



The Navajo Nation
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President Nez presents on early childhood education and culturally appropriate curriculum at the New Mexico State Tribal Leaders Summit



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez presents at the New Mexico State Tribal Leaders Summit at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque, N.M. on May 16, 2019.

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez had the honor of presenting on the importance of early childhood and Head Start programs, and incorporating culturally appropriate programs and curriculum to support Native American children to New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, her cabinet members, and tribal leaders at the New Mexico State Tribal Leaders Summit in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on Thursday.

President Nez spoke about the importance of incorporating culturally appropriate curriculum into early childhood and Head Start programs to instill strength in Native American children to overcome challenges in life and remain persistent in pursuing their academic goals.

“Early childhood and Head Start programs provide an important foundation for children, but often this comes at a cost to communities who see this resulting in language and culture loss. It is sometimes forgotten how important it is in teaching a culturally appropriate curriculum,” stated President Nez. He also urged educators and Gov. Lujan Grisham’s cabinet members to involve Native American educators in the development and revisions of curriculum used in schools.

“Tribal educators and experts have not had a formal presence in the development of educational plans and selection of curriculum. The current incorporation of language and culture is more reactionary and lacks intention, leading to ineffective results,” added President Nez, adding that the Navajo Nation also needs to hold its Head Start program accountable to provide quality education at the highest level as well.

In the recent Legislative Session, the state of New Mexico provided additional Impact Aid funding for schools, however, President Nez pointed out that Native American students throughout the state remain at a disadvantage due to the formula used to distribute Impact Aid funds.

“Impact Aid was designed to assist local school districts that have lost property tax revenue due to the presence of tax-exempt Federal property. School districts must provide a quality education to the children living on Indian or other Federal land and meet requirements for The Every Student Succeeds Act, while sometimes operating with less local revenue than is available to other school districts because the federal property is exempt from local property tax. Every child deserves an equitable education,” said President Nez.

Vice President Myron Lizer was unable to attend the summit, however, he stated that the Nez-Lizer Administration continues to advocate to state leaders on the importance of increasing Impact Aid funds and will continue to do so in upcoming legislative sessions.

The two-day summit brought together tribal and state leaders to focus on issues including education, physical and mental health, protection and preservation of natural resources and cultural sites, protection of Indian water rights, and strengthening state and tribal collaboration.

“New Mexico’s tribal nations represent the proud origins of governance and culture here, existing long before these state boundaries were drawn,” Gov. Lujan Grisham said. “It was my honor to convene a productive meeting with the leadership of all 23 sovereign indigenous nations of New Mexico and every member of my cabinet for what I am confident is the beginning of renewed government-to-government partnerships.”

President Nez said is very thankful to Gov. Lujan Grisham, New Mexico Secretary of Indian Affairs Lynn Trujillo, and the cabinet members for hosting the tribal leaders summit and that he is confident the Navajo Nation will continue to build a stronger partnership with the state.

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