



THE NAVAJO NATION

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President Begaye, Vice President Nez meet with Utah Gov. Herbert



President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez, the two top elected leaders of the Navajo Nation, were given the honor and privilege of addressing the attendees of the 10th Annual Utah Governor's Native American Summit on July 30. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

PROVO—The Navajo Nation was designated as the host tribe for the 10th Annual Utah Governor's Native American Summit today at Utah Valley University.

President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez were in attendance, as more than 600 people, many of them from tribes residing in Utah, gathered for the summit.

Tribal legislators from the 23rd Navajo Nation Council were also in attendance, including Speaker LoRenzo Bates, Davis Filfred, Tom Chee, Nate Brown and Kee Allen Begay.

"Hózhó Speaks – Love, Peace, Beauty and Harmony" was the theme of the summit, which was created by then Lt. Gov. Gary R. Herbert in 2005 and was initially attended by 60 people.

Today, that modest number has increased by tenfold, as tribal leaders, councilmen, native youth and others attended the event. The Utah Division of Indian Affairs and the Navajo Nation

hosted the event.

Gov. Herbert and Lt. Gov. Spencer J. Cox expressed appreciation for the tribes in attendance and said their goal was to work with tribes in Utah.

Ready to work hand-in-hand

President Begaye said, "Some of the issues we're going to be discussing today, Hózhó for our people, is all about economic development, infrastructure and all of the things we need. Like school bus routes and servicing all of our veterans."

He said the Navajo Nation is awaiting the approval of the Utah Public Service Commission for the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority's purchase of the Rocky Mountain Power Company.

"With their approval, we will be able to provide electricity

to over 300 of our Navajo homes and families on the Utah side. We're looking forward to that, Governor Herbert," said President Begaye.

Navajo Nation water rights

President Begaye commended the state of Utah for demonstrating to other states across the country that water rights with tribal nations can be negotiated at the table without going to court and the subsequent years of litigation.

"I was really amazed that the governor and legislators here in the state came up with the proclamation, the resolution, where they agreed they would help the Navajo Nation with their water settlement," he said.

The resolution states that Navajo people will be provided drinking water.

"That is Hózhó," President Begaye said.

Awakening of a New Dawn

Vice President Jonathan Nez said it is truly the awakening of a new dawn on the Navajo Nation. He thanked the governor and lieutenant governor for their advocacy on behalf of native tribes in the state.

"I took time out from a run called Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation. It's over 500 miles, the run, throughout the Navajo Nation," Vice President Nez said. "We have always advocated for healthy living, eating right and taking care of yourself.

"So, our message to the young people in the audience, take care of yourself, stay active and be healthy," he added.

Before leaving the stage, Vice President Nez said the creation of a cabinet level Indian Department in the state is needed. His suggestion drew applause from the crowd.

"We look forward to our continued partnership," said Vice President Nez.

Hózhó and the future

"When talking about Hózhó, we talk about when we signed the Treaty of 1868. It was nation to nation. That was how we were recognized for being a treaty tribe," said President Begaye.

He said the Navajo Nation must deal with three different policies and procedures when it comes to state services provided by federal funds.

"We ask that the state of Utah support that the Navajo Nation. We want to assume total control, direct funding from the federal government," President Begaye said. "Navajo Nation is very sophisticated, we have the infrastructure, the capacity to handle those funds.

"The Navajo Nation stands ready to work hand-in-hand with the Office of the Governor to improve the lives of our people. Thank you," he added.



Vice President Jonathan Nez encouraged the youth in attendance to live a healthy and active lifestyle. He shared his participation in the 5th Annual Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation, where he is currently at 120 miles of running. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



President Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez shared the priorities of the Navajo Nation during the tribal leaders round table discussion after the plenary session of the summit. There, they spoke on issues ranging from the Bears Ears Tribal Coalition to infrastructure to roads. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



President Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez stand proudly with students who performed in a play honoring the Navajo Code Talkers. Although many of the actors were non-Navajo, they spoke Navajo and acted in a performance that was educational and entertaining. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

