



The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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October 25, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Speaker Morgan congratulates Rough Rock Community School, awarded 2008 NIEA Cultural Freedom Award

School demonstrated exemplary work in promoting the revitalization, restoration of Native culture and language in their school

SEATTLE — The Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan attended the 39th Annual National Indian Education Association's (NIEA) Convention and its Tribal Leader's Summit on Indian Education, where he presented a plaque and framed Navajo Nation Council poster to the Rough Rock Community School on Oct. 25, in Seattle.

The theme for the conference was, "Crossroads — Pulling Together Our Indigenous Knowledge."

This year's theme was appropriate, as the Rough Rock Community School was awarded the 2008 National Indian Education Association's Cultural Freedom Award by the NIEA Board of Directors at a Gala Banquet held at the Washington Convention Center. The award is presented annually to an American Indian, Alaskan Native or a Native Hawaiian educational entity that has demonstrated significant and outstanding contributions to Native education to maintain the language and culture of its children.

This year, the NIEA selected Rough Rock Community School for their exemplary work in promoting the revitalization and the restoration of Native culture and language in their school.

According to Wanda Johnson, NIEA convention manager, "The award is also based on the accomplishments of enforcing the importance of living a life balanced by honoring our culture and traditions and preparing Native youth for the future."

This year, in addition to the Rough Rock Community School, the NIEA awarded two other schools for their successful Native language and culture preservation program. The other schools were the Nixyaawii Community School of the Umatilla Tribe and the Chief Leschi School of the Puyallup Tribe.



The Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan attended the 39th Annual National Indian Education Association's (NIEA) Convention, where he presented a plaque and framed Navajo Nation Council poster to the Rough Rock Community School on Oct. 25, in Seattle. Pictured is Speaker Morgan presenting to the Rough Rock Community School. (Photo by Joshua Lavar Butler)

The NIEA conference provided Indian educators from throughout the United States an opportunity to attend various sessions related to educational strategies and concepts. Participants also engaged in working strategy sessions that addressed legislation and how tribal leaders can positively influence federal status that specifically address Indian education.

Speaker Morgan, a tribal legislator for the Navajo Nation, attended on behalf of the Navajo Nation government to continue its support for education and by invitation to discuss issues related to American Indian and Alaskan Native education policy.

Speaker Morgan was given the opportunity to address and respond to key issues affecting Native control of our educational programs and policies, and he shared the educational challenges affecting the Navajo Nation.

"Most of our schools are not meeting the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) standards and our goal, in the spirit of teamwork, should be to enhance our strategy to meet these standards each and every year." Speaker Morgan said. "The teaching and inclusion of our language programs needs to always be included in our strategy as well, because education is important to the continued survival of our Indian Nations."

"The NIEA is the oldest and most representative Indian organization representing American Indians, Alaskan Natives and Native Hawaiian educators and students," said Robert Cook, president-elect for the NIEA.

According to Cook, the NIEA is a 501(C)(3) organization that was founded in 1969 to support traditional Native cultures and values to enable Native learners to become contributing members of their communities to promote Native control of educational institutions, and to improve educational opportunities and resources for American Indians, Alaskan Natives and Native Hawaiians throughout the United States.



Pictured are Young Jeff Tom and Speaker Morgan with staff from the Rough Rock Community School. (Photo by Joshua Lavar Butler)

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