



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Dr. Patricia Nez Henderson recognized by the Navajo Nation for being elected President of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco

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PHOTO: Council Delegate Charlene Tso, Chairman Daniel Tso, and Council Delegate Pernell Halona congratulate Dr. Patricia Nez Henderson as newly elected SRNT President in Baltimore, Md.

BALTIMORE, Md. — Members of the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) of the 24th Navajo Nation Council applauded the recent election of Dr. Patricia Nez Henderson as the first Indigenous President to lead the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT).

On Wednesday, HEHSC Chairman Daniel Tso, Vice Chairman Carl Slater, Council Delegate Pernell Halona, and Council Delegate Charlene Tso joined Dr. Henderson as honored guests during the annual SRNT meeting in Baltimore, Md.

The committee is in Washington, D.C. this week for meetings with Congressional representatives and federal officials from the Biden-Harris Administration to advocate for various priorities including veteran services, education, health care, and infrastructure projects.

“Dr. Patricia Nez Henderson is a compassionate servant for Indigenous people across the United States. The dedication and passion she places in the advancement of medical research for our Navajo people effects real change in our communities, and she will now carry her commitment forward on a global scale,” said Council Delegate Carl Slater (Round Rock, Rock Point, Tséché’izí, Lukachukai, Tsaille-Wheatfields).

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The Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT) is an association consisting of members from over 40 countries that are dedicated to supporting researchers, academics, treatment professionals, and government employees working in the field of nicotine and tobacco research.

Dr. Henderson is from Dził Abe'ée, within the Teesto Chapter, and is born into the Dziłtł'ahnii Diné'ée (Mountain Cove Clan) and born for Tótsohnii Diné'ée (Big Water Clan).

“The Navajo people are proud of Dr. Patricia Nez Henderson, a compassionate matriarch who has given so much to the healthcare needs of Native people around the world. As the first Indigenous President of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco, her decades of advocacy work will assist her in saving more lives from the addiction of commercial tobacco. We believe Dr. Henderson will continue to be an equitable leader that will deliver quality healthcare services to marginalized communities across Indian Country,” said Chairman Daniel Tso (Littlewater, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake, Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Ojo Encino, Counselor).

Graduating in 1990 with a Bachelor of Science from the University of Arizona with a discipline in biochemistry, Dr. Henderson received her Master's in Public Health from Yale University in 1994. Driven with a determination to apply allopathic medicine, she became the first Indigenous woman to graduate from the School of Medicine at Yale University with a Doctorate in Medicine.

This week in honor of her accomplishments, U.S. Representative Tom O'Halleran (D-AZ) acknowledged the meaningful work of Dr. Henderson during a House floor speech, to be recorded into the Federal Register.

“This moment to see a resilient and compassionate Diné woman lead an association that represents world professionals from 40 countries gives young people across Indian Country inspiration. My sister Dr. Henderson has paved the way for future generations to also lead movements to protect the mental, physical, and social well-being of our Native people. We feel immense gratitude for all of the work she and our healthcare advocates have done on behalf of the Navajo Nation. She is self-made and self-persevering - all qualities our strong matriarchs exemplify. Dr. Henderson will be a voice for the world as we help our Indigenous people overcome an addiction to commercial tobacco products,” said Council Delegate Charlene Tso (Mexican Water, Tótikan, Teec Nos Pos, Aneth, Red Mesa).

In October, the Navajo Nation Council enacted the Niłch' éi Bee Ííńá - Air is Life Act that prohibits the use of commercial tobacco products in enclosed, indoor workplaces or public places, and within 25 feet of any indoor area across the Navajo Nation. Chairman Daniel Tso sponsored the bill with Speaker Seth Damon, Delegate Carl Slater, and Delegate Nathaniel Brown serving as co-sponsors.

Last year, the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco presented Dr. Henderson with the distinguished “John Slade Award” for her outstanding contributions to public health and tobacco control through science-based public health policy and advocacy.

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