
Quote

“If the army placed the Navajo on a reservation far from the haunts and hills and hiding places of their country” they would “acquire new habits, new ideas, new modes of life.” “Civilizing” the Navajo could be best achieved through their children: “The young ones will take their places without these longings: and thus, little by little, they will become a happy contented people.”

James Carleton to Thompson, September 19, 1863, in *Navajo Roundup: Selected Correspondence of Kit Carson’s Expedition against the Navajo, 1863–1865*, ed. Lawrence C. Kelly (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing, 1970), 56–57

Major General James H. Carleton ordered Christopher (Kit) Carson to defeat the Navajo (Diné) resistance by conducting a scorched-earth campaign across the Navajo (Diné) homelands. Carson burned villages, slaughtered livestock, and destroyed water sources in order to reduce the Navajo (Diné) to starvation and desperation. With few choices, thousands of Navajo (Diné) surrendered and were forced to march between 250 and 450 miles to the Bosque Redondo Reservation. While intended to be a reservation, Bosque Redondo functioned as an internment camp. The U.S. stationed soldiers there to make sure that the Navajo (Diné) could not leave. From the beginning the plan was to force the Navajo (Diné) to adopt white American cultural values; however, many Navajo (Diné) resisted cultural assimilation and would continue the fight until they were allowed to return to their homelands.