



## The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Navajo Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie motivates students at youth conference in Colo.**

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**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — Navajo Nation Council Delegate Edmund E. Yazzie took students and event coordinators by surprise when he delivered an exceptional presentation on self-esteem at the 4th Annual Youth Conference hosted by the Navajo Department of Workforce Development's Summer Youth Project held recently in Durango, Colo.

The youth project sought the help of Yazzie (Thoreau) as a volunteer guest speaker earlier this summer and they admit they were not sure how students would respond to him.

"You don't know what to expect from a politician, but he brought himself down to the level of the students," said Roderick Harlan, Summer Youth Project Coordinator.

Yazzie addressed more than 120 students, most between the ages of 14-21, during a one-hour presentation at the Fort Lewis College campus.

"He came in with a lot of enthusiasm," said Harlan. Yazzie addressed issues youth on the Navajo Nation are exposed to from alcohol addiction to domestic violence and peer pressure. He shared his own personal experiences on these issues, his professional past experience as a police officer, as well as his current experience as a leader of the Navajo people.

"I know the pressures they are going through," said Yazzie. Yazzie emphasized to the youth to be more positive in life so they can enrich their future. While preparing his presentation, Yazzie chose to focus on addressing the issue of self-esteem. Yazzie felt it was appropriate since the theme of the conference was, "Take the Challenge—Strive for Success."

"A lot of our youth are not building their self-esteem at home," Yazzie said. "When you have a low self-esteem and low feeling of self-worth, you are not motivated to improve yourself as an individual."

Yazzie reminded the youth they are valuable, loved and that he has faith in them to succeed in life. At the end of the presentation, Yazzie said having a positive attitude is what will help them cope with life's pressures.

"They are our future leaders," said Yazzie. As an elected leader, Yazzie makes it a point to listen and talk to youth, especially since he cannot recall a time when a Navajo leader took the time to speak to him as a young man.

Harlan said Yazzie's presentation generated a lot of response from the youth.

"A lot of students came up to me afterwards and thanked me for inviting Mr. Yazzie," Harlan said. "It blew me away because we weren't expecting that."

The two-day workshop offered students various workshops, and panels, and included team work and communication building activities like water rafting.

"The youth conference was a huge success in providing the Diné youth with the opportunity to succeed," Harlan added. "We would like to thank Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan and the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council for their continued support and the good representation they sent on behalf of the Navajo Nation Council."

The program plans to invite Yazzie as a guest speaker in the future.