



THE NAVAJO NATION
DIVISION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Contact: Byron Shorty, Public Information Officer, bshorty@navajo-nsn.gov, 928/871-7378

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 22, 2019

Diné Entrepreneur Series brings resources, information to Navajo entrepreneurs



PHOTO: Virginia Yazzie-Ballinger (Navajo Spirit), Pattie DeMetrio (HTE Realty), Brianne Arviso (Arviso Construction), Victoria Largo (Victoria's Pizza), Karen Bedonie (Opps A Daisy Floral Shop) following the Navajo Women Entrepreneurs panel at the Diné Entrepreneur Series.



PHOTO: Shiprock RBDO leading a session Tuesday, May 21st.

WINDOW ROCK – The Diné Entrepreneur Series concluded Wednesday at the Navajo Nation Museum after three days of workshops, panels, and presentations by Division of Economic Development staff and partners.

President Nez delivered the opening address on Monday morning and expressed the administration's focus on supporting and promoting Navajo businesses and entrepreneurs.

“We’re prioritizing Navajo-owned businesses when it comes to contractual services with the Nation,” President Nez said, “We want our people to succeed.”

The Diné Entrepreneur Series held sessions on topics related to starting a business and creating a business plan, leasing Navajo Nation lands, Navajo priority certification, marketing and finance, bootstrapping, cultivating ideas for business, doing sales, renting through Navajo Shopping Centers, women in construction, designating and withdrawing land, and more.

From the Division of Economic Development, the Shiprock, Eastern, Chinle, and Western Regional Business Development Offices led sessions, along with the Business Regulatory Department.

Other sessions were held in partnership with the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development Procurement Technical Assistance Center (NCAIED-PTAC), the Navajo Nation Tax Commission, First Southwest Bank, Bleu Adams of IndigeHub, Navajo Nation Shopping Centers Incorporated, Navajo Community Development Financial Institution, the Gallup Small Business Development Center, and Arviso Construction.

“I appreciate division staff and our partners for coming together to provide this resource to the Nation’s entrepreneurs without requiring a registration fee,” Division of Economic Development Director JT Willie said.

“Our goal is to keep this up – to keep being a resource to Navajo entrepreneurs in other communities across the Navajo Nation,” Director Willie said.



PHOTO: Christine Reidhead (NTU), Levi Esquerra (NAU), Michael Lerma (Diné College), and Mark Remillard (UNM-Gallup) following the higher education panel discussion.

The series also featured three entrepreneurship discussion panels focusing on higher education institutions, Navajo Nation divisions, and Navajo women entrepreneurs.

The higher education panel included Navajo Technical University Chair for School of Business and Education Christine Reidhead, Director for Northern Arizona University’s Center for American Indian Economic Development Levi Esquerra, Diné College Dean of the School of Business and Social Science Michael Lerma, and University of New Mexico at Gallup Business and Applied Technology, Workforce Development, Community Based Education, and CCTE Division Chair Mark Remillard.

The panel of college programs shared their insights in developing programs that encourage entrepreneurial skills.

“What we see are entrepreneurs striving to solve problems,” Esquerra said, “They don’t understand, ‘No, you cannot do that.’”

The panelists shared with the audience that passion, confidence, and the proper training are important qualities for an entrepreneur to develop.

Navajo Nation divisions and departments were also invited to take part in a panel on Tuesday. This panel included: Navajo Division of Transportation Director Garrett Silversmith, Department of Health Director Dr. Jill Jim, Division of Natural Resources Principal Attorney Robert Allan, Division of Community Development Director Dr. Pearl Yellowman, Division of Human

Resources Director Dr. Perphelia Fowler, and Division of Economic Development Director JT Willie.

The division panelists each shared their stories about overcoming failure, and how their respective divisions rely on the services that Navajo business owners provide.



PHOTO: Director JT Willie, Dr. Pearl Yellowman, DNR Principal Attorney Robert Allan, Dr. Jill Jim, and Director Garrett Silversmith during the Navajo Nation Division panel discussion at the Diné Entrepreneur Summit.

Director Yellowman shared that being a business owner also makes one a leader because they bring services to the community.

“You may not directly benefit from the business, but your grandchildren will,” Director Yellowman said.

Noting the graduations taking place, Director Silversmith continued, “I see graduates, and we need to be there for our youth. We fail – but it’s not about failure. Don’t let fear of failure keep you from going after what you want.”

The Navajo Women Entrepreneurs panel featured Karen Bedonie of Oops-A-Daisy Floral Shop, Virginia Yazzie Ballinger of Navajo Spirit, Pattie DeMetrio of HTE Realty, Brianne Arviso of Arviso Construction, and Victoria Largo of Victoria’s Pizza.

Each woman shared their background in being based on or around the Navajo Nation, and the important skills that helped them throughout the development of their businesses.

“It’s my responsibility to contribute,” Bedonie shared.

She continued by acknowledging that applying the sovereignty of the Navajo people can be an important skill to develop, and that she was able to establish the Navajo Nation in the international floral market to gain an advantage in acquiring plants and flowers from all over the world directly from their source. You have to think outside of the box, Bedonie said.

“You really have a calling – I’m so filled with love and joy, it takes my heart to see people enjoying Victoria’s Pizza,” Largo said. “Believe in yourself, believe in what you do.”

The Diné Entrepreneur Series was held May 20-22 at the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, AZ. The Division of Economic Development plans to build on this event with more topics and in more communities across the Navajo Nation.

###

Information about the Division of Economic Development is online at www.NavajoBusiness.com. DED is on Facebook at [www.fb.com/NavajoEconomicDevelopment](https://www.facebook.com/NavajoEconomicDevelopment), and on Instagram/Twitter @Navajo_DED.