



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
Timothy Benally, Public Information Officer
(928) 871-7000
nnopvp.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 10, 2022

**First Lady Nez co-hosts Collaborative Animal
Summit to address animal welfare on the Navajo Nation**



PHOTO: Navajo Nation First Lady Phefelia Nez (center), Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, and Best Friends Animal Society during the "Nihik'is: A Collaborative Animal Summit" on June 7, 2022 at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort in Leupp, Ariz.

LEUPP, Ariz. – Navajo Nation First Lady Phefelia Nez co-hosted the "Nihik'is: A Collaborative Animal Summit" on Tuesday and Wednesday at the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort with the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources and Best Friends Animal Society, to bring together various animal humane organizations to develop a coordinated response to animal welfare on the Navajo Nation.

"We are grateful for all the internal and external entities who came together to provide input on critical animal issues on the Navajo Nation. This was the first time all organizations were in the

same room together to have productive discussions. We all have a shared vision to make our communities safer through animal stewardship. Taking care of our animals and pets is a part of our Navajo way of life, and we need to create solutions and partnerships to improve the welfare of our animals and communities," said First Lady Nez.

"As a sovereign nation, we appreciate the many partners for attending the summit and now hold a collective understanding of our Navajo way of life teachings of animal stewardship. Many issues were addressed, including the Nation's overpopulation of animals, the safety of communities, the increase of homeless animals, the importance of spay and neuter initiatives, and others. The summit allowed us to meet in person and work towards common goals to address animal concerns," said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez.



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez during the "Nihik'is: A Collaborative Animal Summit" on June 7, 2022 at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort in Leupp, Ariz.

The two-day summit included working groups with all partners on topics such as Navajo culture, animal control programs, veterinary care, animal shelters, pet adoptions, and spay and neuter efforts on the Navajo Nation.

The Best Friends Animal Society Co-Founder and Board Chair Francis Battista, who holds the largest U.S. sanctuary for homeless animals in Kanab, Utah, emphasized the importance of a "no-kill" philosophy against euthanizing homeless animals and stated that one of their common goal with the Navajo Nation is to increase the 21-percent save rate of animals within the Navajo Nation's four animal shelters.

Navajo Nation Fish and Wildlife Director Gloria Tom and the Navajo Nation Animal Control Officers stated the need for continued support for the Navajo Veterinarian Program and the need to expand animal shelters and spay and neuter clinics to address overpopulation and homeless animals. According to Navajo Nation Wildlife Law Enforcement Manager Kevin Gleason, animal control officers collect an average of 135 animals a week.

"Currently, there are four active animal shelters on the Navajo Nation. We acknowledge that non-profit organizations have assisted the Navajo Nation in improving animal wellness for many years. We have an overwhelming number of animals without homes in the Nation, which continues to threaten communities' safety. Through capacity building, we hope to establish a more permanent foundation to start addressing animal stewardship amongst our Navajo people," said Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resource Executive Director Dr. Rudolph Shebala.

Best Friends Animal Society also presented grant awards to Navajo animal organizations during the summit for spay and neuter clinics and kennel construction projects. Awards included \$2,000 to Turquoise Paw, \$3,000 to Blackhat Humane Society, and \$5,000 to Bro and Tracey Animal Welfare.

"On behalf of the Office of the President and Vice President, we encourage Navajo citizens to continue practicing responsible pet ownership and contact your local animal control office or non-profit organizations like Best Friends, Animal Rez-Q, Soul Dog Rescue, Red Rover, and Altered-Tails for animal resources. Every year, thousands of unwanted dogs and cats are euthanized. By sterilizing your dog or cat and getting them vaccinated, you will do your part as a responsible pet owner. Spaying and neutering prevent unwanted litter, protect against serious health problems, and reduce behavioral problems associated with the mating instinct," added First Lady Nez.

For more information regarding animal services, visit the Navajo Nation Animal Control Program at <https://www.nndfw.org/AnimalControl.htm> or the Navajo Nation Veterinary Management at <https://www.navajoveterinaryprogram.com>.

###

For the latest news from the Office of the President and Vice President, please visit <http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/> or find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.