



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Honoring the legacy of Dr. Charles “Monty” Roessel: A champion of Navajo education and sovereignty**



**25th Navajo Nation Speaker Crystalyne Curley and RDC Vice-Chair Casey Allen Johnson reflect on Roessel's legacy and contribution to Navajo education.**

**TSAILE, Ariz.** — On Friday, March 28, Diné College celebrated the life and legacy of Dr. Charles “Monty” Roessel. The former president of Diné College and revered leader in Navajo education was remembered as a visionary who transformed institutions and touched lives across generations.

25th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley reflected on Roessel's multi-generational legacy and the responsibility it places on future leaders.

“He didn’t just pave the way, he leapt ten steps ahead so we wouldn’t have to struggle the same way,” said Speaker Curley. “But it’s up to us now. As students, as leaders, as family, we must carry those footsteps forward.”

The memorial began with a prayer from Dr. Johnson Dennison and words of welcome from Arizona State Senator Theresa Hatathlie, who also chairs the Diné College Board of Regents. Navajo Nation President Dr. Buu Van Nygren and Vice President Richelle Montoya offered remarks, each emphasizing Roessel's immeasurable contributions to tribal education and nation-building.

“Dr. Roessel was more than a college president. He was a peacemaker, a visionary, and an advocate for our students and our culture,” said Senator Hatathlie. “He taught us to face our challenges head-on, to ‘run toward the arrows.’”

Guest speakers included notable figures in Indian Country and higher education, such as journalist Mark Trahant, NTU President Dr. Elmer Guy, BIE Director Tony Dearman, and ASU’s Jacob Moore. Roessel’s insistence on putting students first and his relentless commitment to tribal self-determination through education emphasized that his legacy is not one of endings, but of continuance.

Resources and Development Committee Vice-Chair Casey Allen Johnson reflected on the time he served alongside Dr. Roessel at Diné College. “He carried the weight of this institution’s future on his shoulders,” Johnson recalled. “When I joined the staff, Monty had just started. The message from our leaders was clear: ‘Stabilize the college. Move it forward.’ And that’s exactly what he did.”

U.S. Senator Mark Kelly’s office presented the Roessel family with a U.S. Capitol flag flown in Dr. Roessel’s honor. The flag symbolized national recognition of his role in preserving Navajo language, history, and educational sovereignty.

Family members, including his children and siblings, shared emotional stories of Roessel’s humor, love, and unwavering guidance. Bryan Roessel spoke on behalf of the children and reflected on the values instilled by their parents and carried forward by Monty.

Dr. Avery Denny closed the ceremony with a prayer, while Luci Tapahonso, the Navajo Nation’s Inaugural Poet Laureate, offered a pre-recorded poem in tribute.

Though his physical presence is gone, Dr. Roessel’s legacy is deeply rooted in every corner of Diné College and beyond—from the programs he launched to the people he mentored. As RDC Vice-Chair Johnson noted, “His vision didn’t stop at Diné College. He wanted to uplift all our institutions. He was always looking ahead, always pushing us to do more—for our students, our communities, and our sovereignty.”

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