



# 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council

## Office of the Speaker

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## Navajo Nation Leadership Hosts HHS Leadership



Delegates Daniel Tso and Pernel Halona, Indian Health Service leadership, Winslow Indian Health Care Center staff and management, and U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services leadership, including Deputy Secretary Eric Hargan, pose after a tour of WIHCC's traditional treatment facility on May 7 in Winslow, AZ.

**WINSLOW, Ariz.** — Navajo Nation leadership hosted U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Deputy Secretary Eric Hargan May 7 in a wide-ranging tour across HHS-affiliated facilities on the Navajo Nation.

President Jonathan Nez and Council Delegates Pernel Halona (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'a'a'), Daniel Tso (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake), and Thomas Walker, Jr. (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi Tó'ii) presented programming for Head Start, senior center, and health care facilities in the communities of Leupp, Dilkon, and Winslow.

Hargan was joined by several senior Indian Health Service leaders, in addition to leaders from the National Institutes of Health.

Delegate Tso, chair of the Council's Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, noted several important initiatives to the deputy secretary.

"It is critical that the Navajo Head Start program continue to receive funding. It is year four of its grant, and as you can see here, the program is performing life-changing work for our future generations," Delegate Tso stated.

The community toured both sides of the Leupp Early Childhood Center. One side is dedicated to care for children up to 2 years and 11 months old, and the other side is dedicated to the Head Start Program for children between 3 and 5 years old.

At the Dilkon Wellness Center, Lucinda Charleston, the Navajo Special Diabetes Program manager, and her staff exhibited the program's work to combat diabetes on the Nation. She highlighted how the program seeks to incorporate healthy traditional foods into their educational programming and their efforts to do more school-based work.

Her staff cooked the dignitaries bah doot'izh, unsweetened flat blue corn bread cookies, and toshchiin, blue corn mush, to provide examples of healthy traditional foods.

"This, this is the breakfast of champions," Delegate Tso stated before explaining how senior centers can purchase fruit cocktail cups but have difficulty procuring healthy traditional foods for elders.

Hargan stated that he would refer the senior center matter to the Administration for Community Living, which funds community-based supportive services and nutrition programs for elders.

He also highlighted the unique position of the Indian Health Service to combat diabetes.

"The federal government pays for 1 out of every 5 dollars spent on kidney treatments. IHS is one of the few places where you can intervene before end-stage renal disease," Hargan stated.

The group's last visit was a brief tour with presentations at the Winslow Indian Health Care Center, where the Council leadership requested support for using traditional treatments to address opioid and meth abuse, in addition to information on how opioids are prescribed to Navajo citizens at IHS facilities.

To close the day, medicine man Thomas Edison Yazzie provided a mountain song to protect the HHS leadership in their travels outside the four sacred mountains after explaining the traditional services he provides through the Health Promotion Disease Prevention Department at WIHCC.

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