# Strength in Jewelry

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By: Quindrea Yazzie

Tribal Affiliation: Diné

Major: Journalism & Mass Communication

Native American students at ASU share their passion and pride for wearing traditional jewelry pieces off of the reservation as a sign of identity and strength.
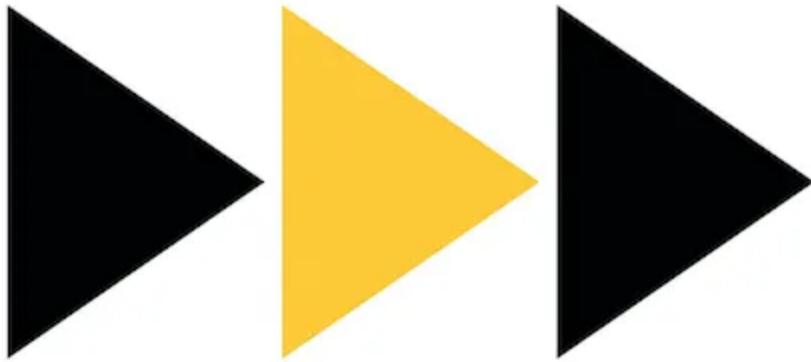
Daangoiina Haven

Daangoiina Haven

For ASU Cross Country and Track runner Daangoiina Haven (Navajo), there is a lot of representation, exercise, wellness and traditional stories that go into detail about the different aspects of Navajo jewelry. Some include the way the jewelry is stored, the purpose behind each design and piece, and how it protects and identifies the wearer.

"My mom and grandma taught me a lot about the significance of jewelry when I was growing up," Haven, an Exercise and Wellness major and junior, said. "I learned more about it in my Kinaaldá ceremony. They would tell me to put all my jewelry in a basket and to always keep it in there to make sure it was protected."

Since her Kinaaldá (a traditional Diné puberty ceremony), Haven has continued this tradition of keeping her jewelry in her basket for safe keeping, including baby bracelets that was given to her when she was younger. She hopes to pass them down to her children so they can pass it down to theirs as a symbol of identity and protection.

"When you wear Native Jewelry... that is what protects you"

"When you wear Native jewelry, specifically turquoise, that is what protects you and the Holy People will bless you because they know you are wearing turquoise," Haven said. "Every day you should wear a piece of jewelry, either turquoise or silver. It is very important."

Sequoia Dance

For Social and Cultural Pedagogy graduate student Sequoia Dance, each beadwork jewelry she owns holds significant representation, meaning and effort put into it as far as material, design, and colors.

"Our tribe is known for beadwork," Dance (Shoshone-Bannock/Assiniboine) said. "One thing that I have learned in making beadwork is (that) a lot of people aim for perfection, but I have been taught from multiple people and tribes to always leave one bead intentionally in the wrong spot or have the wrong color. We as humans can never be perfect and perfection is not something that we should necessarily strive for."

"I try to wear beadwork of any kind on almost a daily basis."

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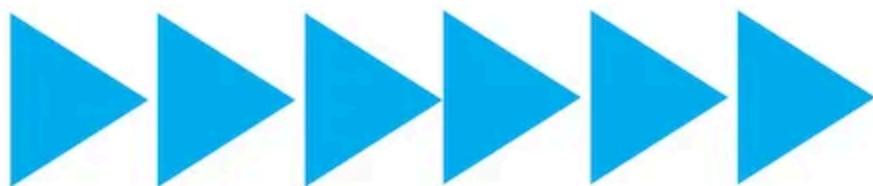
Whether it was gifted to her by a tribal member, family or if she bought it from a vendor, each piece of her's has a story behind it. When she graduated

with her bachelor's from Washington State University, she was gifted with jewelry and is a reminder of how much she has accomplished and motivates her to continue her education.

"I was the former Miss Shoshone Bannock and before that, (wearing jewelry) was still important to me, but it became a lot more important (in) recognizing that anywhere I go outside of our community, I am representing my family, myself, (and) my community," Dance said.

Desiree Yazzie

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Wearing Navajo jewelry gives Civil Engineering senior Desiree Yazzie a sense of belonging to her tribe and her family. Her pieces reminds her of her family who made the jewelry as well as the strength and reason behind the gifting.

"When I was little, my mom made a necklace for me when she worked at Navajo Arts and Crafts in Window Rock," she said. "One day when she was working, she saw one that was really expensive and she thought to herself,

'Oh, I can make this myself.'" Yazzie describes the necklace as being very simple and eye-catching with bits of turquoise contrasting the darker shades of the materials.

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> **"All the jewelry that I have received in my life is my family's," said Yazzie. "In a way they are taking care of you."**

The necklace has become a part of who Yazzie is today. Wearing it in high school and now in college has made the piece more special for her. Yazzie explains that wearing her Native jewelry is important to her.

"All the jewelry that I have received in my life is my family's," said Yazzie. "In a way they are taking care of you."

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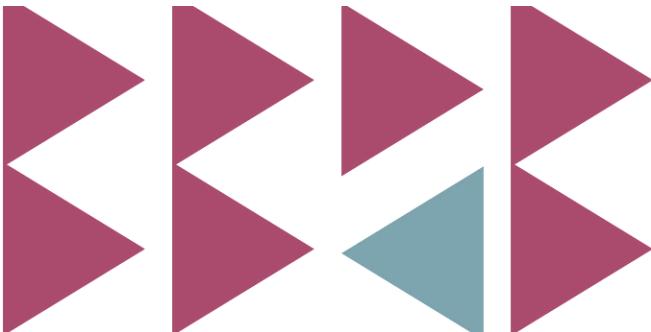
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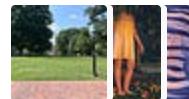
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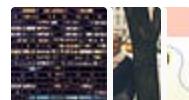
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