



PRESS RELEASE

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Navajo Division of Natural Resources Announces 78th Annual Navajo Nation Fair Parade Grand Marshals

Dr. Crystal Tulley-Cordova and Darlene Arviso to be honored during September 12 parade



Dr. Crystal Tulley-Cordova



Darlene Arviso

AUGUST 20, 2026 – WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources and the Navajo Nation Fair Office are proud to announce Dr. Crystal Tulley-Cordova and Darlene Arviso, known throughout the Navajo Nation as “The Water Lady,” as the Parade Grand Marshals for the 78th Annual Navajo Nation Fair Parade, scheduled for Saturday, September 12, 2026.

Their selection reflects this year’s Navajo Nation Fair theme:

“Through water and Mother Earth, we exist.”

Tó dóó Nihímá Nahasdzáán éí bee iiná

“Water is life, and this year’s theme reminds us of our responsibility to protect the resources that sustain our people, our communities and future generations,” said W. Mike Halona, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, which oversees the Navajo Nation Fair Office. “Dr. Crystal Tulley-Cordova and Darlene Arviso represent that responsibility in two very powerful ways. One has dedicated her career to protecting and developing our water resources, while the other has spent years physically delivering water to Navajo families who need it most.”

Dr. Crystal Tulley-Cordova

Dr. Crystal Tulley-Cordova, PhD, MWR, is a Principal Hydrologist with the Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources, Water Management Branch. Her work includes helping secure and protect Navajo Nation water rights in the Colorado River and Rio Grande basins and supporting the development of water infrastructure projects that provide a more reliable water supply for the Navajo Nation.

Since 2013, Dr. Tulley-Cordova has collaborated with Navajo Nation partners on research addressing precipitation variability, groundwater sustainability and watershed studies. She also serves on the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine’s Water Science and Technology Board and as Vice President of the Colorado River Water Users Association.

A former Chief Manuelito Scholar from Window Rock High School, Dr. Tulley-Cordova holds a doctoral degree in Geology and an Interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate in Sustainability from the University of Utah, as well as a Master of Water Resources in Hydrosience and a Bachelor of Science in Earth and Planetary Sciences from the University of New Mexico.

“Dr. Tulley-Cordova represents the importance of Navajo professionals using their education, knowledge and experience to protect the future of the Navajo Nation,” Halona said. “Her work reminds our young people that there are opportunities to come home, serve our people and become part of the solutions to some of the most important natural resource challenges facing the Navajo Nation.”

Darlene Arviso, “The Water Lady”

Darlene Arviso has been hauling water for much of her life. Raised near Thoreau, New Mexico, she now drives a water truck for St. Bonaventure Indian Mission, delivering water to approximately **250 homes in and around the Thoreau area.**

Four days each week, Arviso fills the 3,500-gallon tank of her truck, known as the **“yellow buffalo,”** before traveling across communities to deliver water to families. Known affectionately as the “Water Lady,” she serves some of the Navajo Nation’s lowest-resourced communities, where access to running water remains a daily challenge.

Her service extends beyond delivering water. Arviso has also provided food, wood, blankets, friendship and support to families and elders along her route, making herself available to community members who need help or simply someone to talk to.

“Darlene represents the strength and compassion of our Navajo people,” Halona said. “For her, delivering water is not simply a job. It is service. It is caring for elders, families and communities, and making sure people know they have someone they can depend on. That spirit of helping one another is at the heart of who we are as Diné.”

Halona said honoring Dr. Tulley-Cordova and Arviso together provides a meaningful representation of the Fair’s 2026 theme.

“One works to protect our water rights, water resources, and long-term infrastructure, while the other brings water directly to our people’s homes,” Halona said. “Together, their stories remind us that **Tó éí iiná**, *water is life*, is more than a saying. Water connects us to our land, families, communities, and future. We are proud to recognize these two Navajo women during the 78th Annual Navajo Nation Fair.”

The Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources and Navajo Nation Fair Office invite the Navajo people and visitors to join in honoring Dr. Crystal Tulley-Cordova and Darlene Arviso during the 78th Annual Navajo Nation Fair Parade on Saturday, September 12, 2026.

For more information, visit nnfair.org.

Photos Attached: Navajo Nation Fair Office

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