

# **THE OFFICE OF THE NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT**



## **STATE OF THE NAVAJO NATION ADDRESS 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL 2017 WINTER SESSION**

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**MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 2017**

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## STATE OF THE NAVAJO NATION ADDRESS 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL + 2017 WINTER SESSION

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Ya'at'eeh Honorable Members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, dignitaries in the audience and most importantly shik'éei dóó shidine'ée, the Navajo people. Today marks the third year of our State of the Navajo Nation Address for the 2017 Winter Session.

Within the past month both Vice President and I had attended the Navajo Agency Inaugurations and we would like to congratulate all the recently elected officials on their appointments as Chapter Officials, Grazing Board Officials, School Board Officials and Navajo Nation Elections Board Members. The work you accomplish during your terms is valuable to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the Navajo people.

As we said during our speeches at the inaugurations, great leaders think about the unborn generations and prepare for them. We must always think about the future. We must also promote family values and a return to the family core of our kinship. In moving forward, we need to support one another on a local, regional and national level. This starts in the home.

We like to congratulate all recently elected State Senators and State Representatives as they represent their constituents in the State of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. We look forward to working with each of you this coming year to help make 2017 the best year for the Navajo Nation.

Our vision is still based in the idea of One Voice, One Na-

tion and remains a tireless effort. Rest assured we look forward to working with you to promote the four pillars of our administration: Veterans, Elders and Youth, Infrastructure Development and Job Creation.

Let's reflect now on the huge accomplishments the Navajo Nation has made this past year at the national, state and executive level.

## **VETERANS**

It has been one year since signing of the Navajo Veterans Act into law. The Department of Navajo Veterans Administration was created to provide our Nation's warriors with the services to live fulfilling lives. In June 2016, the Office of the Auditor General contracted REDW, LLC of Albuquerque to perform an internal audit on the DNVA Veterans Housing Program. The purpose was to see if the program was operating in a manner that would result in safe, quality and affordable homes for Navajo veterans.

When you are building a new administration it is the utmost importance to create a solid foundation. This internal audit revealed deficiencies stemmed from previous administrations and we will be taking the necessary steps to adjust through a corrective action plan. We will be working with Home Depot to identify invoices and track past expenses. There were 23 homes complete and only eight are currently occupied. People were given homes who were ineligible.

The Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council will have a big part in revamping the program as well.

## **ELDERS AND YOUTH**

We held our first annual Elders and Youth Conference. This intergenerational conference involved over 300 participants. For the elders, they were able to teach essential Navajo customs. For the youth, they were embraced by our culture, language and traditions.

Our Building Communities of Hope project, pursuant to Executive Order 03-2015 is a collaborative effort of departments and programs within the executive branch, has visited schools and communities to enrich the lives of our youth and provide communities the tools to prevent suicide. Through the efforts of this team, they have visited 25 schools on the Navajo Nation Reservation and impacted the lives of 2,295 students, teachers and elders. The Building Communities of Hope project received the 2017 Leadership Award from Casey Family Programs for the efforts to prevent suicide within our Navajo communities.

On May 13, 2016, President Begaye issued a directive to complete the Tribal Action Plan. This comprehensive plan will address a multitude of health, violence and educational disparities facing our Diné people. Once implemented this plan will provide solutions to ensure a better quality of life for many on the Navajo Nation. This past year the U.S. Department of Interior and Department of Education approved and signed the Diné School Accountability Plan for BIE-funded schools on the Navajo Nation. This accountability plan is unique and different from State plans because it emphasizes the learning of Navajo students using the language, culture, history, government, and character development.

Through the implementation of the Diné School Accountability Plan (DSAP), the academic contents and achievement standards in 60 BIE schools across the Navajo Nation will be consolidated into one accountability system. Future phases of DSAP will integrate Navajo language and culture into the Navajo school accountability system.

We also completed the following buildings for elders and youth. The Ft. Defiance Youth Center, the Tohatchi Senior Citizen Center, Church Rock Senior Center and the Shiprock Youth Center.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Infrastructure development is critical to ensure businesses have the essential infrastructure in place to conduct business, provide our Navajo people with services, and enhance the wellbeing of our Navajo people. With this new year, be prepared to see power lines, water lines and roads in rural areas.

From the State of New Mexico, through the Tribal Infrastructure Fund, the Navajo Nation was awarded a total of \$12.8 million in 2013 through 2015 to complete 28 projects. We thank the State of New Mexico for these projects to improve the infrastructure for our chapters and the welfare of our people.

The Navajo Nation has completed the following projects: Oak Springs Chapter renovations, Nation Eagle Aviary, Sweetwater Chapter Multi-use building, Tohatchi Senior Citizen Center, and the Tohajiilee EMS Building.

With the Navajo Division of Economic Development, the Ganado Burnside shopping center plan broke ground last month, construction will begin soon. This \$9 million dollar project will create up to 150 permanent and temporary jobs. There will be a Lowe's Supermaket, Subway & Pizza Edge.

The Division of Economic Development assisted the Shonto and Dennehotso convenience stores and is continuing to assist the Indian Wells Project in Indian Wells, AZ.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

In regards to transportation, we have improved the roads in monument valley park, paved the Navajo Nation Fair Grounds, completed Legacy Fuel Exercise Tax parking lot projects, improved N52 to Nahodishgish for the bionic paving project, and collaborated with the Navajo Nation Division Public Safety to improve public safety on Navajo Nation roads.

The Navajo Division of Transportation completed all long-range transportation plans and also implemented a traffic records accident computer system to compile all vehicle crashes.

Shiprock recently received \$1.5 million for an airport. Window Rock Airports also received \$1.15 million in grants.

## **JOB CREATION**

Through the work of the Division of Economic Development, there was over 650 jobs created this past year, 85 trainings were conducted, and 17 Business Site Lease Transactions.

On September 21, 2016, we created the Strengthening Families program through the Department of Social Services. This created 10 new jobs which prevented layoffs of other programs.

We implemented the first subsidized youth employment program for Tse Daa K'aaan Chapter. \$16,451 was for the initial pilot project, approximately 18 youth were hired. We also implemented the first subsidized adult employment program for the Utah Navajo Health System, six people were hired.

Creating jobs for our Nation is a priority of this administration. We will be working with the Trump Administration to bring in companies & manufacturing factories to create jobs for the nation.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NAVAJO NATION**

We need to adapt to a new reality and do things differently, we need to diversify our economy and stop relying on nat-

ural resources. We must build a sustainable economy that not only funds our government but that also provides jobs for every member of our Nation. The economic plan will be released to the Navajo People and the 23rd council in the coming weeks.

The following economic development projects are currently in progress: the Nahat'a'Dziil Shopping Center, Shonto convenience store and laundry, Indian Wells convenience store, Dennehotso convenience store and the Shiprock Hotel. Dennehotso, Nahat'a'Dziil and Shonto is currently on the verge of construction and set to open in 2017. These projects totaling \$6 million will create up to 95 permanent and temporary jobs throughout the next few years.

The Navajo Technical University in Crownpoint, NM has partnered up with the Arrowhead Center and several other New Mexico Universities, incubators and manufacturers to develop the Advanced Rural Manufacturing. This partnership was created with the hopes to stimulate the Navajo economy with technological innovation that transcends spatial collaborative constraints to create Advanced Manufacturing virtual hubs to conduct business and discover new technologies.

## **NAAT'ÁANII CORPORATION**

In 2015, the Navajo Nation's 14 enterprises and corporations collectively employed 4,500 people and generated \$950 million in revenue. None of these companies gave even a minor portion of their profits back to the Nation. To address this, we are proposing the creation of the Naat'áanii Development Corporation, a Section 17 federally chartered corporation with a professionalized board of directors serving at arms-length distance from politics and whose charter will mandate a dividend schedule whereby up to 40% of all net earnings will go back to the General Fund and Permanent Trust Fund.

## **THE NAVAJO NATION NAANISH DOO IINA TASK FORCE**

As announced in the Fall State of the Navajo Nation, OPVP has created the Navajo Nation Naanish Doo Iina Task Force. The focus of this Task Force will be in four main areas: 1) revenue generation; 2) job creation; 3) commercial strategy development for the State Highway 491 corridor; and 4) analysis and options with the future of the overall job creation. The co-chairs have identified individuals who will serve as the point persons related to each of the four areas.

## **RESTRUCTURING OF THE DIVISION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

In October, the Navajo Nation council approved the revised master plan of operation to restructure DCD. This restructuring will streamline efficiency and ensure that our projects are completed and closed out properly. The division merged the Capital Improvement Office, Design Engineering and the Solid Waste Management Program to create the Capital Project Management Department. This division was created to streamline the procurement process for construction projects and capital outlay projects.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

Through the successful collaboration between the Division of Public Safety and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, they completed the Ramah Detention Center. The Navajo Nation Fire Department now provides fire services to Shiprock, Ojo Encino, and Newcomb. This created 15 new firefighter positions that transferred from the San Juan County Fire Department.

The following construction projects for public safety are currently in progress to be completed:

- Dilkon Public Safety facility
- Pinon judicial and public safety facility
- Division of Public Safety regional training academy, located in Chinle. This 80-acre site will have two classroom facilities, a cafeteria and a physical training area
- Twin Arrows Fire Station and Public Safety building

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Through the Division of Natural Resources, the U.S. Department of Agriculture selected the Navajo Nation's FY 2017 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) proposal for funding. This proposal includes watershed planning for the Little Colorado River (LCR) watershed. The funding award is for \$4,826,250 over the next five years; 75% of the funds will be used for watershed projects and 25% for planning/technical assistance. This funding is subject to a negotiation process with the State Conservationist. The Navajo Nation is one of 88 high-impact projects across the country will receive federal funding a part of the RCPP. The Division of Natural Resources serves as the lead on the partnership proposal. Partners include LCR Watershed Chapters Association, Soil and Water Conserva-

tion Districts, BIA, and US Army Corps.

The Division of Natural Resources will be creating a Forest Carbon Project processing facility (i.e. sawmill) in order to treat the forest. Implementing forest treatments are a requirement for the forest carbon sequestration project.

The Navajo Land Department launched the Navajo Land Title Database System. This system can be utilized to process land access documents (i.e. leases and permits) electronically. Electronic processing will streamline the lengthy process for gaining access to land for infrastructure and other development.

## **LAND BUY BACK PROGRAM**

Through the successful collaboration between the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, the Department of Interior, and the Navajo Nation Executive Branch the Land Buy Back Program concluded for the Navajo Nation. The Nation now has greater than 50% tribal ownership in 568 allotments, representing nearly 90,000 acres. Many of our people are still waiting to sell their land back to the Navajo Nation. The program has fully expended the funds allocated to the Nation but we will work to ask for additional funds.

## **BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT**

On December 28, 2016, President Barack Obama designated the Bears Ears National Monument under the Antiquities Act of 1906. This National Monument designation put 1.35 million acres of land into protection for future generations to come.

We ask the new administration to support this designation because of the uniqueness of the declaration. The Navajo Nation and the four other tribes will now assist in the collaborative management of the park. No other designation provides tribes the opportunity to collaboratively manage the national monument.

We will continue to push for the protection and designation of the Greater Grand Canyon National Monument with the new administration. This landmark is an icon of the American southwest, it needs to be protected from uranium mining. The landscape and water in that region would be greatly impacted should uranium mining be allowed in this region.

## OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

We congratulate the Obama Administration on exceeding their ambitious goal to restore more than 500,000 acres of Tribal Homelands to Indian Country. President Obama visited more Tribal communities than any other President. His administration inspired hope and courage for many future generations of all races. His pledge to fulfill a true nation-to-nation relationship and achieve milestones that upheld self-governance and self-determination. We give our thanks to President Barack Obama for his work with tribal nations. Thank you for the effective government-to-government dialogue and we look forward to continuing this dialogue with the trump administration.

## TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

When meeting with President Trump's transition team, we called for a cabinet-level Native American advisory council, full authority rights to minerals, and an end to dual taxation on Native American lands. All too often decisions are made on behalf of tribes without a comprehensive understanding of how tribes will be affected, which is why we need a cabinet-level advisory council.

Regarding economic development, the Navajo Nation

needs to have full authority over the mineral rights on the Nation as we have the capability to develop in these areas. Businesses operating on tribal lands are subject to both tribal and state taxation which negatively impacts tribal economies. This hinders our ability to bring in economic development ventures and hurts both natives and the states. The Navajo Nation stands ready to repatriate business back to the Nation. We appreciate the opportunity to meet with President-elect Trump's transition team and having them listen to our concerns. The issues we presented are common among many tribes. The Navajo Nation will continue to foster self-determination within our government, programs and among our people.

## IN CLOSING

We ask God to provide you with the words and the wisdom to make the right decisions for the Navajo people as we start this Winter session. Thank you for your work ethic to improve the lives of our Navajo people and your commitment to be fiscally responsible to ensure prosperity for generations to come.

As President and Vice President of the great Navajo Nation, we thank you for your continued support and will continue to hold you up in our prayers. God Bless you.



Russell Begaye, *President*  
THE NAVAJO NATION



Jonathan Nez, *Vice-President*  
THE NAVAJO NATION

