

Navajo Nation Council Office of the Speaker
Contact: Sararesa Begay-Hopkins, Public Information Officer
(928) 871-6384
sararesabegay@navajo.org
<http://www.navajonationcouncil.org>

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Navajo Nation Program for Self Reliance Department hosts visit with U.S.
Department of Health and Human Services Regional Directors**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Roxanne Gorman, Navajo Nation Program for Self Reliance Department Manager, said the NNPSR program doesn't impose a road to success on its clients, but helps them develop their own path.

Gorman who spoke during a dinner meeting during Wednesday evening, Sept. 5 with Michael A. Garcia, Region 6 Director and Tom Lorentzen, Region 9 Director, representatives from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Regional Directors.

Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr. and Navajo Division of Social Services Director Cora Maxx-Phillips also attended the dinner meeting.

NNPSR assists about 4,000 Navajo families, Gorman said.

Considering the Navajo Nation 50 percent unemployment rate, that is a modest amount of people, she noted.

The program's goal ultimately is for clients can only remain on NNPSR – part of the federal government's Welfare to Work program – for five years, she said.

The federal government's Health & Human Services department provides funds to Native American tribes, and allows the tribes to administer their own programs, Gorman said. The tribes are given some leeway in determining how it will assist its members, she said.

NNPSR, for instance, not only provides financial assistance, but can also offer day care, work-related expenses, educational assistance and pay for training.

Navajos take pride in being able to take care of their own. Thus, the idea of help is in becoming self-sufficient appeals to them, Gorman said.

Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan said that our Navajo ancestors and elders are always self-sufficient.

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“Being self-sufficient and self-sustaining is a Navajo teaching,” Speaker Morgan said. “We, contemporary Navajos, have experienced influence from the outside world, and that has hindered our mindset to be self-sufficient to some extent. I’ve observed numerous Navajos who are working and striving to make a living, that’s in accord with our Navajo teachings and lifeways. Then there is a segment of Navajo society that has lost their way as a Navajo, that is, becoming dependent on welfare and others in Navajo society to make their own living, I believe, we can heal and overcome that mindset of becoming dependent and be individually self-sustaining.”

Speaker Morgan added that he believes the NNPSR is also in accord with the Navajo teachings in forwarding one’s self-reliance and self-governance.

NNPSR held a dinner at the Quality Inn in Window Rock to welcome federal HHS officials, who had come to spend several days touring and learning about the Navajo Nation.”

Maxx-Phillips spoke to the visitors during the dinner meeting, and said, “We are all unique in our own way, and there is so much we can learn from each other. A human being can be measured by numbers alone.”

The HHS officials – Region 6 Director Michael A. Garcia, Region 9 Director Tom Lorentzen and Jeremy Marshall, a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma – are the highest ranking HHS staff to visit Navajo, Max-Phillips said.

They will attend events, such as a NNPSR education and job fair, and visit several other social service agencies and the Indian Health Service.

The Navajo Nation has its priorities in order – with a focus on family, culture, language and education, Garcia said. Of them, obtaining a formal education is the key, he said, adding that he is a Mexican-American from Texas. His own father pushed him to achieve more than he had, and Garcia said he now pushes his own son in the same manner.

“It’s in the education,” Garcia said. “Teach people how to fish, instead of doing the fishing for them.”

Lorentzen has had an interest in Navajo for years, and he related a chance meeting in Washington, D.C. he once had with former Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater – who told Lorentzen to come by his office and read up on the Navajo Nation.

“I wanted to be here, to learn and to know,” Lorentzen said. “I will return to Washington a better person.”

For Marshall, it was his second visit to Window Rock.

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Marshall who grew up on a small farm in Oklahoma said, “The first time I left Oklahoma, my family was on our way to someplace in Arizona and we stopped here,” Marshall said. “I asked a man, ‘Why do they call it Window Rock?’ and he said he turned around. And then I saw it.”

He saw the historic Window Rock, a mystic reminder of the past with a window open to the future.