



The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Speaker Morgan chairs meeting of Council of Large Land Base Tribes, re-elected as vice chairman

Morgan pleased with Council's endorsement of Navajo Nation policy statement urging Organization of American States to strengthen draft of American Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

ALBUQUERQUE — The Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan chaired the quarterly meeting of the Council of Large Land Base Tribes April 24 at the Route 66 Casino near Albuquerque, N.M.

The meeting provided an important venue for tribal leaders of large land holdings to discuss issues affecting their tribes. The meeting was well attended by tribal leaders representing the Standing Rock Sioux, Rosebud Sioux, the Navajo Nation, the Hualapai Nation, Eastern Shoshone, Shoshone Arapaho, Oglala Sioux, Northern Arapaho, Chippewa Cree, Crow Nation, Red Lake and the Shoshone Bannock Tribe.



The Council of Large Land Base Tribes conducted their quarterly meeting April 24 at the Route 66 Casino near Albuquerque, N.M. Navajo Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan poses with members of the Council.
(Photos by Joshua Lavar Butler)

The Council, established as an organization of sovereign Indian tribes and nations to advocate needs of tribal nations with a large land base of more than 100,000 acres and a large population, elected their new officers and discussed issues affecting tribes across the country.

Officers, according to the organization's bylaws, are rotated by region every two years.

Ron His Horse is Thunder, tribal chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, is being considered for president; Lawrence T. Morgan, speaker of the 21st Navajo Nation Council, was re-elected vice chairman; Harvey T. Spoonhunter from Northern Arapaho was elected secretary and Ervin M. Keeswood Sr., Navajo Nation Council delegate, was elected treasurer. The officers will serve two-year terms beginning this year.

Three resolutions seeking support from the Council were presented and approved. Many of the resolutions involved national issues, mainly because issues differ for large land base tribes versus smaller land base tribes.

Two resolutions were presented by the Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council and were passed unanimously. Resolution 2009-04-22-02 proposes the suspension of the Tribal Transportation Allocation Methodology as the formula for distributing Indian Reservation Roads Program Funding.

The second, Resolution 2009-04-22-01, was presented in response to the Eagle Sting Operation conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and other federal law enforcement agencies.

The third resolution urged the Organization of American States to strengthen the draft of the American Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to endorse the Navajo Nation Policy Statements by the Navajo Human Rights Commission — an organization established by the Navajo Nation Council in 2008 to address human rights.

Leonard Gorman, executive director of the Navajo Human Rights Commission, along with Commissioner Duane Yazzie presented the resolution to the Council.

The document is a resolution supporting and adopting the Navajo Nation policy statement in response to the Organization of American States' draft declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and request the Organization of American States to consolidate the recommendations contained in the Navajo Nation policy statement to enhance the draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



Leonard Gorman, executive director for the Navajo Human Rights Commission, presented a resolution to the Council.

Commissioner Yazzie made a presentation to the Council and explained the commission's purpose.

"The commission was established in response to problems in our 13 border towns," Yazzie explained. "One such case occurred in Farmington in the summer of 2006 when one young man was shot to death by a white police officer. A week later a tribal member was beat up in another border town. In response to those kinds of situations, the Navajo Nation Council took it upon themselves to provide some meaningful response to those types of activities. Through the advocacy of Council Delegates Ervin Keeswood, Rex Lee Jim and Speaker Morgan, the commission was organized and formed."

Today, the five member commission seated in July 2008, was directed by the Navajo Council to visit border towns and address the extent of racism. Since its establishment, the commission has conducted 12 public hearings around the Navajo Nation and has five more remaining. The commission provides the public an opportunity to tell their story, many ranging from employment discrimination, to forced relocation and even to the issues involving the protection of sacred sites.

Yazzie asked the Council, "We come to you respectfully asking for your blessings of this document, which was approved by our tribal council. We are hoping that the large land base that you have, many tribal members that you represent, that you will see it your way to support our recommendations. Take this language to your own councils to see if we can all get behind this, it's for the good of all of us, for the future generations."

Speaker Morgan was pleased with the Council's endorsement of the Navajo Nation policy statement and looks forward to other organizations and tribal council's across the country to endorse it as well.

He praised Council Delegates Ervin Keeswood Sr. and Rex Lee Jim for taking the lead on behalf of the Navajo Nation in advocating for indigenous peoples and their involvement in drafting the declaration.

"It is very important that our suggestions are made," he said. "It is important that we continue to educate others on the declaration and the importance of our recommendations to it."