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OPVP SIGNS HISTORIC THREE-BRANCH AGREEMENT TO CREATE THE NAVAJO NATION AD HOC YOUTH COUNCIL

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Aug. 21, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Speaker LoRenzo Bates and Acting Chief Justice Allen Sloan signed a three-branch agreement recognizing the Navajo Nation ad hoc Youth Council.

Since the early 80s, Diné youth have been involved in providing insights in advising the Navajo Nation government. These various youth councils had only remained in effect for the length of the sitting administration's tenure and offered temporary benefits to our tribal government.

The Navajo Nation made a historical change on Aug. 21, 2016, by entering into a three-branch government agreement ensuring a constant youth voice in tribal operations while creating a forum for future advocacy of youth issues.

President Begaye stated this is a historical event will give Navajo youth the opportunity to work with all three branches of government of our Navajo Nation.

"Our youths' voices and concerns are critical to our future and this three-branch agreement facilitates their presence. This executive order is significant," he said.

The signed document asserts, "The Diné Youth are the Navajo Nation's future. We must prioritize our Youth in all areas to give them the opportunities to be successful in life, ...be immersed in our culture and language to carry on our Diné traditions and way life...."

Further, the Navajo Nation ad hoc Youth Council shall apprise and provide guidance to the three branches on policy matters that involve the Diné Youth...."

Following approval of the three-branch agreement, President Begaye signed Executive Order 06-2016, Empowering Our Youth; "Recognition of the ad hoc Youth Council."

This executive order instructs all tribal divisions, departments and programs of the Navajo Nation to consult with the ad hoc Youth Advisory Council on matters that impact Navajo youth. The Advisory Council will be allowed to discuss and make recommendations pertinent to Navajo language and culture, education, health and violence prevention. This collective dialogue ensures that major stakeholders are included in the process, as they are integral and cherished.

Technical assistance to the ad hoc Advisory Youth Council, including financial, program and operational support is imperative in ensuring that meaningful dialogue is established to address our Nation's needs. OPVP has committed to providing the Youth Council the resources they need to achieve success.

The 11-member team represents youth from various areas of the Navajo Nation and surrounding urban areas. The ad hoc Advisory Youth Council was selected based on their community involvement, and commitment to the Youth Council's work. The team has been meeting for the last year to become better organized and outcome based.

Members of the Youth Council signed acceptance letters, which detailed their roles and responsibilities as advocates of their peers, parents, grandparents and communities on and off the Navajo Nation.

The ad hoc Advisory Council will soon develop events to encourage ongoing education, Navajo language and cultural preservation, leadership activities and help to bridge communication across generations.

“Enacting the ad hoc youth council is another step toward instilling resiliency in our future generations,” said Vice President Jonathan Nez. “All too often, we hear from tribal leaders and others that the youth are our leaders of tomorrow, when in fact, they are the leaders of today. This new advisory council underscores the important role our youth have in the tribal government.”

Newly appointed Ad hoc youth council member Virlencia Begay said she was humbled to be appointed as one of the members to serve on the Navajo Nation Youth Council.

“The Diné Youth’s voices’ have not been heard and our input within our Nation has been long overdue. With the Begaye-Nez Youth & Elder pillar and great support from our three branches of Government, I am positive we will get work done on local, state and national level,” she said.

OPVP is honored to have been part of this momentous event and looks forward to positive contributions made by the ad hoc Advisory Council.

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