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PRESIDENT BEGAYE SAYS TRIBAL NATIONS NEED TO CHANGE PARADIGMS ON ECONOMIC CULTURE



President Russell Begaye spoke at 2017 National RES during a luncheon on Wednesday, Mar. 15 about the need for tribal nations to change their perspectives on economic development and culture.

LAS VEGAS, NV-While building and diversifying tribal economies was the resounding theme of discussion at the 2017 National Reservation Economic Summit, President Russell Begaye said tribal nations should change their views on economic culture.

Speaking at a luncheon on economic diversity, he encouraged tribal nations to become their own financial institutions, push for control over their natural resources, and make federal agencies utilize tribal workforces in spending grant monies.

As tribal lands are held in trust by the Federal government, tribal members don't own their lands or business fronts. This makes it hard for entrepreneurs to acquire loans without certain collateral. The president encouraged tribes to buy and own banks on their nations.

"We need to see more Indian nations buying their own banks so that they can lend money to their own people to start businesses," he said.

Federal agencies that are conducting major projects on Indian lands, and using Federal grants, should implement tribal preferences. Although federal laws govern federal dollars, these agencies have the power to implement criteria in their contracting that gives preference to employing tribal workforces.

"What percentage of these bids go toward employing tribal populations? How many of these contractors or subcontractors work with Native owned business?" President Begaye asked.

In pushing tribal preference a step further, President Begaye said that he will soon issue an Executive Order enforcing Buying Navajo.

"I am issuing an Executive Order stating that if you do business on the Navajo Nation you will hire Navajos, buy Navajo products and contract with Navajo businesses," he said. "We want to keep our money home. We don't turn over our dollars like we should on the Nation."

The president stressed the importance of providing employment opportunities toward bringing tribal members home. Many tribal members want to work for their tribes but face obstacles of employment opportunity and housing.

“We have made a commitment to bringing our people home to build the nation,” he said. “We need our college graduates to help us face challenges in building our nation to be stronger.”

Aside from changing paradigms from within, President Begaye said the United States needs to Buy Indian and afford tribes control

over their natural resources.

“Our sovereignty doesn’t negate the responsibility of the Federal government to honor their trust responsibilities and treaty obligations,” President Begaye said. “We are the ones who have made America great. We can run our own businesses and develop our own economies. As Native American nations, we are strong.”

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