# 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
## OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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## Delegate Brown advocates against hate crimes at Diné Pride event

***Photo: Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown addresses a crowd regarding LGBTQ issues, hate crimes, and HIV prevention at a Diné Pride event in Window Rock on June 30, 2017.***

**WINDOW ROCK** – Last Friday, Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) attended an inaugural Diné Pride event entitled, "I See Myself As A Sacred Being" at the Ch'ihootso Indian Market Place, which featured guest speakers who presented personal stories and hardships related to LGBTQ issues and HIV prevention on the Navajo Nation.

The Coalition for Navajo Equality and the K'é InfoShop coordinated and sponsored the event, which drew a diverse crowd from across the Navajo Nation and nearby border towns such as Gallup, Flagstaff, and Farmington.

Delegate Brown, who serves on the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, was invited to speak to convey his support for LGBTQ issues on the Navajo Nation, and said he has begun an initiative to begin addressing hate crimes against LGBTQ individuals.

"I want to thank the sponsoring groups for allowing me to speak about this very important issue, and I am even more happy to see all the advocates of the LGBTQ community come together to start the dialogue. It is our job to educate Navajo leadership and communities about who we are and to stop negative stigmas of LGBTQ people," said Delegate Brown.

He added that when he informed his father that he was gay years ago, he was afraid of what his father would think because he is a conservative traditional Navajo. However, Delegate Brown said it was a defining moment in their relationship as father and son.

"It was incredibly emotional and I was happy that he told me he supported me no matter what and that he loved me entirely. My dad later told me after I was elected to the Navajo Nation Council that there is a reason that I am a leader—to be a voice for those who need understanding and compassion," said Delegate Brown.

Delegate Brown added that he would soon be working with the Navajo Nation Department of Justice to amend the Navajo Nation Criminal Code Title 17 to address hate crimes against Navajo LGBTQ individuals and to provide justice.

Delegate Brown, who also serves on the Naabik'íyáti' Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee, said that he has been working with several organizations that have been addressing sex trafficking in Indian Country, in which many Native American LGBTQ youth and adults have been sex trafficked.

"A lot of our LGBTQ relatives are being assaulted and not reported, and our leadership has not addressed this issue yet. These problems are real. It is time that we look at our LGBTQ community as humans, not as 'that gay community.' They are our relatives and we have to protect them," said Delegate Brown.

Other speakers at the event included Coalition for Navajo Equality member Alray Nelson, and First Nations Community Healthsource supervisor of HIV Prevention Programs Mattee Jim. The Tséhootsoí Medical Center had a mobile unit on site that provided HIV/STI testing and prevention education to pride event attendees.

For more information regarding HIV/STI testing and prevention education, please contact the Tséhootsoí Medical Center at (928) 729-8110.

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