



**NAVAJO NATION
DIVISION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 25, 2011

CONTACT: Rick Abasta
Public Information Officer
Phone: 928-871-6560
Fax: 928-871-7090
Email: rabasta@nndcd.org

Separate technology islands to be a thing of the past for the Navajo Nation



Navajo Nation Department of Information Technology Manager Harold Skow said the forthcoming fiber optics line from Navajo Tribal Utility Authority will provide lightening fast Internet connection for the Navajo Nation. DIT is working to unify all information technology islands. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK-No man is an island.

The Navajo Nation Department of Information Technology recognized that truth long ago and has been working to eliminate fragmentation in communications within the tribal network since.

Separate information technology islands within the government results in waste, according to Harold Skow, department manager for NNDIT.

Effective and immediate contact between these technology islands is the primary concern.

A decade from now, Skow foresees the Navajo Nation operating in a paperless environment.

The Shelly-Jim Administration view the same reality and is working with the NNDIT to provide the reach to contact all tribal employees at once.

Navajo Nation Vice President Rex Lee Jim said unifying the IT islands is paramount.

“The primary objective is to unify all IT islands, in case of an emergency or public safety issue,” Jim said.

The department’s new Microsoft Exchange server is a step in the right direction.

Jim said, “With this new system, the Shelly-Jim Administration can send out an email and his message can reach over 8,000 employees at once.”

NNDIT recently migrated from an obsolete email server to the updated MS Exchange 2010, after the previous system crashed in November 2010.

The exchange server provides email services, Skow said, and new features for tribal employees, like calendar sharing and integration with Macintosh computers.

“There are different ways of setting it up and there’s a lot of good functionality in there,” Skow said.

“Our current President Ben Shelly, his platform is to have one IT for the Navajo Nation. He’s been moving along and we’ve been following his lead,” Skow said.

All Navajo Nation divisions and departments should be using the integrated network infrastructure from NNDIT, he said.

In the past, dependence on outside vendors from surrounding urban centers led to the evolution of the IT islands, splintering the tribal structure. Many divisions and departments have outside websites and email service, often at a significant cost, he noted.

“Now, we’re trying to bring them back together. The IT islands were here before I came to work for the Navajo Nation,” Skow said.

NNDIT is currently developing a Navajo Nation IT governance law that will be presented to the Navajo Nation Council.

“The primary concern is to unify all IT islands, in case of an emergency or public safety issue.”

“Once the council adopts the law, it will be the law of the land,” Skow said.

Having one IT platform for the Navajo Nation will eliminate costs from exorbitant consultation fees and email networks that are divided from NNDIT.

“Some divisions and departments are already jumping onboard and we really appreciate that,” he said.

NNDIT will integrate with the new fiber optic line being installed by Navajo Tribal Utility Authority for a lightening fast connection.

The department has a staff of 23 and plans are underway to add more personnel to serve the needs of the tribe.

“DIT serves the whole Navajo Nation government,” Skow said. “We do technology in a holistic manner.”

Facilitating support services for the department are the administrative, network, desktop, development, and software sections.

Each section handles duties such as administrative functions, web helpdesk, email, PC installations, maintenance, developing websites and web applications.

Since 1992, the NNDIT has been responsible for using technology to control the flow of information between chapters and the central government, after resolution CJY-34-92 was passed by the Navajo Nation Council.

The department was formerly known as Computer Services and became established as the NNDIT in 2003.

The mission of the department is to provide an environment that integrates people, processes and technology to increase the efficiency of Navajo Nation services.

Staying abreast of innovations in the industry is the key and the NNDIT datacenter is prime.

“What we’ve done is create a virtual environment. And in that environment, we’ve basically configured a Navajo Nation IT cloud,” Skow said.

Cloud computing allows access to computer resources like data and software via computer network, as opposed to a local computer. Using the cloud provides secure access to all applications and data from any network device.

Skow said the department loaded a new Microsoft Exchange 2010 server in the cloud.

“It has a redundant environment, where it’s fail safe and very secure,” Skow said. “It’s a very complex environment right now.

The datacenter’s complexity includes seven terabyte storage area network drives and a proposed 60-terabyte SAN drive, to increase the cloud’s capacity.

Getting the cloud operational is a big step for the Navajo Nation, Skow said, especially when you consider the nation is relatively new to the IT environment.

“I think there’s still a lot of misconception about technology and the use of it in our government,” Skow said. “Most of our leaders tend to see the IT solution only as email.

“They don’t see the capacity of what IT can do, especially in the wireless environment,” he added.

Information: www.dit.navajo-nsn.gov



Navajo Nation Department of Information Technology Web Developer Alex Yazzie spends the day working with Adobe Dreamweaver and building websites for Navajo Nation departments and programs. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



The servers for the Navajo Nation Department of Information Technology practically fill half the building. The new Microsoft Exchange 2010 was the most recent addition for the department. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



The computers pictured here were repaired by the Navajo Nation Department of Information Technology Desktop Section, which is responsible for installing and maintaining personal computers and peripherals for the tribal government. (Photo by Rick Abasta)