



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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## Navajo leaders welcome First Lady Jill Biden to the Navajo Nation



**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – On Thursday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, First Lady Phefelia Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, Second Lady Dottie Lizer, along with members of the 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council and Navajo Nation Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne, welcomed the First Lady of the United States, Dr. Jill Biden, to the capital of the Navajo Nation for the start of a two-day visit. This marks the third visit of Dr. Biden to the Navajo Nation over the last several years and her first official visit as the First Lady.

A welcome ceremony was held at Navajo Veterans Memorial Park in Window Rock, Ariz. where First Lady Biden addressed the Navajo people and leaders, which was aired live on the Nez-Lizer Facebook page and local radio stations. In her public address, First Lady Biden stated that the Biden-Harris Administration will always stand beside and work with American Indian tribes, including the Navajo Nation.

“Honoring the treaty trust obligations and responsibilities between tribes and the federal government will be recognized. With beauty, harmony, and Hozhó in front of us, behind us, above us, below us, and around us, we can build and strengthen Mother Earth and our Nation. We stand with the Navajo Nation today, tomorrow, and always,” said First Lady Biden.

“On behalf of the Navajo people and my wife Phefelia Nez and our family, we thank First Lady Biden for making the Navajo Nation a priority in the first months of the Biden-Harris Administration. I met with President Biden and Vice President Harris last October, at that time, nominee Biden promised to listen to Native American people and understood the importance of the government-to-government relationship and in November the Navajo people came out and delivered the State of Arizona on election day, even in the midst of this terrible pandemic. We are very pleased that the Biden-Harris Administration is keeping their promise by having a seat at the table for the Navajo Nation and other tribes,” said President Nez.



He also praised health care workers and first responders who continue to sacrifice time with their families and put themselves at risk to treat COVID-19 patients and to save lives by administering the vaccines. President Nez noted that well over half of the adult population residing on the Navajo Nation have been fully vaccinated.

Prior to the public welcome event, First Lady Biden joined Navajo Nation First Lady Phefelia Nez and Second Lady Dottie Lizer for a discussion with several women leaders, educators, business owners, organizers, and advocates including 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty who chairs the Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee, Arviso Construction project manager Brianne Arviso, Tséhootsooí Medical Center respiratory therapist and cancer survivor Sarah Dahozy, Navajo Technical University Board of Regents member Gloria Grant, Navajo Nation Board of Education President Priscilla Manuelito, Navajo artisan and wellness advocate Gwendolyn Sandra McCray, Navajo United Way Executive Director Dr. Laura Mike, and First Things First Navajo Regional Director Memarie Tsosie.

“On behalf of the Navajo Nation Office of the First Lady and Second Lady, we are honored to have First Lady Biden meet inspirational and courageous Navajo women leaders who are passionate and dedicated to restoring unity, healing, and well-being of Navajo children, women, elders, and families. Together, as mothers and leaders, we are committed to calling attention to focus areas that impact our Navajo families, including early childhood development and education, culture preservation, health and wellness, single parenting, foster parenting, reducing trauma of children and women, behavioral and mental health issues, violence against women and children, and many others. With increased awareness, resources, and network building, we are confident that many issues will be addressed with the Biden-Harris Administration,” said First Lady Nez.

“Moreover, we are thankful for First Lady Dr. Biden, who was instrumental in the development of the very first cancer treatment center on any American Indian reservation across the United States in 2019. In just two years, the Specialty Care Center at Tuba City Regional Health Care Center has seen more patients than expected and is expected to expand. We are looking forward to future collaborations with the administration to provide adequate and specialized health services for Navajo people,” added First Lady Nez.

The roundtable participants also presented recommendations to provide more support for Navajo families and individuals and service programs and organizations. The discussion also highlighted underfunded and under-resourced programs and initiatives that hinder effective and adequate services to Navajo families and individuals.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty discussed the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) epidemic. According to a recent MMDR and the Sovereign Bodies Institute report, 164 missing Navajo persons have been documented from 1951 to 2019. Of these cases, it is reported that 38% are missing persons cases, and 62% are murder cases. Additionally, 41% of these cases occurred on the Navajo Nation, 10% occurred off the Navajo Nation, and 49% of these cases occurred in urban communities. The goal is to raise awareness, to support families recover their relatives and increase the capacity of law enforcement to respond, she added.

“We extend our appreciation to First Lady Biden for taking the time to listen to each of our Navajo women leaders who are committed to public service to protect Navajo children, women, elders, and families. Besides the participants’ reflections and recommendations, the Office of the First Lady and Second Lady continues to set priorities shaped from the unheard voices of our Navajo women, children, and elders. Together, we stand with the values of compassion, faith, and unity to help our Navajo people,” said Second Lady Lizer.

“Second Lady Dottie Lizer and I welcome First Lady Biden to the Navajo Nation and we look forward to continuing our work together. We greatly appreciate her taking the time to join First Lady Nez and Second Lady Lizer for today’s discussion to hear some of the personal experiences and issues present by our Diné women who are all making great impacts in our communities,” said Vice President Lizer.

On Friday, First Lady Biden will visit a local school and vaccine site to speak with students, educators, and health care workers. The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President is working with the White House to provide live-streaming of several of the events on the Nez-Lizer Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/NezLizer2018>.

Please be aware that due to security measures and COVID-19 precautions, the schedule of events may be subject to change. The White House and the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President will continue to provide updates.

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