

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

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Council Delegate Commemorate Ring Reminds Him of Navajo Nation Sovereignty

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – To Council Delegate Rex Lee Jim (Rock Point) the Council Delegate ring reminds him of Navajo Nation sovereignty.

“I see the Treaty of 1868 inscribed on one side of this ring,” Jim said as he inspects the commemorative ring for the 20th Navajo Nation Council. “Treaties are made only between sovereign nations. When we Council Delegates take the Oath of Office, we swear to protect this treaty and, therefore, Navajo Nation sovereignty.”

Jim’s thoughts turn to stories told by Navajo elders in his community about how the Navajo ancestors struggled to survive, and return to Navajo Territory after the Hwééldí or the “Long Walk.”

“The stories recount Navajo survivors picking out corn kernels from animal waste,” Jim said somberly. “What kind of thoughts do you have to have in order to humble yourself and feed yourself in such a manner, just so that future generations of the Navajo people may continue? Our ancestors were able to find a seed of greatness in such a horrific experience. This kernel of corn has bloomed into the Great Navajo Nation that we now are.”

Today, Jim, who is in his second term as a Council Delegate, says that he strives and works toward Navajo sovereignty. This means that each and every Navajo must earn and design the kind of life he or she wants to live.

“A sovereign nation is only as sovereign to the degree that its people are self sufficient,” said Jim who was born and reared in the Rock Point community. “We must become productive citizens,” Jim said.

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Jim added that, "If you turn this ring to the other side, there's 'Dzil,' ("Mountain" in the Navajo language) which essentially means strength, and a corn stalk. The four sacred mountains and the corn are the strength and foundation of who we are. Our ancestors made the most of the land. Combining their own strength with the strength of the land, they made sure that each and every Navajo was clothed, fed and sheltered. We as a Nation must recommit ourselves to that fundamental goal."

Navajos are expanding, learning and growing, he explained.

The symbolism held in the Navajo Council Delegate ring is significant, spiritual and special to Jim as he continues to describe the symbols.

"The 'Dzil' and the corn stalk in the Navajo culture are at the core of our Navajo prayers and ceremonies," Jim said. "These symbols remind us to work hard and smart for our people"

Jim said his responsibility and public service as a Council Delegate is meaningful to him and his colleagues on the 21st Navajo Nation Council.

"We take that to heart," Jim said. "We are here to serve."

"Certainly, there are those who believe that Council Delegates do not work and are self-serving," he said. "They will continue to think that no matter what. Then there are others who know how hard we work. And understand that the 'ring' is but a small token of appreciation on the part of the Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council."

Jim believes that those Navajos who are self-sufficient and working "will probably appreciate the meaning of the Council Delegate rings."

He said numerous Rock Point community members told him that the Council Delegate ring is "beautiful," and to take care of the ring and the values it stands for.

"Those values are in the Navajo Nation Chamber and now the commemorative ring."

He said he wants to stress that a "Sovereign Navajo Nation is only as sovereign as its people."

Jim has a BA degree in English from Princeton University, and a Master's degree from the Bread Loaf School of English of Middlebury College, Vt. He also has done research at Oxford University in England and has traveled extensively. He is a published author and a practicing Blessing Way singer.