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Office of the President and Vice President
Mihio Manus
Nicole Macias
928.871.7000
OPVPP.PressRoom@gmail.com

VICE PRESIDENT NEZ PROVIDES ENCOURAGEMENT TO PARTICIPANTS AT THE NB₃ HEALTHY BEVERAGE SUMMIT



Vice President Jonathan Nez shares with participants of the Notah Begaye II Foundation Healthy Beverage Summit his story to becoming a healthier and active leader.

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – Vice President Jonathan Nez shared his life story to become a healthier leader and the road to imposing a tax on Junk Food for the Navajo Nation at the Notah Begaye III Foundation Healthy Beverage Summit on Feb. 8.

“Life is not easy, teaching us to be prepared for the hard times in life. Today at this summit, we need to embrace the old ways of Navajo teachings. Those teachings are what made us who we are today,” said Vice President Nez. “We need to bring some of that knowledge and those teachings into the 21st century. It will greatly benefit the health and wellness of all indigenous people.”

Vice President Nez provided participants his life story as to why he changed his habits and promoted a healthier lifestyle. He also commended the service providers that attend the summit for their efforts to make their tribe healthier and active.

“You have to look internally and want to make that change. If you want to encourage people, you must be that example,” said Vice President Nez.

In remembrance of James Peshlakai, Vice President Nez noted that our traditional knowledge and wisdom are tools. These tools

are weapons that must be utilized to battle the 21st century monsters.

“We need to share these tools to empower other individuals to battle these monsters. We need to remind ourselves that we are resilient. You have the power to make that change but it starts with you. From there you will have the power to change your family, community and nation for good,” said Vice President Nez.

Vice President Nez noted the importance of sovereignty and ways to be truly sovereign. Being sovereign means that we, as the Navajo Nation, have the ability to feed every Navajo Nation constituent. Today, 98 percent of the food consumed on the nation is imported from outside of the Navajo Nation.

“We are moving forward to having food sovereignty on the Nation. We put \$15 million into three farms to grow vegetables for our food markets. This is the first step towards food sovereignty,” said Vice President Nez.

Vice President Nez also provided remarks about the implementation of the Navajo Nation’s Employee policy to allow employees to exercise 30 minutes to one hour during the workday.



Vice President Jonathan Nez pictured above with the Notah Begaye III Foundation Staff after day one of the summit.

In order to change the mindset of a community or nation, it takes consistent messaging to be healthier. This was evident for both President Russell Begaye and Vice President Nez when they were providing fair participants with fruit instead of candy. After one year, participants were asking for the fruit.

The Navajo Nation Junk Food tax was unprecedented and the first for

the United States. The Health Dine Nation Act of 2014 was signed into law by former president Ben Shelly. This act mandated a two percent sales tax on all food products with a minimal-to-no-nutritional value.

In closing, Vice President provided these encouraging remarks, "As a team, we will continue to change lives and our communities."

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