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## **Navajo Nation and Kyrgyz Republic Embark on Cultural Exchange to Forge Deeper Ties**



**Left to right: Director Justin Ahasteen, Speaker Crystalyne Curley, Ambassador Baktybek Amanbaev.**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – In a significant step toward cultural collaboration, the Honorable Crystalyne Curley, Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council, and His Excellency Baktybek Amanbaev, Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United States and Canada, met at the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic to discuss avenues for strengthening cultural relations and mutual understanding between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Navajo Nation. Also joining the discussion was the Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office, Justin Ahasteen.

The meeting was held on Wednesday, March 20, 2024, at the invitation of Ambassador Amanbaev, who is interested in pursuing a cultural exchange to explore similarities between the Navajo people and the Kyrgyz. Though the two nations seem distant and foreign at a first glance, a shared history of colonization, economic and geographic similarities, and cultural traditions such as weaving suggest there may be more in common than one might expect. The Ambassador recommended an initial cultural exchange to be organized in the coming months, with potential for the establishment of permanent exchanges, including sister city agreements, if all goes well.

"I'm grateful to Ambassador Amanbaev for welcoming the Navajo Nation to their embassy to discuss ways of enriching our knowledge and understanding of their culture. Any opportunity for people to learn more about other cultures increases our appreciation for diversity and humanity. We look forward to continuing our dialogue and hopefully to welcome the Ambassador to the Navajo Nation at some point," said Speaker Curley.

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren was unable to attend the meeting but sent his regards: "While I regret not being able to join today's historic dialogue in person, I am proud that the Navajo Nation was represented by our esteemed Speaker Crystalyne Curley. The Navajo and Kyrgyz peoples have beautiful cultures, rich in history and tradition, and much to teach one another. This meeting marks the beginning of what I hope will be a long-lasting friendship between our two nations."

As a symbol of goodwill and friendship, Ambassador Amanbaev presented Speaker Curley with a traditional Kyrgyz wall tapestry and a jar of Kyrgyz honey. These gifts reflect the rich cultural heritage and culinary delights of Kyrgyzstan, showcasing the country's vibrant traditions and hospitality.

In return, the Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office presented Ambassador Amanbaev with a turquoise necklace, a cherished symbol of Navajo culture and spirituality. The exchange of gifts further exemplifies the spirit of friendship and cooperation between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Navajo Nation.

Ambassador Amanbaev and Speaker Curley both expressed their enthusiasm for future exchanges and collaborative initiatives aimed at deepening cultural and economic ties and enhancing mutual understanding. They emphasized the importance of promoting cross-cultural dialogue and fostering meaningful connections between their communities. Details of the next steps in the cultural exchange will be worked out in coming weeks.

The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both parties expressing their commitment to furthering dialogue and cooperation between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Navajo Nation.

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