



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:
Jared Touchin, Communications Director
(928) 274-4275

Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer
(928) 274-2758

nnopvp.communications@gmail.com

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**Vice President Lizer advocates for Navajo children
and families at the 2019 First Things First Tribal Consultation**



PHOTO: Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer and First Things First Navajo Nation Region representatives during the 2019 First Things First Tribal Consultation in Phoenix, Ariz. on Sept. 12, 2019.

PHOENIX – On Thursday, Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer was joined by the First Things First Navajo Nation Regional Director Memarie Tsosie and First Things First Navajo Nation Region Partnership Council member Yvonne Kee-Billison, during the 2019 First Things First Tribal Consultation in Phoenix, Ariz. to advocate for healthy development and learning for young children and the strengthening of families on the Navajo Nation.

Since 2006, the First Things First Navajo Nation Region has been designated to serve as one of the critical partners in creating a family-centered, comprehensive, collaborative, and high-quality

early childhood system that supports the development, health, and early education of Navajo children from birth to age of five. Approximately 10,900 children within the First Things First Navajo Nation Region are under the age of six.

“Healthy development in the early childhood years provides the building blocks for educational achievement, responsible and disciplined citizenship, lifelong wellbeing, strong kinship and self-identity, and successful parenting of the next generation. As leaders we need to ensure our young children and families have the resources and services to achieve a strong foundation of development, learning, family and cultural values, and love,” said Vice President Lizer.

The tribal consultation allows First Things First to improve the government-to-government relationship with Arizona’s 22 federally recognized tribes, and enables the tribes to advocate for early childhood development and health services and policies.

During the consultation, Vice President Lizer spoke of the need for more culturally appropriate education and professional development for early childhood professionals on the Navajo Nation. Currently, the First Things First Navajo Nation Region provides professional development in partnership with Northland Pioneer College and the Navajo Nation Child Care and Development Fund program, however, more educational programs are needed, especially in rural communities, he added.

According to the Regional Director Memarie Tsosie, accessibility to education and professional development for early childhood professionals is challenging due to the lack of adequate telecommunications and transportation. Moreover, only one of the Nation’s tribal universities, Navajo Technical University, offers a bachelor of arts in early childhood education program.

Recommendations to the First Things First board members included the creation of early childhood education programs and institutions in rural tribal communities and to hold an inter-tribal early childhood summit to begin addressing issues and concerns discussed at the session.

The Office of the President and Vice President recognizes early childhood development is key to ensuring the social and emotional health of Navajo children and families. First Lady Phefelia Nez was also recently recommended to serve on the First Things First Navajo Nation Region Partnership Council.

Other tribes present at the session included the Hualapai Tribe, White Mountain Apache Tribe, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Havasupai Tribe, Ak-Chin Indian Community, Hopi Tribe, and Gila River Indian Community.

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