



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 25, 2017

MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253

Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174

Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee successfully concludes the 2017 Navajo Language and Culture Revitalization Summit



PHOTO: Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown, Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye, and Council Delegate Jonathan L. Hale during the leadership panel on the third-day of the 2017 Navajo Language and Culture Revitalization Summit at Diné College in Tsaile, Ariz. on May 24, 2017.

TSAILE, Ariz. – On Wednesday, the 2017 Navajo Language and Culture Revitalization Summit presented by the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee and co-hosted by Diné College from May 22 to 24 at Diné College successfully concluded. The three-day summit concentrated on building awareness, dialogue, understanding, unity, and action regarding Navajo language and culture revitalization and maintenance efforts.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta), who played a key role in initiating the summit, thanked the participants who engaged in the summit and provided critical input and recommendations to revitalize Navajo language and culture.

“The summit brought together educators, community partners, elders, youth, cultural knowledge holders, language and culture advocates, parents, grandparents, policy makers, community leaders and organizations. The purpose of the summit was to bring together all the resources and create a vision and goals. The summit created an environment where everyone could share their thoughts, concerns, and solutions,” stated Delegate Brown.

Over 200 individuals participated in the informational Navajo language and culture sessions, dialogue sessions regarding the challenges and opportunities of Navajo language and culture in families, school-based education, community, and media, and general sessions addressing intergenerational historical trauma and healing.

“As policy makers, the summit allows us to understand the needs at the community level and allows the community to take ownership of stabilizing and maintaining the Navajo language. This problem needs to be addressed in a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach and financial commitment from the Navajo Nation to support language revitalization and resiliency is critical,” stated HEHSC member Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáož’t’í’í).

The participants also questioned the HEHSC members during a leadership panel session regarding policy changes and their reflections on Navajo language and culture revitalization.

HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan L. Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) stated that Navajo language initiatives and movements are needed to revitalize the language and culture.

“The people need to start movements to address the issues and concerns of Navajo language and culture. It will take personal and community effort and advocacy. The movement can begin with an individual or a community. I highly encourage our people to begin advocating at their local governments. As policy makers, we need the peoples’ and chapters’ input and recommendations,” stated Delegate Hale.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaille/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch’ izhi) added, “Not only do we need individual and community advocacy, we also need to address the funding issue associated with revitalizing our language and culture. We have the sovereign ability to teach our own children and people.”

The summit concluded with network-building sessions, in which participants expressed their reflections with one another on how to resolve the challenges and obstacles of revitalizing the Navajo language within families, schools, and communities.

“The summit opened many ideas and opportunities for the participants to heal and restore our language and culture. The HEHSC and myself will continue to advocate and support the initiative. We will definitely organize and host the 2nd annual Navajo Language and Culture Revitalization Summit next year,” added Delegate Brown.

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