



Navajo Nation Council recognizes retirees, new officials, organizations and others during 2021 Winter Session

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — During the 2021 Winter Session of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, delegates recognized individuals and organizations for their service, representation and dedication to the Navajo Nation. Wednesday's recognitions join the Council's continual recognition of front-line workers and responders in the ongoing coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

Recognitions took place virtually on Wednesday with delegates and participants joining the event via Zoom.

Erich Rogers

Council Delegate Rickie Nez (T'iistsoh Sikaad, Nenahnezad, Upper Fruitland, Tsé Daa K'aan, Newcomb, San Juan) presented to Erich Rogers the Navajo Nation's recognition for recently winning the final round of the Wranglers National Finals Rodeo (NFR) on Dec. 13, 2020, in Las Vegas.

At age 34, Rogers also holds a 2017 team roping world championship, ten National Finals Rodeo qualifications and many other rodeo achievements.

"I was touched to see our very own Navajo Nation cowboy on the television and all over national news papers," said Nez. "This man speaks Navajo and sets a great example for all of our Navajo Nation members and we wish him luck in his continued professional endeavors."

Rogers shared: "I am blessed to do all that rodeo stuff and make headlines to represent not only Navajo country but Indian Country as a whole. There's been several of us Navajos that have been to the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo and we are always looking for ways to give back to the Navajo Nation, especially the kids."

Martha Ellison

Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh) recognized Legislative Branch retiree Martha Ellison who has served in various Navajo Nation divisions and departments since 1984.

Ellison began her 36 years of service at the Navajo Nation Division of Social Services as an administrative service officer. Four years later, she began working with the Navajo Nation Department of Personnel Management before joining the Navajo Nation Legislative Branch, where she has been since 2001.

"Mrs. Ellison has helped laid the foundation for the 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd and now 24th Navajo Nation Councils and we thank her for the grit and determination she brought to her positions and with the many lives she has touched," said Speaker Damon.

Chinle Chapter

Council Delegate Eugene Tso (Chinle) recognized those of the Chinle Chapter administration and elected officials, including:

- Dr. Rosanna Jumbo-Fitch, Chapter President
- Mrs. Shawna Claw, Chapter President
- Mrs. RoAnn Burbank, Chapter Secretary/Treasurer
- Mr. Oscar Bia, Chapter Grazing Representative
- Mr. Walton Yazzie, Chapter Manager
- Melissa Winney, Chapter Administrative Assistant
- Tyrone Begay, Chapter Planner
- Michael Dohi, Chapter Project Manager

Tso commended the youth of the new Chapter administration for going above and beyond to serve Chinle and surrounding chapters during the Covid-19 pandemic. He likened them to Navajo leaders who led their people through tough times in previous generations.

Jesse Thompson

On behalf of Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain), Council Delegate Elmer Begay (Dilcon, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone, Greasewood Springs) recognized Jesse Thompson on retiring from his position as Navajo County supervisor after 28 years of service.

Thompson is a resident of Indian Wells and was recognized by Begay as a man of great character with a caring heart that has served many constituents at the Navajo County and individual levels while supervisor.

The recognition of Mr. Thompson also came with an extensive list of roles served during his tenure as supervisor. Those include membership in regional economic councils, census commissions, conservation initiatives and more.

Alberto Peshlakai

Begay also welcomed new Navajo County Supervisor Alberto Peshlekai and indicated his eagerness to work with him as one of the Council delegates with districts overlapping Navajo County. Peshlekai was mentored by former County Supervisor Jesse Thompson during his previous 12 years of working for Navajo County as a transportations project manager.

Begay commended Peshlekai for his dedication to the constituents in his Navajo County, recalling moments he heard of Peshlekai delivering resources to constituents.

Donor and volunteer organizations

Council Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Lake Valley, Náhodishgish, Standing Rock, Whiterock, Huerfano, Nageezi, Crownpoint) presented special recognitions to the following organizations who partnered with eastern communities to continuously serve over 2,000 families since the Covid-19 pandemic began:

- Women to Be - Albuquerque, NM
- Dream Lab - Albuquerque, NM
- Rotary Club of Albuquerque
- Vegan Outreach
- Jewish Community Center
- Believer's Center of Albuquerque
- All Vegetarian Inc.
- Kirkland Air Force Base
- Mo Gro Mobile Grocery - Sante Fe, NM

Three representatives received recognitions on behalf of the organizations virtually, including: Aly Bitsoui, Christine Goodwin from Dream Lab, Christine Glidden from Women to Be, Victor Flores from Vegan Outreach, Tom Walker from the Rotary club of Albuquerque.

Huerfano Chapter President Ben Woody and Crownpoint Chapter President Rita Capitan also joined in to express their appreciation to the various organizations for their assistance.

“We did what we could with what we had. The resources provided by these organizations were essential,” said Freeland “These aren't just organizations they are individuals like Aly, Christine, Victor, Tom and many others who have worked tirelessly to collect resources to donate directly to our people.”

All individuals and organizations recognized by the Council will receive a plaque commemorating their contributions and achievements.

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