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Communications Office
Office of the President and Vice President
Michele J. Crank
Mihio Manus
928.871.7000

PRESIDENT BEGAYE CALLS FOR TRIBES TO WORK TOGETHER TO ADDRESS WATER, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ISLETA PUEBLO-President Begaye attended the 2016 New Mexico Tribal Leaders Summit and called for tribes to work together to facilitate water delivery to rural communities, professional resources for economic development and for the state of New Mexico to collaboratively address education issues on the Navajo Nation.

The Summit was held at the Isleta Resort and Casino on June 16 and 17 and was facilitated by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department.

In talking about economic development, President Begaye made the point that approximately 80% of the contracts he signs go to non-Indian businesses.

The president advocated that tribal nations formulate a resource directory that lists the professional and technical skills their tribal members are licensed and certified to perform. This resource would be helpful in farming out work to other tribes and keeping money within the state and among tribal nations.

"You have expertise and technical skill and we need to partner. We need to keep our money in New Mexico," he said. "We should develop a list of professionals and experts within these tribes."

President Begaye said dual taxation is another issue that obstructs economic development within tribal nations. When non-Indian companies establish businesses on a tribal nation, there is a possibility that these companies will be taxed by the state along with the tribal nation.

"They need to be tax exempt on the Navajo Nation if their business is established on the Nation and under the complete sovereignty and jurisdiction of the Nation. We are trying to build our economy and some companies will go set up in border towns because they don't want to pay the taxes that the state imposes."

President Begaye asked that the state of New Mexico partner with the Navajo Nation to address school bus routes that are impassable in inclement weather.

"In the monsoon season and during the winter our routes get im-



Governor Martinez said the state and tribes need to continue to work together in pursuing educational goal reforms and giving Native American students and teachers the resources they need to succeed.

passable," he said. "We need to see that our children get to the bus stops and then onward to school."

President Begaye also thanked Governor Susana Martinez for providing a letter of support for the Academic Accountability work group the Navajo Nation has put together.

"We signed a State Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) with the state of New Mexico and it will expire on Sept. 30 of this year. This STEP impacts 30,000 Navajos," President Begaye said. "We need to sign another agreement. I also recommend that tribal members are assigned to the State Book Review and also the Text Adoption Committee."

Governor Martinez said the state and tribes must continue to work together to pursue educational goal reforms and give Native American students and teachers the resources they need to succeed.

"We need to continue to do this successfully together," Governor Martinez said. "We need to put advance resources into supporting the Navajo language."

President Begaye addressed the \$6 million dollars that the state

paid the Navajo Nation in the San Juan River Water Settlement. He said the Nation is spending an allocated \$250 million dollars for a five-year project to bring water to individual homes. He noted that an estimated 130,000 Navajos live on the New Mexico side of the Nation and many of them do not have running water.

"This is a Tribal Infrastructure Fund and Capital Improvement project that we are asking the state to consider. There are a lot of homes out there and this is one of those infrastructure and economic development issues that we need to have addressed," he said.

President Begaye also asked for collaboration and cooperation in running a water pipeline from Albuquerque to Tohajilee through tribal lands.

"I think we could collaborate on this more in coming to a resolution that allows the Navajo Nation to run a pipeline to Tohajilee so the community can receive water directly from Albuquerque. We need collaboration to cross tribal land and we are asking for cooperation in this," President Begaye said.

Director of the Navajo Department of Health, Ramona Antone-Nez,

advocated to create a specific Navajo Nation Medicaid agency. Nez said the Nation is performing due diligence in bringing Medicaid to the Nation.

"The Nation can build the infrastructure for Medicaid," she said. "We have the capability for the Health Department to operate as a regulatory agency. We need to determine how we can do this to enforce, regulate and coordinate health issues on the Nation."

Antone-Nez also noted that through partnership with the state, the Navajo Nation has been able to construct 36 elder centers in New Mexico. These centers were capital outlay projects based on dilapidated and outdated facilities that existed.

"Please maintain funds for projects such as these," she said.

President Begaye thanked the gathered tribal leaders for their attendance and asked that the nations represented work together to maintain their sovereignty and to facilitate collaboration between tribal nations.

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