



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

## Office of the Speaker

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Speaker, Delegates Work with Chapters to Advance Projects at New Mexico Síhasin Summit

**ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.** – Navajo Nation Council Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhááíí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) and Council Delegates attended the New Mexico Síhasin Summit in Albuquerque, N.M. June 24-26 to plan and advance critical infrastructure projects across the Nation.

The Summit, developed and conducted by the Capital Projects Management Dept. within the Division of Community Development, provided an opportunity for chapter officials, community land use planning committee members, and various stakeholders to review the successful completion of projects and to strategize how to accelerate the delivery of authorized projects.



“We want to assist these project managers to move these projects forward and make sure they get done,” stated **Speaker Damon**, who spoke on Wednesday, June 26.

Speaker Damon provided a legislative history of the Síhasin Fund and spoke of efforts from the Office of the Speaker to ensure authorized projects are advancing in a timely fashion.

The Office of the Speaker has pushed for CPMD to hire more project management, engineering, and architectural staff, either internally or externally, to make sure projects are delivered on time and under budget.

In April, the Council passed resolution NABIAP-23-19, appointing members to the Naabik'íyáti' Committee Síhasin Fund Subcommittee. The committee is tasked with the planning and development of regional infrastructure supporting economic development and community development.

On June 14, the subcommittee convened and selected Delegate **Nathaniel Brown** to chair the subcommittee and Delegate **Wilson C. Stewart, Jr.** (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill) to serve as vice chair.

*Fund's Origins*

In May 2014, the Council accepted the settlement funds from the *Navajo Nation v. United States* lawsuit, which awarded \$554 million to the Nation for the historical mismanagement of the tribe's trust assets and its failure to ensure that the Navajo Nation received all funds due and owed under the United States' trust obligations and fiduciary duties.

Between October and November 2014, the Council and Office of the President and Vice President held public hearings to understand to what purpose the Navajo People believed these funds should be expended.

The Council recognized that during the decades in which the US government was mismanaging the Nation's assets, the Nation was deprived of the opportunity to develop adequate public infrastructure.

It was decided that the proceeds from the settlement would be deposited into the newly-established Síhasin Fund in order to fund infrastructure development across the Nation.

Among the Council's first order of business was the development of a bulk water and wastewater development expenditure plan, which passed the Council in January 2016. The Council appropriated over \$100 million to address the then-\$620 million backlog in proposed IHS projects that were deemed feasible.

Two years later, the Council passed the CAP-35-18, which appropriated approximately \$100 million for the construction of powerline and waterline projects to spur economic development.

"My predecessors and former colleagues recognized that these projects were not solely for economic expansion," stated Speaker Damon. "Rather, our people deserve and are rightfully owed a quality standard of living. It is our unwavering responsibility as your governing body to ensure you receive that."



Council Delegates **Nathaniel Brown**, **Amber Kanazbah Crotty** (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'í'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tséahnáoz't'í'), **Mark Freeland** (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahí, Whiterock), **Pernell Halona** (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'a'a'), **Rickie Nez** (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T'iis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland), **Wilson C. Stewart, Jr.**, **Daniel E. Tso** (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake), and **Jimmy Yellowhair** (Black Mesa,

Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinõn, Whippoorwill) also attended the summit, meeting and strategizing with chapter and government officials.

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