

Executive Branch Report

EASTERN AGENCY COUNCIL MEETING

Nahodishgish, N.M.



THE NAVAJO NATION
Office of the President and Vice President
June 6, 2015



Yá'át'ééh!

It is the awakening of a new dawn for the Navajo Nation. Our administration is doing things differently than previous leaders and we believe that the Navajo people have given us a mandate, through their vote, on what they want to see during our administration.

As such, we have four pillars that we will be focused on during our time of office, four mandates that have come directly from the Navajo people.

The first one is our Navajo Veterans. We will be working hard to ensure they are properly acknowledged and provided a helping hand with the issues they face. Our veterans are in need of housing and mental health counseling services for the post-traumatic stress syndrome they must deal with on a daily basis. They put their lives on the line for our nation and now it's time we provide the assistance they need.

The second mandate from the Navajo people is our Navajo elders. They are the bedrock and foundation of our Navajo sovereignty. They too, must be properly taken care of and provided for, whether it is nursing homes or assisted living centers. Our youth are included in this effort, as they are both interconnected. We will encourage our elders to teach our youth our language and our culture to continue for the years to come.

The third mandate from our people is infrastructure. Time and again we see countless trucks traveling the roads to haul water in huge barrels to provide their families with drinking water, but also for cleaning and bathing. Many of our people also haul water for their livestock. Beyond the water issues, there is also a tremendous need for electricity and power lines to provide basic life necessities that improve the quality of life.

The fourth mandate from the Navajo people is job creation and employment. We have heard over and over again about the unemployment rate hovering at more than 50 percent across our nation. However, in some chapters, it is as high as 70 and 80 percent. We are planning on taking advantage of our desert economy to create jobs such as making creams, lotions and ointments from aloe vera and yucca plants.

From Capitol Hill to the Navajo Nation, you can rest assured that we have selected the best and brightest Navajos to help us with these mandates that came directly from the Navajo people. Please join us in this awakening of a new dawn. It is only by working together and with each other that these tasks can be completed. Ahe'hee.

CAPITOL HILL MEETINGS

For the first week in June 2015, we traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with federal officials and leaders from the House and Senate to discuss issues important to the Navajo Nation. These issues ranged from water rights, infrastructure, funding formula changes, appointing members to national tribal organizations, energy, Navajo veterans, employment, economic development, Ft. Wingate, working with the U.S. EPA, transportation, and the reauthorization of NAHASDA.

We met with 11 congressmen and congresswomen, seven senators and several leaders from various federal departments. The legislators we met with were the decision makers: ranking members and chairpersons of committees in both the House and Senate.

It is our intention to ensure that our leaders on Capitol Hill know that Big Navajo is back. The voting block from the Navajo Nation has been the difference in key elections this past season, including the reelection of Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (D-Ariz.), who acknowledged this fact by proudly displaying the Navajo flag outside her office doors.

NAVAJO NATION TREATY DAY

Níwohdéé' nihi amá sání dóo nihi acheii Hwéeldi déé ahni nak'aa.

A time ago, our grandmothers and grandfathers returned back from Ft. Sumner on foot, after years of captivity by the federal government. The Long Walk of the Navajo people was a time of suffering and sadness for the tribe.

It is because of the strength and resilience of our Navajo ancestors that the Treaty of 1868, *naaltsoos sání*, was signed and the war of the federal government against the Navajo people ended. The Long Walk, *Hwéeldi*, tested the limits of our people, but through our sacred language, traditions and songs, we overcame these challenges over time to become the thriving Navajo Nation of today.

We honored the bravery and sacrifice of Navajo leaders such as Manuelito, Barboncito, Largo, Narbono, Ganado Mucho and others at the Smithsonian Institute National Museum of American Indians. We met with the director, Kevin Gover and spoke about the possibility of displaying the original Treaty of 1868 inside the museum and possibly, at the Navajo Nation Museum to share with the Navajo people and others.

We will stand by the Treaty of 1868 forever and it will never be taken from us. Thank you to all who observed Navajo Nation Treaty Day and may our God bless the Navajo Nation.



TÓDÍNÉESHZHEÉ PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX GRAND OPENING

On May 29, 2015, the Kayenta Township celebrated the grand opening of the Kayenta Department of Corrections and the Kayenta Support Facility.

The new facility was funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, at a cost of \$34 million and provides a 54,000 square feet facility with 84 beds, a short-term holding facility for male and female inmates, plus a 13,500 square feet support building to house dispatch, police and criminal investigation departments.

The facility is located near the Kayenta District Court, which is another benefit because it reduces travel distance, in addition to relieving overcrowding. The facility also features culturally beneficial healing areas such as a sweat lodge, teepee ground and traditional Navajo hogan. Throughout the construction, there was an 80 percent Navajo workforce participating in its construction.

President Begaye said the construction of the facility was not one person's work or one person's idea. Rather, it was a collective work effort that blessed the Kayenta Chapter with a new public safety facility. He said the new building is symbolic of public safety, from the police officers, emergency medical services and all people serving to protect the Navajo people.

Vice President Nez said the work, dedication, and sacrifice of public safety personnel must be respected. He said the new building was also because of Navajo residents in the community buying goods and services that were taxed and subsequently went toward the facility's construction. He said the fallen Navajo officers must also be honored for the sacrifices they made to protect the Navajo people in the line of duty.

SAN JUAN FIRE SUPPORT SERVICES

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez met with representatives from San Juan County and the Navajo Nation to discuss fire protection support services provided for three Navajo chapters located within the county boundaries. The chapters are Newcomb, Ojo Amarillo and Shiprock.

San Juan County Commissioner Wallace Charley organized the meeting, which was held in late May 2015. It was the first time that this issue was brought forth to the Begaye-Nez administration. President Begaye said the Navajo Nation is exploring temporary options with the county to provide protection to the affected chapters.

This includes the transfer of needed equipment from the county to the tribe and mutual aid response, which would allow the Navajo Nation to reimburse San Juan County for each emergency fire response on the Nation. The tribe will plan for a more permanent solution next fiscal year.

Vice President Nez, who previously served with the Navajo County Board of Supervisors, said the taxes collected by the county from Navajo people paying for goods and services must be taken into account.

"The myth is that Navajos don't pay taxes. Navajos visit the border towns and infuse millions of dollars. We need to remind the commission that if it wasn't for the economic power of Navajos, the county budget crisis would be worse than it is," Vice President Nez said.

President Begaye agreed and said more advocacy from commissioners elected into office by the Navajo people needs to be done. Because they represent these Navajo constituents, they need to advocate on their behalf, he said.

"These are critical services," said President Begaye. "Our people go to Farmington and shop, paying taxes in the process. Those taxes benefit the county, including the fire tax. The county must take that into consideration."

BIRDSPRINGS MEMORIAL DAY

The Birdsprings Chapter honored their fallen warriors on Memorial Day and Vice President Nez attended the event to pay his respects to members of the U.S. Armed Forces who paid the ultimate sacrifice. The veteran organizations from Birdsprings, Leupp and Tolani Lake also participated in the event.

More than 100 people were packed into the domed confines of the chapter, including a large group of veterans. The group honored their fallen comrades with photos of Navajo warriors hung on the wall to honor their service. The color guard also unfolded the flags of these American heroes, inspected them for any wear and tear before refolding them and giving the flags back to family members.

Vice President Nez said Navajo veterans are one of the four main pillars of the administration and that a veteran would be appointed to the Office of the President and Vice President to serve on behalf of the veterans.

"We know that you need a veteran in our office. They know you've been through and what you're facing on a daily basis. We're going to put a good person in there who knows the veteran issues," said Vice President Nez.



TSAYATOH CHAPTER POWER LINE EXTENSION

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez joined Navajo Nation Council Delegate Seth Damon on May 19 to present the chapter with a check amounting to more than \$168,000 for power line extensions.

The chapter members were moved to tears upon seeing their tribal leaders attend their meeting unannounced. They said it was the first time a sitting president and vice president visited their chapter for other reasons than campaigning for election.

Both President Begaye and Vice President Nez praised the tenacity and intelligence of Damon and told community members they raised good leader who is looking out for their best interests. Damon said what initially began as a \$50,000 supplemental appropriations request grew to more than \$168,000 to meet chapter needs.

A young man introduced himself as a member of the Notah family and said he was in the eleventh grade. He recounted his life of doing homework in the dark and worrying about his elder grandmother in the winter, as his family stacked blankets to keep warm.

Breaking down in tears of joy he said, "Maybe now my younger brothers and sisters will finally have light to do their homework and we can utilize heaters and those kind of things to stay warm in the winter."

GRADUATION MESSAGE FOR STUDENTS

President Begaye and Vice President Nez congratulated students that graduated from high school and colleges and universities across the country. They said education is crucial for tribal leadership and that their first round of cabinet member appointments highlights that point.

Several graduates of Harvard University have been appointed to the Begaye-Nez administration to provide solutions to problems facing the Navajo people.

In May, President Begaye traveled to Tempe, Ariz. to honor Navajo students graduating from Arizona State University. ASU has partnered with the Navajo Nation to educate teachers and staff from Navajo Head Start, which currently has more than 50 percent of their staff with a bachelor's degree education.

"Congratulations to our high school graduates across the nation. We are also very proud of all our graduates from the colleges and universities across the country," said President Begaye. "Our administration is excited to bring you home to work for the Navajo people."

Vice President Nez commended the president for opening the door to educated Navajos to return home and serve the people.

"I want to thank *shi nali*, President Begaye, for opening the doors to a lot of our educated folks coming back to the Navajo Nation," said Vice President Nez.

BEGAYE-NEZ CABINET APPOINTMENTS

For the awakening of a new dawn, it was important for President Begaye and Vice President Nez to change the consciousness of the Navajo people, especially the tribal employees providing direct services to the people. The administration did this by appointing highly educated and qualified executive directors to their cabinet to oversee the different tribal divisions.

These key appointments include Jackson Brossy as the executive director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office, Bidtah Becker as the executive director of the Division of Natural Resources, Wenona Benally as the executive director for the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission, Jesse Delmar as the executive director of the Division of Public Safety, and Dr. Donald Benn as the executive director of the Navajo Environmental Protection Agency.

The Begaye-Nez administration received hundreds of resumes and applications to join the team and President Begaye and Vice President Nez will be announcing more new appointments soon. In the interim, they have asked others to assist temporarily as they assemble the right team to assist the Navajo Nation.

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