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MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin | 928.221.9253
Krista Thompson | 928.637.5603
Jolene Holgate | 928.871.7160
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Council Delegates share knowledge of Navajo government and current issues with students from Canadian Tribes



Photo: H.O.P.E. Scholars students from Canada by the Navajo Nation Council Chambers. The group is from the Plains Cree in Maskwacis in Alberta, Canada, consisting of 4 First Nations (Tribes) including the Samson Cree Nation, Ermineskin Cree Nation, Louis Bull Tribe, and Montana Cree Nation.

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts’ah Bii Kin), Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels), and Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), took time to share their perspective on Navajo government and current issues with H.O.P.E Scholars students, representing four tribes in Canada.

The H.O.P.E. Scholars group is from the Plains Cree in Maskwacis in Alberta, Canada, consisting of four First Nations including the Samson Cree Nation, Ermineskin Cree Nation, Louis Bull Tribe, and Montana Cree Nation.

Delegate Hale who serves as the chair of the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, shared knowledge of a wide range of issues including health care, education, and gaming, while emphasizing the need for young people to learn and utilize their language and to participate in their government, specifically at the local level.

“Being able to speak your language is a blessing, but sometimes those teachings are not handed down,” said Delegate Hale. “It’s important to exercise your language, especially in your local government because it’s your families that will benefit from your community moving forward.”

H.O.P.E. group leader Mario Swampy from the Samson Cree Nation, explained that he wanted to broaden the minds of the participants and empower them to become leaders and actively contribute to the development of their own communities.

When encouraging the group to overcome obstacles and pursue their goals, Delegate Yazzie who chairs the Law and Order Committee, drew from his own experiences serving as a Council Delegate and from his passion for music.

“Don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t accomplish something,” said Delegate Yazzie. “If you put your heart to it, and your mind to it, you can do a lot for your people.”

Prior to meeting with the delegates, the group of 21 high school students had the opportunity to sit in on budget hearings conducted by the Budget and Finance Committee.

Vice chair of the Budget and Finance Committee Delegate Nez, stressed the importance of being involved in one’s local government and giving back to your community.

“Be involved in your local government because that’s one thing that a lot of young people don’t do these days,” said Delegate Nez. “Learn all you can and take it back to your people because a lot of them look up to you as young people.”

The group’s visit marks the first time the H.O.P.E. Scholars have visited the Navajo Nation.

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