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AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS LEADERS VISIT NAVAJO NATION

Several of Australia's most notable indigenous leaders were welcomed by Navajo Nation officials in Window Rock on June 7, 2006.

"It was exciting to have these discussions with our visitors," Speaker Lawrence Morgan who was presented with a report on social justice from the group, said. "We have learned that as indigenous peoples, we face many of the same issues."

During the meeting with the international visitors, Speaker Morgan gave an in-depth presentation on the Navajo Nation government, covering its history to present day operations. He explained the three-branch system under which the Navajo Nation operates and explained major issues with governance that the nation is addressing.

Speaker Morgan explained that there was a system of governance among the Navajo people that was practiced before European contact, and that the passage of the Dine Fundamental Law, which was enacted by the Navajo Nation Council in 2002, attempted to preserve original Navajo laws.

The speaker mentioned the banning of uranium mining as an example of the Council using Dine Fundamental Law in legislating.

Council delegate Rex Lee Jim, who has done much international traveling throughout his life, spoke about the international effort that the Navajo Nation has been involved in for more than ten years in advocating for the rights of all indigenous peoples with the drafting of the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"It wasn't long ago that these discussions were happening without us," Jim noted in explaining why the Navajo Nation was a participant in the international arena.

The speaker and Mr. Jim asked for the indigenous leaders to take the advocacy back to their country for a strong declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples so that the document may eventually become international law. They further invited the leaders to collaborate in the future.

The dignitaries were extended the invitation to visit the High Star Sun Eagle dance held June 4-11 in Red Valley by the organization's president Ervin Keeswood, who is also the Council delegate from Hogback. The mission of the High Star/Sun Eagle Peace

Foundation is to participate in the creation of a peaceful world through the high star/sun eagle dance and educational, ceremonial and other events that support peace.

Keeswood has been participating in international discussions for the past 10 years, most recently traveling to Qatar to represent the Navajo Nation at the International Telecommunications Union.

Some of the leaders in attendance include:

Jodie Ryan, Aboriginal Business Development Officer. Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development

Toni Bauman, noted anthropologist

Leah Armstrong, General Manager, Yarnteen Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Corporation

Tanya Hosch, National Indigenous Youth Movement of Australia

Eddie Cubillo, Deputy Director, Indigenous Affairs with Northern Territory Correctional Services

Mick Dodson, Director of the [Australian National University's](#) National Centre for Indigenous Studies and Chairman of the [Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies](#). Dodson was Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social justice commissioner with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

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