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Harold Baxter (1889-1982) took this picture of Navajo shearing sheep. The image was digitized by Utah State University, Merrill-Cazier Library, and is online via [Navajo People](#).

The Navajo are a hardworking people. Before World War II, they divided family responsibilities along traditional lines.

- Navajo women took an active part in handling the sheep and goats and were responsible for most of the shearing.
- Women would also card, spin and dye the wool which was then turned into yarn, suitable for weaving beautiful Navajo blankets and rugs.
- While mothers worked, their babies rested in a cradleboard.
- By 1937, Navajos were still cultivating their corn, a Navajo staple, by hand. The same was true of thrashing and grinding.
- The Navajo dried their corn on a "summer shade" or directly on the land.
- Because of the arid conditions, squash could be stored in a pit called a root cellar.

Even at a time when the United States was mostly an agrarian country, the Navajos lived differently from other Americans. But they also took time to have fun.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/NAVAJO-FAMILY-LIFE-Wind-Talkers-Navajo-Code-Talkers-in-WWII>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/NAVAJO-FAMILY-LIFE-Wind-Talkers-Navajo-Code-Talkers-in-WWII>

Media Stream



Navajo People Shearing Sheep

Photo by Harold Baxter; digitized by Utah State University, Merrill-Cazier Library; online via Navajo People.

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Navajo Lands - Arid Conditions

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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Navajo Life

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Navajo Life and Culture

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