



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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President Nez promotes food sovereignty at Diné Bich'iiya' Summit



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez serves on a panel at the 2020 Diné Bich'iiya' Summit at Diné College in Tsaile, Ariz. on Feb. 27, 2020.

TSAILE, Ariz. — On Thursday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez provided the welcome address on the opening day of the Diné Bich'iiya' Summit at Diné College in Tsaile, Ariz., where he spoke about the importance of individual and community empowerment through the production and consumption of Navajo traditional foods. The theme of this year's summit is "Empowering Grassroot Producers."

The two-day summit hosted by Diné College, Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President, and the Special Diabetes Program provides an opportunity for policy makers, health

advocates, local leaders, students, and community members to share their teachings and initiatives to promote healthy traditional foods. The event also offers workshops on cooking demonstrations, traditional food demonstrations, and water purification.

“By practicing the teaching of our Navajo elders known as T’áá hwó’ajít’éego, or self-reliance and self-determination, we have the power and ability to grow our own healthy foods and to feed our own people — that’s true sovereignty,” said President Nez. “We have the land, the resources, and the people to revitalize farming and food production on the Navajo Nation.”

He also spoke about the importance of inspiring others through healthy living by choosing healthy foods and incorporating Navajo traditional foods. In 2016, the Nation invested \$15 million to revitalize farming in several communities, which remains a top priority in order to help provide healthy foods at the local level.

President Nez also encourages families to grow their own healthy foods to become less dependent on outside food sources and to create a way for families to offer their food products at farmer’s markets to create revenue while promoting healthy eating.

Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development Executive Director JT Willie, Division of Natural Resources Executive Director Dr. Rudy Shebala, Hank Haskie with the Department of Health, and President Nez also participated on a panel to respond to questions from the audience and to share their personal knowledge and perspectives on traditional foods.

President Nez stated that the Office of the President and Vice President will once again support Navajo farmers and entrepreneurs by purchasing their healthy food items to distribute in this year’s fairs and parades on the Navajo Nation.

The second day of the summit will be held on Friday at the Diné College campus in Tsaile, Ariz. The Nez-Lizer Administration extends its appreciation to the Diné College Land Grant Office, Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Program, and many others involved in coordinating this year’s Diné Bich’iyya’ Summit.

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