

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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[Home](#) / [Periodical](#) / [Article](#) / [Public power pioneer, NTUA founder Walter Wolf passes away](#)

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Walter Wolf Jr., who was involved in founding the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority in Arizona and was a lifetime member of the American Public Power Association, passed away on Jan. 18.

Wolf played an important part in the history of the Navajo Nation and the development of electric resources in the Southwest. He helped to extend electric service into remote parts of Navajo Nation's 27,000-square-mile service area, where there was no distribution infrastructure. He also helped to create the Native American Power Pool.

Wolf was NTUA legal counsel for many years and most recently worked as a legal consultant after he reached his retirement years.

Wolf's career in public power began when he was hired as a young attorney to serve as legal counsel to the Navajo Nation leadership. Wolf was given a task to create NTUA. This was shortly before the Glen Canyon Dam was built, before massive electric transmission lines were placed within Navajo land and when utility development in the Southwest was in growth mode, NTUA noted.

In 1965, NTUA took over its first distribution line from the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs and Wolf was at the negotiation table for that agreement.

Wolf also participated in NTUA talks to acquire Rocky Mountain Power's service territory in a remote region of the Navajo Nation. In 2016, the Utah Public Service Commission [approved a settlement agreement \(https://www.publicpower.org/periodical/article/unique-transaction-will-allow-navajo-utility-bring-power-about-300-families\)](https://www.publicpower.org/periodical/article/unique-transaction-will-allow-navajo-utility-bring-power-about-300-families) between NTUA and Rocky Mountain Power that allowed NTUA to buy power lines and substations and bring electricity to about 300 Navajo families.

"I am overwhelmed as I am humbled," Wolf said after the acquisition. "It brings personal satisfaction to see what we started has grown into what it is today. I am truly thankful to have witnessed such progress. Every power line that we build is an achievement, and every family that we connect is a success story. I'm happy that I have accomplished something this significant in my lifetime. I'm very lucky."

Over the span of 60 years, Wolf worked with five NTUA general managers. Since 2008, he was an advisor, colleague, and coach for current NTUA General Manager Walter Haase, NTUA said.

"It was without question that he served NTUA and the Navajo Nation immeasurably. He was one of the few real champions for the Navajo people," Haase said. "His achievements were many. For more than 60 years he helped us advance NTUA, in doing so, benefiting the Navajo people."

"Personally, Walter has helped more than I can put into words," added Haase, who is also a former chairman of APPA. "It has been my honor and privilege to work with him. He was a wonderful coach and guide for me as I navigated my new role at NTUA. He provided me outstanding assistance throughout my career here on the Navajo Nation. Most importantly, he was a great friend to me. He will truly be missed."

"The leadership, dedication, and service of Walter Wolf is greatly commended, cherished, and honored. His vision and passion to help the Navajo people will forever be appreciated and remembered," said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez.

"The Navajo Nation has lost a champion who dedicated his life to providing utility services to the Navajo people and advancing our Nation forward through self-determination," said Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council Seth Damon. "We will continue to honor his memory on the Council floor."

"Walter was a great, true, and loyal friend to us as Navajo people. The friendship and love he shared with us is hard to find in the world," said former Navajo Nation President Dr. Joe Shirley, Jr. "There is no way to measure the amount of help he has given and by which have helped many of our Navajo people enjoy running water, electric power, and waste water treatment services - let alone having a cell phone to communicate today. We will be forever thankful we had such a friend as the late Walter Wolf, Jr. Our friend and brother will truly be missed."

"Because of Walter's conviction that all citizens should have access to running water and electricity, and because of his vision of a tribally owned utility that delivers those services, the lives of tens of thousands of Navajo people have improved," said former Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye. "His sacrifice, determination and dedication to the Navajo people have helped ensure that more elders have light and heat in their homes and that more children are able to do their homework without relying on kerosene lamps."

In 2015, Wolf was presented with the Association's James D. Donovan award, which recognizes individuals who have made significant and sustained contributions to the electric utility industry and to public power.

"Walter Wolf set the standard for what it means to be a leader in the public power community," said Association President and CEO Joy Ditto. "His role in the creation of NTUA and his decades of work to help improve the lives of Navajo families will serve as his lasting legacy."

A memorial service was hosted by the Wolf family in Albuquerque, N.M., on Jan. 23. The family has asked that condolence contributions be made to the American Lung Association and the American Cancer Society in the name of Walter Wolf Jr.

Any personal messages for the Wolf family should be sent to Deenise Becenti at NTUA. Her email is: [deeniseb@ntua.com \(mailto:deeniseb@ntua.com\)](mailto:deeniseb@ntua.com). These thoughts will be compiled and given to the Wolf family as a tribute to the legacy of Walter Wolf Jr.

Topics [Community Engagement \(/Topic/Community-Engagement\)](#)