



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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President and First Lady Nez offer support for Diné teacher fellowship program

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and First Lady Phefelia Nez offered their continued support and commitment to Diné teachers and educators during the Northern Arizona University (NAU) Diné Institute for Navajo Nation Educators and Indigenous Early Childhood Educators Fellowship’s annual showcase and open house held at the NAU campus in Flagstaff, Ariz., on Saturday.

This year’s event brought together approximately 34 Diné teachers and educators, who are part of this year’s fellowship program, which is a partnership between schools and districts within and bordering the Navajo Nation and Northern Arizona University. NAU President José Luis Cruz Rivera, NAU Interim Vice President for Native American Initiatives Ann Marie Chischilly, and Navajo Nation Acting Superintendent Patricia Gonnig were among the presenters.



PHOTO: (left to right) Northern Arizona University President José Luis Cruz Rivera, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and First Lady Phefelia Nez in Flagstaff, Ariz. on Dec. 4, 2021.

During the keynote address, President Nez and the First Lady extended their gratitude to the teachers for their unwavering commitment to Navajo students, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also spoke about the critical roles that teachers play in the development of students at an early age, which influences future generations and the future of the Navajo Nation.

“The teachings of our elders are just as important as what our educators teach in the classroom. T’áá Hwó Ají Téego is what our elders always tell us – that we have the ability within ourselves to accomplish what we set out to do. Those teachings are the foundation of the success of our students and enable them to persevere through the challenges that all of us face at certain times in our lives. Just as our ancestors persevered through hardships and adversities, our Navajo people, including our teachers and students continue to strive forward during this pandemic. We were truly honored to be invited to provide the keynote address and to engage with so many

wonderful educators who are making a difference in the lives of so many of our young people today. We thank NAU President Rivera and NAU for their commitment and dedication to all Native American students,” said President Nez.

NAU’s Diné Institute for Navajo Nation Educators (DINÉ) aims to strengthen teaching in schools serving Navajo students through long-term professional development with teachers by empowering teacher growth and fostering mutually beneficial cultural and content knowledge between the partners. The program also strives to build capacity for culturally responsive, academically rigorous curriculum development and delivery among all teachers in Navajo schools and to enhance and promote teacher leadership and student achievement within Navajo schools.



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez provides the keynote address during the Diné Institute for Navajo Nation Educators and Indigenous Early Childhood Educators Fellowship’s open house in Flagstaff, Ariz. on Dec. 4, 2021.

“As teachers, you shape learning and development and play a major part on the path a child takes. You build the self-esteem of students and impact the development of their moral growth, but perhaps the most important characteristic of an effective teacher is to emulate the traits of a life-long learner. Teachers who demonstrate a love for learning often pass this passion to their students in the classroom. As you continue on this path of being a life-long learner alongside your students, remember that you are impacting the lives of future generations to come. These children will grow up to become engineers, scientists, teachers, police officers, social workers, biologist, and maybe even a Navajo Nation president. Thank you for your commitment and dedication to the future of our children,” stated First Lady Nez.

The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President thanks Northern Arizona University, Department of Diné Education, NAU’s Diné Institute for Navajo Nation Educators, and Indigenous Early Childhood Educators Fellowship program. To learn more about the program, please visit: <https://in.nau.edu/dine/>.

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