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Contact: Mihio Manus, Sr. Public Information Officer
Office of the President and Vice President

The Navajo Nation
Phone: (928)871-7728
Fax: (928)871-4025

TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY AND REVENUE SHARING HAVE CRITICAL IMPACTS TO GAMING TRIBES, PRESIDENT BEGAYE SAID AT 2015 AIGA EXPO

SCOTTSDALE-On Friday, Oct. 30, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye spoke at AIGA's Tribal Leadership Forum during a panel on 'Exploring the Many Facets of Gaming'.

President Begaye was joined by White Mountain Apache Chairman Ronnie Lupe, Hualapai Chairwoman Sherry Counts and Pueblo of Sandia Lt. Governor Stuart Paisano.

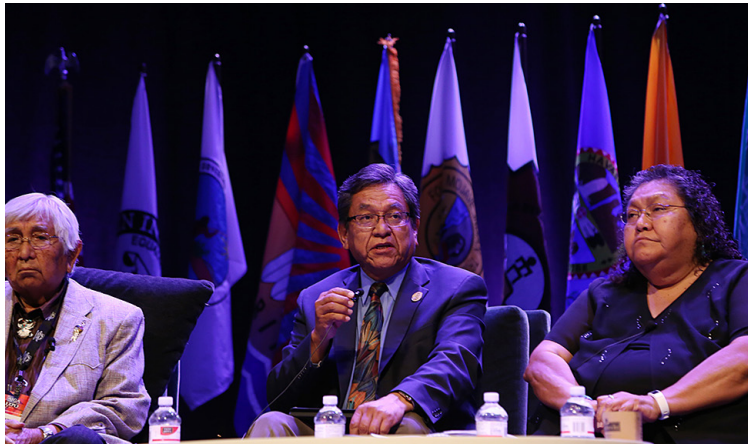
The 2015 AIGA Expo was held at Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community's Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale.

A relative newcomer to gaming, the Navajo Nation has constructed four casinos in five years. These casinos have created 1500 jobs and in the process contributed to utility investments in the areas near development.

Thus far, Navajo gaming has paid a total of \$122,550,000 million dollars in employee salaries and benefits. Eighty-five percent of Navajo gaming employees are Navajo tribal members.

"It's good for our Navajo people to get a paycheck, go shopping and buy cars. It gives them a tremendous sense of pride that they can raise their families," President Begaye said.

Since its inception, Indian gaming has generated over a billion dollars in the state of Arizona said President Begaye. By impacting the state economy in this manner, President Begaye said tribes are



"We have contributed to raising the salary of teachers and impacted many other state programs," President Begaye said during the Tribal Leadership Forum at the 2015 AIGA Expo.

also impacting their own nations. Revenue sharing has greatly benefited educational programs across the state.

"We have contributed to raising the salary of teachers and impacted many other state programs," President Begaye said. "Every teacher in Arizona needs to be thankful for Indian gaming."

President Begaye said he would like to see gaming impact tribal communities on a greater level via revenue sharing with the state.

"The state needs to take the money we send to them and put half of it back into the programs of tribal nations."

Tribal leaders on the panel discussed threats that are impacting Indian gaming. Lt. Governor Stuart Paisano said in New Mexico the largest threat to Indian gaming is the expansion of the lottery and

racinos.

"Racinos are beginning to utilize growing technology in gaming to put newer machines into their facilities," he said. "We are seeing the exclusivity of gaming slipping away. Gaming tribes are looking to enhance protection and communication is key to working together."

Chief Executive Officer for Navajo Gaming, Derek Watchman addressed alternative markets that have impacted Navajo's Twin Arrows Casino.

"It's interesting that for Twin Arrows, our primary competition is Laughlin," CEO Watchman said. "In the Valley, the alternative is Las Vegas but up in Flagstaff, people will go to Laughlin."

Watchman said the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise is consistently assessing their own competitive status.

"The encroachment of outside gaming will always be there because gaming creates revenue. As such, we are always thinking outside of the box in moving Navajo gaming forward."

As tribal nations look forward to the future of Indian gaming, they must also consider the obstacles of renegotiating gaming compacts with the state and the encroachment of non-Indian gaming.

Tribes need to channel gaming revenue back into education programs to affect the next generation of leaders in becoming more market savvy and globally effective said President Begaye.

"The next generation needs to know the struggles we have gone through to create and protect Indian gaming in the state," he said. "We must defend Indian gaming and to do this we need to have a strong strategy in place to counter commercial and non-Indian gaming."

Tribes need to exercise their inherent sovereignty, President Begaye told the panel.

"Our sovereignty defines us. It is our strength and it gives us a platform to negotiate with the state and the federal government. We were here way before the United States was formed. We had our own government and way of life. As tribal nations, we need to stand together and move forward."

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