udall had been friendly since he had been elected to Congress in the 1950s representing a district embracing much of the Navajo Reservation. Udall had grown up in the little Mormon town of St. John’s near the reservation and as a child had heard about Chee Dodge, the famous Navajo leader. He had followed Annie’s work on tuberculosis. When the White House had sent a circular around to government departments announcing President Kennedy’s intention to give the award and requesting suggestions, Udall had
pickup, they decided they would be tourists and would drive to the nearby Painted Desert and Petrified Forest National Monument. Milton remembers his grandmother being fascinated by all the exhibits, including evidence of dinosaurs; she would study them with concentration and would urge her grandchildren to look closely at them. Back in the parking lot she unwrapped some charcoal she’d packed in aluminum foil, and they all rubbed some on their feet to cleanse them of the spirits of the dinosaurs that might still be lurking about. Afterward they piled back in the pickup to drive more than a hundred miles into the town of Flagstaff so she could take the kids out for what she considered to be really good hamburgers.

She was always willing to give a hand when her grandchildren needed her. One day she found young Milton struggling up the hill with his injured dog in a wheelbarrow. The dog had been attacked by the neighbor’s bulldog and was in bad shape. Annie said she’d drive them both to Gallup to the veterinarian. They put the dog in the back of the pickup but then decided it would be too cold for the dog. They moved the bleeding animal into the cab and flew off down the road at even a little faster than her usual speed. It was closing time by the time they got to Gallup, but because it was Annie, the vet motioned them in. The dog’s injuries were too grave, however, and after he died, Annie and Milton made the sad trip home. Later, in recounting the story, Annie said, “I never cried over an animal in my life, but I sure cried over that dog.” One suspects it wasn’t so much the dog that prompted her grief but seeing her beloved grandson so bereft that brought on her tears.28

The time grandmother and grandson spent together did not always involve driving around. Sometimes they stayed at her home in Klagetoh. “When I’d spend my summer days at Grandma’s house, sometimes she’d sit quietly and she’d have her right elbow in her left hand and her chin in her hand,” Milton recalls. “She’d have this faraway, distant look. She wore glasses, so the light reflecting off the outside window would reflect off her glasses. It was like she was seeing something on the inside of her

A SPECIAL BIRTHDAY PARTY
In truth, no other Navajo had done all that Annie did. And in early 1984 Chairman Peterson Zah decided that the tribe should give a special recognition to the woman to whom they all owed so much. More than forty people were involved in planning the celebration, which evolved into an entire day of events in honor of Annie’s seventy-fourth birthday. Both Arizona and New Mexico proclaimed “Annie Wauneka Day,” and a scholarship fund was established in her honor.22

On the day before the ceremony a nasty spring storm swept across the reservation with rain, snow, and sleet, not the best weather for the luncheon barbecue that was planned. But, undaunted, Annie took charge. Later, she confessed she had looked up to clouds and said, “Tomorrow you’re going to behave, because tomorrow’s my day.” Sure enough, April 10 dawned sunny and warm, with temperatures in the high sixties, a perfect day. Whoever the Navajo spirits are who oversee such matters, they complied on that day and did as they were told.

School buses brought children from across the reservation, and car license plates indicated the visitors had come from as far away as Mississippi to attend the ceremonies. Presidential candidate Walter Mondale sent his daughter Eleanor to represent him, delegates came from other tribes, and national and local officials from the BIA and IHS joined the crowd. The Window Rock crossroad, usually so sparsely traveled that a flock of sheep could wander across it in safety, was crowded with vehicles. Firemen were brought in to help police officers direct the traffic.

The celebration began with a song and flag raising; then it was on to a two-hour Tribal Council meeting in which Annie was hailed as “Our Legendary Mother” and Chairman Zah placed the
Navajo Medal of Honor, the highest award given by the Navajo Nation, around her neck.

Blinking back tears and with a catch in her usually strong voice, Annie said she was accepting the medal “in honor of my better half, George Wauneka, my family and the memory of my father, Chee Dodge, who greatly influenced my life and in honor of the people who have worked with me.” At this point she had to take off her glasses and borrow a handkerchief from someone in the audience to wipe her eyes. Pointing to the murals on the council chamber walls surrounding the crowd, she indicated the section depicting her father signing the first oil leases for the tribe, and she said she’d looked to him for counsel on difficult decisions. “When the debate gets hot, when the decision gets to the point where I don’t know how to vote, I’d look up there and ask him to give me the best advice. He passed on the legacy of leadership to me.” She called the Navajo medal the most meaningful of all her awards. At the end of her speech she walked to George, bent over, and hugged him, saying in Navajo, “And what about you? What about you?”

After the lunch barbecue, Annie gave out prizes to Navajo students who had won contests run in conjunction with the Navajo Youth Conference and Annie Wauneka Day.

A CELEBRATION DINNER
The day concluded with a sold-out banquet and more speeches in the evening. A banner behind the head table proclaimed, “I go forth to move about the earth in wisdom, courage and peace.” Throughout the day Annie had been dressed in a colorful print skirt and a bright purple velvet tunic adorned with three silver and turquoise pins, one as big as the rim of a teacup, a heavy squash blossom necklace, a heavy silver concho belt, and her Medal of Freedom in addition to the new medal. She wore large silver and turquoise bracelets on her wrists and several rings on each hand. In the evening, she added an oversize corsage of red roses. Not many gray-haired grandmothers could have moved with that much metal weighing them down nor stood up to that quantity of decoration, but on her it seemed natural. George, seated next to her, sported a blue ribbon on his sport coat, an acknowledgment from the organizers that without his help and quiet concurrence, Annie’s career would not have been what it was.

Dr. Theodore Marrs, former IHS director on the reservation and former special assistant to President Gerald Ford, gave the keynote speech, opening with, “Dr. Wauneka has never solicited my assistance, she has demanded it.” He concluded, “She’s never lost sight of the cycles of the moon, but she’s learned the cycles of the budget in Congress. She’s remained a shepherdess, but her flock is the people of the Navajo Nation. Strong men look to this shepherdess. They call her ‘mother.’ Rough kids actually look on her with respect. Chairmen, chiefs, presidents are all included in her flock. She has put love into politics.”

Then followed a series of testimonials from many of the people Annie had worked with over the years. Alyce Rouwalk, president of the Council for Navajo Women, told how grateful she and other Navajos who had lost touch with the culture were that Annie had reached out to them, never ridiculing them for their inability to speak Navajo or their lack of knowledge of Navajo traditions. “She is the mother who teaches us how to be a Navajo—the most lasting influence on our lives,” she said.

Then followed the presentation of a stack of telegrams from well-wishers, including President Ronald Reagan, and a $1,000 check to use for a vacation. But the organizers did not figure Annie quite right. “Mr. Zah has said many times that money that comes out of the reservation should remain on the reservation,” Annie announced. “So it will be spent on the reservation. Anyway, George Wauneka wouldn’t want to get away for even one mile.” She concluded, “This [award] does not mean I want to stop here. When I get up in the morning, I want to go and do more.” Grasping the messages in her hand she added, to knowing laughter, “I want to get all these telegrams so I can use them…”

BEGINNING TO FEEL THEIR AGE
And she did keep on traveling the reservation, speaking to school children, raising money. Six weeks later, she was in Tucson to
before her death in 1824. Her son, Fivemiler, who was with his mother at her death, reported that a white light ascended from her body and flew into the sacred mound at Chota. The same mound was destroyed by the Tennessee Valley Authority's Tellico Dam Project of the 1970s and 1980s. Nancy Ward is buried somewhere near present-day Vonore, Tennessee. Many honors have been bestowed in her name since her death. Among these, the Nashville, Tennessee, chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution is named for her.

References

WAUNEKA, ANNIE DODGE (1910–1997), a public health activist and politician, was born in the Navajo Nation near Sawmill, Arizona. She was the privileged daughter of Henry Chee Dodge, the first elected chairman of the Navajo Tribal Council after the tribe adopted a constitutional form of government in 1923. Although Henry Dodge was a wealthy rancher and an influential politician, he believed that his children should learn Navajo traditions and values. From an early age, Wauneka had chores such as shepherding, but also received a formal education at the Albuquerque Indian School.

Wauneka grew up fully bilingual. She was equally comfortable in Navajo and English, and was able to act as a cultural translator between the conservative and liberal elements of the tribe. Soon she realized that the way her unique talents could best serve the Navajo was through improving the health of the more traditional segment. Wauneka was a trailblazer in the Navajo Nation's health care system, and was the first elected Navajo chairman.

Wauneka was elected tribal council representative from the Klagetoh District. After her marriage to George Wauneke, she became the first woman elected to the Tribal Council. Her work in public health made her the obvious choice to head the council's Health Committee. Her successes garnered her two more terms on the council (1955, 1959). She felt so certain that her talents were needed by the Navajo people that she risked her marriage to continue her work. In 1953 her husband was running for the position Wauneke had been holding, but she felt he was not a good candidate, so she ran against him and easily defeated him.

As she continued her grassroots work with the Navajo Tribal Council Health Committee, Wauneke went to college, eventually earning the credentials to back up her work. She graduated with a BS in public health from the University of Arizona in the mid-1950s. In 1959 she received the Arizona State Public Health Association's Outstanding Worker in Public Health Award, as well as the Indian Achievement Award from the Indian Council Fire of Chicago. In 1960 Wauneke began hosting a biweekly radio show on KGAK in Gallup, New Mexico. The program, complete in Navajo, covered topics of interest to the Navajo Nation, as well as health information. A tireless worker, Wauneke was eventually appointed to the Surgeon General's Advisory Board and served as a board member of the National Tuberculosis Association.

In 1963 Wauneke received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, given to her at the White House by President John Kennedy. She also received an honorary doctorate in public health from the University of Arizona.

References

WETAMOO [Namumpam, Talatanim, Tatanaran, Squaq Sachem of the Pocasset, Wetamoo, Wetamou, Wetamento, Westamoo, Westamou, Westamoe, Wetamome, Queen Wetamoo] (c. 1635/1650–1676) was born near the Fall River in present-day Rhode Island. Her father (Corbliant?) was a sachem (chief of a federation of the Algonquian tribes of the North Atlantic coast) of the Pocasset (Pokanoket) village of the Wampanoag Confederacy. When he died, Wetamoo succeeded her father as sachem. She married Wamssutia (Alexender), grand sachem of the Wampanoag Confederacy and brother of Metacom (Metacomet, King Philip). When Wamssutia died, she married Quequequamchet (Potonowummer, Peter Mumutt, "Ben"), but she left him because he sided with the colonists in King Philip's War. With her next husband, Quinnapin (Quinapin, Quequoquamchet),
Dr. Annie Dodge Wauneka (1910–1997), Navajo Nation

Dr. Annie Dodge Wauneka was a politician and public health activist who worked tirelessly to reconcile differences between Western and Navajo traditions in healthcare, especially in the fight against tuberculosis. She was the daughter of prominent Navajo leader, Henry Chee Dodge. Born near Sawmill, Arizona, on the Navajo reservation, Annie began sheepherding as a young girl and learned to speak Navajo. Her father wanted his children versed in Navajo culture and to receive a formal education. Annie attended boarding schools in Fort Defiance and Albuquerque.

She attended chapter meetings with her father, where she observed firsthand, his efforts to bridge Navajo and Anglo cultures. These experiences impacted her entry into politics. She was named to the Grazing Committee of the Klagetoh chapter and went onto become the chapter’s secretary. In 1951 she was elected to the Navajo Nation tribal council representing the chapters of Klagetoh and Wide Ruins. She was the second woman elected to the council; Lily J. Neil had been the first. When elected, Wauneka was the only woman serving on the council, a position she held for twenty-six years. She won reelection several times, once in match-up against her husband, George Wauneka. Throughout her years of public service, she also raised a large family, with the support of George. The two had met while students at Albuquerque Indian School and married in 1929.

As a tuberculosis epidemic ravaged the Navajo Nation in the 1950s, Wauneka was named chair of the Health and Welfare section of the Community Services Committee. In this position, she educated herself about tuberculosis. She insisted on visiting the sick in their hogans and hospitals and witnessed the devastation that tuberculosis inflicted on Navajos. Her primary concern became halting the spread of the disease, a situation compounded by the unwillingness of those infected to remain hospitalized until completely rehabilitated. Wauneka addressed cultural differences hampering treatment, as well as, sanitation and cleanliness issues impacting the spread of the disease. In addition to her work on tuberculosis, she focused on other medical issues, including healthcare for pregnant women and infants, and alcohol abuse. She educated Navajos through home visits, the production of a public health film, and through a weekly radio program that she hosted every Sunday morning. Annie also assisted doctors with compiling an English-Navajo dictionary of medical terms after observing the inadequacy of translations.

Wauneka was well respected within the Navajo community and on the national level for her efforts to improve healthcare on the reservation. She received numerous accolades for her work. She was named to the U.S. Surgeon General’s Committee on Indian Health Care and served as a board member on the National Tuberculosis Association. In 1959, she received the Arizona State Public Health Association’s Outstanding Worker in Public Health Award, and the Indian Council Fire Achievement Award from the Indian Council Fire, an award her father had received years earlier. In 1963, she was the first Native American awarded the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the country. She received an honorary doctorate in public health from the University of Arizona. In 1984, the Navajo Nation tribal council officially declared Annie, “Our Legendary Mother” and awarded her the Navajo Medal of Honor. Wauneka continued to work on improving Navajo healthcare and education until her death in 1997.
Sources Used


Annie Dodge Wauneka, tribal leader of the Navajo Nation and public health activist, worked tirelessly to improve the health and welfare of the Navajo Tribe and reduce the incidence of tuberculosis nationwide.

Born in 1910 in a traditional Navajo hogan, Wauneka was raised by her father, one of the wealthiest men of the Navajo Tribe. While taught Navajo history and culture, Wauneka also gained a general education. When she was eight, while attending a government-run school on the reservation, a tragic event occurred which helped shape the rest of her life. An influenza epidemic struck. Thousands of Navajos, including many of Wauneka's classmates, died. Wauneka escaped with only a mild case that left her resistant to the disease. Thus she was able to care for those who were too ill to feed themselves. After graduation and her marriage to George Wauneka, Annie continued to travel with her father, observing the poverty and disease that plagued most of the Navajo. She studied public health and then, realizing that the best way to change the standards of health and sanitation among tribal members was from within, Wauneka gained election in 1951 to the Tribal Council, the second woman ever so elected.

During her three terms in office, Wauneka led the fight against tuberculosis. She wrote a dictionary to translate English words into Navajo for modern medical techniques, such as vaccination. Her weekly radio broadcasts, in the Navajo language, explained how modern medicine could help improve health among the Navajo. She also worked on other health problems including better care for pregnant women and new babies, regular eye and ear examinations, and alcoholism. She continued working in her community on health issues until her death in 1997. She helped improve housing and sanitation conditions and convinced her tribe to adopt many modern medical practices and avail themselves of hospital care, when needed. She also served on the advisory boards of the U.S. Surgeon General and the U.S. Public Health Service.

In 1963, Wauneka became the first Native American to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Ladies' Home Journal selected her a Woman of the Year in 1976. In 1984, the Navajo Council designated her "The Legendary Mother of the Navajo Nation." All recognize that through her efforts in education and health, the lives of every Navajo, as well as the nation at large, have been improved.


