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Navajo President Buu Nygren welcomes new Board of Directors for Naat'aanii Development Corporation

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Thursday, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren welcomed five new members to the Naat'aanii Development Corporation Board of Directors.

The newly-appointed board members are:

- **Ann Marie Chischilly**, a lawyer, speaker and vice president of the Office of Native American Initiatives, Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals at Northern Arizona University.



- **Delmar R. Blackhorse**, MBA-Finance, of Chandler, vice president of investments for Tallsalt Advisors, LLC, with experience in mergers, acquisitions and valuation.



- **Quincy Beau Natay**, a senior accountant with the firm of Wipfli, LLP, of Milwaukee, Wis., and Chinle.



- **Jacqueline Ahasteen**, an electronic engineer, entrepreneur, local business owner and IT systems administrator with the City of Gallup.



NDC is a wholly-owned Navajo Nation corporation and federally chartered corporation under Section 17 of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. It is a was created in 2018 to increase economic opportunities for the Navajo Nation.

"We have selected high caliber, professional Navajos that want to see change and see a vision for NDC," President Nygren said. "They envision NDC being an economic driver for the Nation, which is exactly what NDC was created for. I am excited that these individuals have stepped up to take on this challenge."



- **William H. Draper**, an architect and president of Johnson Smitthipong & Rosamond Assoc., Inc., of Tucson.

NDC Shareholders include Navajo Nation President Dr. Buu Nygren, Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalne Curley by virtue of their elected positions, Sheyenne Lacy and Reuben Mike.

In March, the NDC Shareholder Representatives voted unanimously to remove all seven of its board members during a special meeting.

Requests for board and CEO participation had gone unanswered for months, and requests for financial records and information related to NDC were ignored.

“For some time, NDC has had little to no movement,” President Nygren said. “Removing the entire board, especially after providing them due process and several opportunities to respond, is in the best interest of the Navajo Nation and people.”

He said that by repeatedly ignoring requests for information and a lack of participation in the process of information gathering, the NDC Board of Directors failed to fulfill its duty and obligation to the Navajo Nation and people.

The shareholder representatives said it was in the best interest of the Navajo Nation to remove and replace the seven board members after they neglected to call an annual meeting as required by the federal charter, failed to appear at three special meetings called by the shareholder representatives, and failed to provide financial information that was requested by the shareholder representatives.

“The initial board of directors were given over \$2.5 million, and we as shareholders have no idea where the funds are, how much is left, and have received no accounting of those funds,” said President Nygren. “This is \$2.5 million of the Navajo people’s money.”

In order to continue to conduct business, a new board of directors needed to be appointed. So NDC shareholders called a special meeting for Dec. 12, 2024, to interview board applicants and to appoint the new NDC Board.

In November 2023, President Nygren and Speaker Curley sent a joint letter to the NDC board of directors and then-CEO Robert Joe to ask about the financial health of the company and the board’s plans to call an annual meeting to review audits and reports for 2022.

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– Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren

The board’s president responded to the inquiry but provided minimal details. The majority of shareholders then sent follow up correspondence to ask that Mr. Joe, CEO at the time, call a special meeting. He failed to do so.

Two of the four shareholders then received a letter that Greg Bigman was purportedly the new CEO. The shareholders refused to acknowledge him as the appointed CEO when the former board failed to provide shareholders with resolutions supporting board action and appointment of Mr. Bigman.

As a result, the shareholders called their own special meeting in accordance with NDC’s federal charter to ask that all board members attend and participate in the special shareholders meetings.

In preparation for a February special meeting, shareholders prepared a list of questions related to past annual reports, financial audits, corporate books and records of NDC. The NDC board failed to provide written responses.

In a final effort to work with the board, shareholders invited the board to attend the third special meeting on March 13, 2024. After no communication or participation from the board, the shareholders unanimously voted to remove all seven board members for failure to respond and provide information to shareholders and Navajo leadership regarding the financial health of NDC.