



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Diné Bizaad Subcommittee convenes first regular meeting



PHOTO: The Diné Bizaad Subcommittee met Dec. 30 and selected Chairman Nathaniel Brown and Vice Chairman Elmer Begay as the first order of business. The next meeting is scheduled Feb. 3, 2020.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Dec. 31, 2019 – The Diné Bizaad Subcommittee met Dec. 30 at the Navajo Nation Council Chamber for their first regular meeting. The initial order of business was the selection of the committee chairman and vice chairman.

Delegate Paul Begay (Bodaway-Gap, Coppermine, K'aibii'to, LeChee, Tonalea-Red Lake) nominated Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbetto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) as chairman and the committee approved the nomination by a vote of 4-0.

Delegate Wilson Stewart Jr. (Crystal, Ft. Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill) nominated Delegate Elmer Begay (Dilkon, Greasewood Springs, Indian Wells, Teesto, White Cone) as vice chairman and the committee approved the nomination by a vote of 4-0.

Chairman Brown said the purpose of the subcommittee is to work with Navajo elders, tribal programs, Na-

vajo colleges, and others to identify priorities. The committee is going to work with available resources to gather data for the current status of Navajo language revitalization at schools across Navajo land.

“We need to understand where the Navajo Nation is with regard to Diné bizaad,” said Delegate Tso. “We need to figure that out internally before we start going out to the schools.” Information from schools on Navajo curriculum is an important step in establishing the committee priorities, he said, along with working with federal and state counterparts for the educational reform of Navajo language.

Vice Chairman Begay said the committee’s efforts are for the benefit of Navajo children to learn how to speak Navajo. “We are doing this for the next generation coming. What was already done needs to be brought together with current research being conducted,” he said. “Let’s look at the Treaty of 1868, it

doesn’t state that Diné bizaad will be revitalized. That responsibility is left to us and our Navajo elders.”

Chairman Brown said the Department of Diné Education Diné Bizaad Listening and Oral Proficiency Assessment results will be shared. “This is aggregate data that they have. I will also ask them to report before us,” he said. Chairman Brown said in 1990, there was 93 percent of the Navajo population that spoke Navajo. By 2000, that number dropped to 84 percent. By 2010, it was at 76 percent. For 2020, the number dropped to 51 percent of the Navajo population that speaks Navajo.

The next Diné Bizaad Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for Feb. 3 at the Navajo Nation Council Chamber beginning at 8 a.m. Chairman Brown said it will begin with a traditional Navajo offering of corn pollen to ensure the committee is on the right path.

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