



The 22nd Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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Speaker Naize Provides Keynote at Hero Twins Conference

Weekend forum sought to teach traditional values and self-confidence for Navajo boys and young men

Farmington, NM — At San Juan College's Henderson's Fine Arts Center, during the President's Day weekend, Navajo Nation Council Speaker Johnny Naize told an audience of approximately 130 young boys and young men that if they discover and understand the importance of the values taught by traditional Navajo society, they are capable of not only preserving the Navajo culture but also self-determine their goals in life.

"If you incorporate traditional teachings into your daily lives and make it a vital part of your values system, you can govern your own lives," said Speaker Naize. "This is a way you can take responsibility and take ownership of the decisions you make. We cannot blame others for the choices we make if we sacrifice our own values. So take the time to define and develop the values you want to live by."

Sponsored by The Miss Navajo Council and the Ways of Life: ina, a Ford Foundation Project, the "Hero Twins in Modern Navajo Society" conference featured several panel discussions ranging on topics from finding positive role models at school and at home, the importance of learning the Navajo language, to developing leadership skills for future Diné leaders.

"Start identifying individuals in the community that are well versed and are willing to share their cultural knowledge. This may start with your immediate family such as grandparents, parents and other relatives. You could also invite a special practitioner who knows the stories to learn about the way of life."

"By surrounding yourself with those who know, live and understand the Navajo culture you will begin to plant the seeds of cultural awareness so that you can nourish your well-being," continued Speaker Naize.

The one-day conference grew from a similar workshop held annually in the summer, introducing traditional Navajo values and culture and instilling self-confidence for girls and young women. Conference organizers note that this is the first boy's forum and by tradition can only be held during the winter season.

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