



THE NAVAJO NATION

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## Vice President Nez Attends CDC-ATSDR Tribal Consultation Session



*Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez speaks on issues important to the Navajo Nation during the tribal testimony portion of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry 14th Biannual Tribal Consultation Center on Feb. 10, 2016 in Atlanta.*

ATLANTA—Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez joined tribal leaders around the country for the 14th Biannual Tribal Consultation Session, hosted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

The consultation session was from Feb. 9 to 11 at CDC headquarters and featured subject matter experts from around the country. They provided information on areas such as mental health, promotion of health and wellbeing, bolstering the next generation of health professionals, and tribal funding opportunities from the CDC.

### Navajo Nation Issues

Vice President Nez is the CDC-ATSDR Tribal Advisory Committee Co-Chairman and spoke on issues important to the Navajo Nation.

He spoke about the Navajo Birth Cohort Study, Navajo Nation Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention Program, Navajo Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response, Building Communities of Hope, injury prevention, emerging infectious diseases, and chronic disease prevention.

“For the Navajo Nation, there’s historical trauma that’s 10, 20, and 30 years fresh. The Bennett Freeze and Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute,”

Vice President Nez said. “The boarding school trauma imposed on native children is another.

“President Russell Begaye and I have advocated on the revitalization of our Navajo language to empower our families, because the core of our teachings is in our language,” he added.

Vice President Nez said the protection of Indian Child Welfare Act and programs available to tribes through the CDC will help break the chains of dependency and preserve tribal ways of life for Indian communities.

### Tribal Advisory Council

Other tribal leaders in

attendance included Kristine Rhodes of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Chairman Robert Flying Hawk of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, Councilman Chester Antone of the Tohono O’odham Nation, Lisa Pivec of the Cherokee Nation, Vice Chairwoman Delia Carlyle of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, and Secretary Adam Geisler of the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians.

The TAC provides the CDC and ATSDR feedback and guidance on policies, guidelines, and programmatic issues facing native tribes. The discussions strengthen government-to-government relations and inform tribal

leaders of federal policies or activities that affect tribal nations.

### ACEs

According to Dr. Larke Nahme Huang, director of the Office of Behavioral Health Equity for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), trauma leads to violence and potential traumatic events in the form of school problems, incarceration, homelessness, substance abuse, and more.

Trauma leads to biology-increased levels of stress hormones similar to combat veterans (post-traumatic stress disorder), in addition to altered sleep patterns, cognitive problems, behavior control, dissociation, and disturbed self-image.

“Trauma is cumulative,” Huang said by teleconference.

In 2014, Huang led a workgroup that published SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, detailing issues facing Indian nations.

### ACE Study

Carol Redding, a doctoral candidate and former study fellow with the CDC shared statistics from an ACE Study she researched on childhood abuse and neglect.

Obesity is linked to childhood sexual assaults, which was referenced in the Kaiser Permanente Weight Loss Program data. A partnership between Kaiser Permanente and the CDC resulted in the creation of the ACE Study.

“Being heavy was a means of protecting one’s self from sexual interests in general,” she said.

Redding said more than 17,000 volunteers with HMO plans participated in the San Diego-based Kaiser Permanente study, which was part of a routine health screening appointment and was comprised

of multi-part, gender-specific questionnaires.

“The case study was from the mid-1990s, with insurance coverage from well-off employers,” Redding said. “There were no natives included. If the study was conducted today, this would be a very different profile.”

### Intergenerational Trauma

Marilyn Zimmerman, tribal senior policy advisor for the U.S. Justice Department Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, spoke about the resiliency of tribes, specifically the tribal customs and spiritual connections that unite families to communities.

“Think about your communities and the children who have gone through trauma. Some children have PTSD and they think they are blessed to have survived such traumatic events,” she said.

Zimmerman underscored the difference between historical trauma and trauma history.

“Trauma history is childhood experiences in contemporary traumatic events in our life and exposure to violence, most often maltreatment or neglect by a caregiver,” she said.

Sexual abuse, physical abuse, intimate partner violence, and community violence placed children at high risk for PTSD and chronic health problems, Zimmerman said.

Intentional injuries, homicides and suicides account for 75 percent of the deaths of American Indian and Alaska Native children between the ages of 12-20. The average American loses someone significant once every 10 years, while native people lose someone close anywhere from four to 10 times per year.

Native people must resilient, she said, adding that tribes can take proactive measures to connect youth to tribal culture, language, ceremony, and spirituality. 🌍



*Epidemiologist Del Yazzie joined Vice President Nez at the CDC-ATSDR Tribal Advisory Committee Consultation Session in Atlanta from Feb. 9 to 11. Yazzie is the program manager of the Navajo Epidemiology Center.*



*Tribal leaders and subject matter experts from around the country were in attendance for the TAC meeting and consultation center in Atlanta, Georgia.*



*The headquarters for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was the site of the TAC meeting and 14th Biannual Consultation Session with tribal leaders from around the country.*