



## The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

Contact: Alastair Lee Bitsoi, Acting Communications Director

Phone: (928) 871-6384

Cell: (505) 906-1304

Fax: (928) 871-7255

[abitsoi@navajo.org](mailto:abitsoi@navajo.org)

[navajocouncil\\_pio@yahoo.com](mailto:navajocouncil_pio@yahoo.com)

[www.navajonationcouncil.org](http://www.navajonationcouncil.org)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council agrees to officially adopt the Naa Bik'í Yáti' Committee at the 2011 Winter Session

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – At today's work session, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council agreed to officially establish a fifth committee called the Naa Bik'í Yáti', which will be formally adopted at the 2011 Winter Session. In addition, the Council decided that the Naa Bik'í Yáti' would absorb the full duties and powers of the Government Services and Intergovernmental Relations Committees, as well as the agenda-setting authority from the Ethics and Rules Committee, allowing the new committee to set the agenda for Council sessions.

Speaker Pro Tem Jonathan Nez said the Naa Bik'í Yáti' and the committee powers it would absorb corresponds to the mandate issued by the Navajo Nation Supreme Court. "The establishment of the Naa Bik'í Yáti' Committee is part of restructuring the Legislative Branch's committee system, which the high court mandated as the Council's first order of business," explained the speaker pro tem.

The decision by the Council also amends the legislative process they agreed to Jan. 17. Under the amendments, Council delegates would still continue to request from the Office of Legislative Counsel the drafting of legislation, which would then proceed to the proper committee for consideration. The legislation would also be forwarded to executive divisions and programs for analysis and the public for notification. At the committee level, delegates and the general public would be given the opportunity to provide input through written and oral testimony. After committee oversight, all legislation would proceed to the Naa Bik'í Yáti' before going to the full Council for consideration.

The Naa Bik'í Yáti', comprised of all 24 members of the Council, would serve as a committee to filter legislation and increase the involvement of the president, such as providing the president the opportunity to explain why he vetoed a particular legislation. Honorable Leonard Tsosie said the Naa Bik'í Yáti' would distinguish the Navajo legislature from other legislatures because it would allow the president and Council to exercise the principle of K'é by "talking things out."

"The Naa Bik'í Yáti' consists of fairness, understanding and reassurance on legislation that is important to our people," added Honorable Edmund Yazzie. "It also reassures acknowledgment and improves communication with our president."

The committee would also eliminate the need for caucuses and provide Council delegates the chance to discuss all proposed legislation before going to the full Council for consideration.

On Thursday, the Council will focus its efforts on amending the Council and standing committee floor rules, as well as determine the speaker's authority and selection.

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