



## SOUTHWEST RESERVATION AID™

A program of Partnership With Native Americans  
www.SWRAprogram.org • 800-811-6955

3-8-22

Mr. Tom Millington  
51 Northview Dr.  
Burlington, VT 05408-1860



Yá'át'ééh (Hello) Mr. Millington,

As Americans, we are facing challenging times and uncertainty with the coronavirus crisis continuing to affect all of us. You may already be familiar with the difficult situation facing Native Americans living in Navajo Nation — perhaps you've even seen the news coverage. However, you and I may have a different understanding of the impact of particular events in America's history and how the pandemic exacerbates issues Native Americans face today.

You see, I'm a member of the Diné — or “The People” — what you may call the Navajo Nation of Native Americans. I grew up in the Sweetwater area of Arizona on the Navajo Reservation, but my ancestors came to what is now the United States over a thousand years ago. At an early age, I learned our Navajo traditions, culture, and history as told in stories passed from one generation to the next.

As a teenager, I left the reservation to attend boarding school and then college. There, not everyone shared my thoughts on how historical events — particularly those surrounding America's westward expansion — created the framework for the prejudice, poverty, and despair Native Americans continue to endure today.

### **3-Minute American History Quiz**

Mr. Millington, the “3-Minute American History Quiz” illustrates how policies made nearly 200 years ago still affect the everyday lives of Native Americans. I encourage you to take this quiz and then help us raise awareness by telling your family and friends what you learned.

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Southwest Reservation Aid (SWRA) is a program of Partnership With Native Americans (PWNA)

1310 E. Riverview Drive • Phoenix, AZ 85034 • (800) 811-6955



**Question 1:** Why did the United States government establish Indian reservations?

**Answer:** The government's objective was to rid the country of its "Indian problem" and open their land for white settlers.

Beginning in 1830 with the Indian Removal Act, the official policy of the United States was to forcibly remove Native Americans from their ancestral lands and relocate us to far-away regions "reserved" only for Indians. Today these are known as the reservations. For the Cherokee and other tribes, this is often remembered as the "Trail of Tears." But it didn't end there. During the Navajo Long Walk beginning in 1863, thousands of Navajo were also removed from their homelands. Many died or grew ill along the way due to illness and malnutrition. They settled within an area of only 40 square miles and gave up their sacred homeland mountains.

**Question 2:** How did the government decide where to locate the reservations?

**Answer:** Typically, the government put reservations in the areas it regarded as being unfit for white settlers — arid places unsuitable for agriculture and isolated from towns, transportation, and the growing economy.

However, as the settlers expanded westward, the government took back most of the reservation lands too and forced Native Americans to relocate again — this time to even less-desirable lands. And today, the land once reserved for Native Americans has shrunk to just 2.3 percent of the land originally promised by the U.S. government.

**Question 3:** If I were to visit an Indian reservation, what should I expect to see today?

**Answer:** You would see a proud people — strong in tradition and values — but living in or near third-world conditions. Poverty is extreme — the norm. Drive around the reservation and you'll see many of our people living in run-down houses and trailers, many of which are without electricity, telephone, running water or a sewage system.

Today, Native Americans are the poorest population in the entire Northern Hemisphere and have the highest need in the U.S.

**Question 4:** How can these conditions exist in a rich and powerful country like the U.S.?

**Answer:** Harsh government policies concentrated Native Americans in barren regions inadequate for farming and distant from settlers, supplies, and jobs. Most reservations are so remote that the added costs of transporting supplies and

products on and off the reservations make local production impractical. What's more, the U.S. government holds reservation lands in trust, so outside businesses are reluctant to invest and create jobs on reservation lands.

Sadly today, between 35-85% of the Native Americans who live on the reservations we serve are unemployed. To find work, many must move away from the reservation and leave their families behind. This is why about half the children living on reservations are being raised by their grandparents.

Even the most basic services — healthcare, retail stores, pharmacies, and schools — are often an hour or more away and families are forced to choose between using what little money they have to buy gasoline for the car or food for the children.

**Question 5:** Why didn't I know about this before?

**Answer:** Many people don't, and you can help change that by sharing this quiz to raise awareness. Make sure your friends and family take the quiz and pass it on to as many people as they can.

**By now, I'm sure you're wondering, what else can I do to help?** The most urgent need is for food and drinking water. Today, one in four Native Americans who live on reservations don't have enough to eat — or know where their next meal will come from. Feeding people is the number one priority of Southwest Reservation Aid (SWRA), but we need your help to do it.

**What is being done to solve the problem?** Thankfully, SWRA is helping us build strong, self-sufficient Native American communities. But we recognize that it is unrealistic to expect anyone to focus on building a stronger community — much less return to the reservation — unless they know there will be food for their family. So, SWRA's most urgent goal is to get food to the reservations — to the people who need it most.

To fulfill this need, the SWRA program is distributing staples such as beans, rice, flour, soup, various canned goods, and drinking water to Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, Apache, and other reservations. Last year alone, SWRA provided enough food for thousands of meals for Native American Elders, families, and children — thanks to good people like you.

You can help change the lives of Native American Elders, children, and families with a tax-deductible contribution that will help us provide food such as rice, beans, vegetables, protein bars, oatmeal, potatoes, drinking water, and the other foods that people on the reservations need to survive. We deliver significant amounts of water and food to the Navajo — thanks to donors' contributions. They would not receive the water without generous people like you.

**I know first-hand how basic, nutritious food is desperately needed on the American Indian reservations, now more than ever. Remarkably, SWRA can provide a community meal for only \$3 per person! This means we can feed 3 Native Americans — who would otherwise not have anything to eat — for only \$9. With just \$15, we can feed 5 people.**

The SWRA program achieves this efficiency by working closely with tribal community partners, Native American volunteers, community food banks, as well as businesses that donate food. But even these efficiencies can't hold back the supply chain delays, rapid increases in food prices, and the rising cost of fuel for transporting food to the reservations.

**Mr. Millington, SWRA is a nonprofit program with BBB accreditation. We depend upon the generosity of people like you to help fund our vital services on the reservations. Will you please help today?**

With or without COVID-19, these communities need our help with the delivery of food, water, toilet paper, and other basic supplies. Indian Country has suffered terribly and disproportionately during the persistent and deadly pandemic. Although many states have lifted restrictions with the vaccine rollout underway, some tribes continue to be cautious while maintaining safety protocols and various restrictions to keep their vulnerable populations safe.

Now, two years later, our communities continue to send us high volumes of requests. Will you please give a gift today so that we have the resources to fulfill them? **Please use the reply envelope I've enclosed to mail back your completed Food & Water Delivery Certificate and tax-deductible contribution today. Whatever you can spare to send will help more than you know.** Thank you for your generosity and friendship.



Ahéhee (Thank you),

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lovena B. Lee".

Lovena B. Lee, Navajo Nation  
SWRA Chairperson

P.S. Mr. Millington, the address labels are our gift to you. I hope when you use them, you'll have a sense of pride knowing you are helping the Navajo people during this unprecedented time in our American history. I pray that you and your loved ones continue to remain safe and healthy.

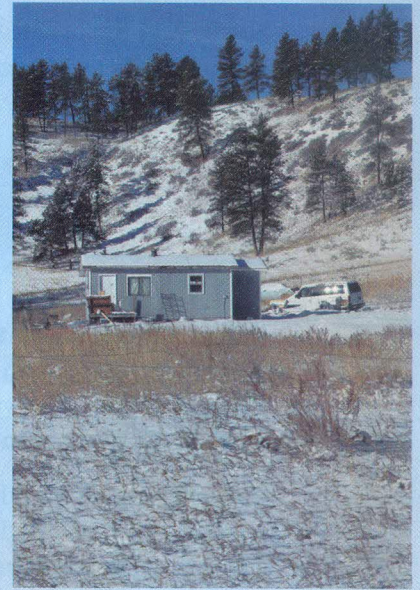


## A Trusted Partner & Resource for the Reservations

Partnership With Native Americans (PWNA) ensures immediate impact by providing critical goods and services such as food, water and emergency supplies, while also supporting long-term solutions for nutrition, education and self-sufficiency. We involve tribal community members in the delivery of our services, challenging dependency and poverty while simultaneously supporting new resources and sustainable change in Native communities. This approach means our year-round network of reservation partners and their volunteers have a direct hand in improving the lives of those they care about most – those within their own tribal communities.

### *What sets PWNA apart as the top choice for solutions-based philanthropy in Native American communities?*

- ✓ Serving Indian country for 30 years, as one of the largest Native-led and Native-serving charities
- ✓ Partnering with hundreds of programs in hundreds of tribal communities, and together improving quality of life for a quarter of a million Native Americans each year
- ✓ Supporting the self-determined needs of each community by delivering only the goods, services and support requested by our reservation partners
- ✓ Operating two 40,000 sq. ft. distribution facilities and driving up to 250,000 miles each year to deliver about 5 million pounds of high-need products
- ✓ Industry-level acknowledgements for donor confidence, including:
  - Accreditation by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance
  - GuideStar Platinum Exchange Member status with maximum transparency to donors
  - Top-Rated Nonprofit status based on donor, partner and collaborator reviews
  - Approved national charity for the Combined Federal Campaign



To spread the word about Native Americans, life on the reservations and how they can make a difference, ask your friends to visit our website: [www.NativePartnership.org](http://www.NativePartnership.org).



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NATIVE AMERICANS®**

