



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Secretary Jennifer Granholm and Arizona Congressman Tom O'Halleran join the Navajo Nation Council for Renewable Energy Roundtable

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PHOTO: Council Delegates Nathaniel Brown, Jimmy Yellowhair, and Amber Kanazbah Crotty discuss Navajo Nation's vision for a greener future with Department of Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm in Kayenta, Ariz.

KAYENTA, Ariz. — Members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council hosted a roundtable conversation with Department of Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm and United States Representative Tom O'Halleran (D-AZ) to discuss clean energy transition initiatives in the Navajo Nation.

Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown was joined by Madam Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Council Delegate Jimmy Yellowhair, Office of Indian Energy Director Wahleah Johns, and President Jonathan Nez for the roundtable discussion at the Nash Center in Kayenta, Ariz.

Topics focused on the Navajo Nation's vision for a transition to green energy sources like geothermal, hydro, wind, and solar development.

"Secretary Jennifer Granholm and Congressman Tom O'Halleran are true champions for Indian Country, and by working together, we brought a sustainable source of electricity to families in Kayenta. For the first time, 24 homes in the communities I represent can now turn on the light switch and have access to the internet. We commend the University of Utah engineers and Dr. Shundana Yusaf for their leadership to make this project grow forward," said Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Dennehotso, Kayenta, Chííłchínbii'tó).

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In March, the Kayenta community was awarded a \$1.2 million grant by the Department of Energy to construct an autonomous solar-based microgrid and battery energy storage for 24 families in the Comb Ridge and El Capitan areas.

“This grant is for the betterment of the Navajo Nation and its people. The project represents an act of sovereign energy development for the Kayenta community. All the work being done is reparation work because we are on Indigenous land and are giving back. We are honored to be your partners to protect the land, air, and water, and construct a greener energy future,” said Dr. Shundana Yusaf, University of Utah Associate Professor.

The Department of Energy provided nearly \$9 million in funding to 13 American Indian and Alaska Native communities for 14 projects that would harness undeveloped solar, hydro, and geothermal energy resources, reduce or stabilize energy costs, and increase the energy resilience of tribal communities.

“This COVID-19 pandemic showed us how far behind we are providing clean drinking water, electricity, and high-speed internet to our Navajo families. This solar-based microgrid project will provide 24/7 power for homes and the internet for our youth to submit homework or take tests. The Navajo people welcome Secretary Grandholm on her second visit to our homeland and appreciate her advocacy for energy initiatives in Indian Country,” said Madam Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley, Tsé’áłnáoozt’í’í, Sheep Springs, Beclabito, Gad’ii’áhi/ Tó Ko’i).

A key partner in the work is Native Renewables which empowers Native American families to achieve energy independence by growing their renewable energy capacity and access to affordable off-grid power. The organization is led by Indigenous engineers, solar entrepreneurs, and tribal members based in the Hopi and Navajo Nation.

“The successful completion of this solar-based microgrid is an example of how powerful partnerships are, and we are proud to be here. We are solving the energy independence problem by empowering families with renewable sources. I believe that the future of the Navajo energy economy is solar, which will solve the lack of electricity problems our people experience,” said Dr. Suzanne Singer, Native Renewables Executive Director.

Under the leadership of President Dalton Singer, the Kayenta Chapter partnered with the University of Utah, BoxPower, New Sun Road, and Diné Energy for the project. The electrical and computer engineers who worked on the preliminary investigations and construction included Dr. Mingxi Liu, Dr. Mostafa Ardakani, and Dr. Jianli Chen.

“Many of these families have never had a power supply to their homes in history. We will be providing them with stable and sustainable clean power for years. Together the project enables complete Wi-Fi coverage for the whole community so they can enjoy online education and more. Families will have an improved quality of life into the future,” said Dr. Mingxi Liu, University of Utah Associate Professor.

According to Secretary Granholm, the \$1.2 million grant will create five full-time temporary positions and three full-time positions for the life of the system.

“The Department of Energy has an advocate for Indian Country, and we are proud to have our Office of Indian Energy Director Wahleah Johns on our team. President Joe Biden is determined to provide the best technical assistance to Tribal Nations so that the United States is 100% clean energy driven by 2035. The energy power of the Navajo Nation and the rest of the country is on our land and the sun. Investments in clean hydrogen, geothermal, wind, and solar power projects are our priority moving forward,” added Secretary Jennifer Granholm.

Sworn in on February 25, 2021, Secretary Granholm is the second woman to lead the United States Department of Energy. Prior to her nomination, she was the first woman elected Governor of Michigan, serving two terms from 2003 to 2011.

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