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PRESIDENT BEGAYE SAYS TEACHING THE NAVAJO LANGUAGE IS KEY TO REINFORCING THE FOUNDATIONS OF HÓZHÓ AND KÉ

MONUMENT VALLEY-Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye said the theme of “Shił Hózhó” for the 22nd Annual Heritage Language Conference was a great exemplification of how the Navajo people are rooted in the foundations of Hózhó and Ké.

President Begaye was the keynote speaker at the conference which was held today at Monument Valley High School in Monument Valley, UT.

“The Navajo language contains so many teachings of Hózhó and Ké,” he said. “As a Nation, this is who we are. Our language provides a way for us to move back into these teachings of Hózhó and Ké, because in many ways we have moved away from them.”

This year’s Heritage Language Conference focused on the content area of fine arts and offered workshops that incorporated the Navajo language into the district’s curriculum to enhance culturally relevant teaching ideologies to subjects like music, photography and reading.

Celeste Dayish, Administrative Secretary with San Juan School District and conference organizer, said it’s important for educators to attend the conference to get a better idea of how they can teach their students.

“They get ideas on how we can preserve the language,” she said.

The conference also offered workshops addressing issues like: Diné Content Standards; Teaching Proficiency



During his keynote address, President Begaye said, “I don’t want the next generation to be raised without knowing Hózhó and Ké. We need to return back to our roots and foundations.”

through Reading and Storytelling; and Perspectives on Values and Knowledge of Learning the Navajo Language.

Bilingual Education Director for the San Juan School District, Clayton Long said that utilizing traditional languages in education reinforces culture and the Navajo language is inherently a way of life.

“We want our students to think in Navajo as well as speak the language. We want them to be able to read and write in Navajo as well,” he said. “All four modalities are critical in helping our students

become fully engaged. We use the language as a tool to enhance our curriculum.”

Long said he liked way that President Begaye related the concept of Hózhó to the teachings that can be found within the Navajo language.

“It teaches us to act a certain way and to say things a certain way, as opposed to finding fault in what people say. He called this Hózhó,” Long said. “I believe it’s true because we need to remember the teachings of our mothers, which are



The Monument Valley High School Native Flute band, under the guidance of Vince Redhouse, gave a special performance to President Russell Begaye in honor of his attendance at the Heritage Language Conference on Fri, Apr. 1.

based in the idea of Hózhó. We were very fortunate that he was able to put that across to the audience today.”

Principal at Monument Valley High School Spencer Singer said it was great for President Begaye to be in attendance today as it allowed the students to rub shoulders with the leader and be in his presence while hearing his direct counsel.

During his keynote address, the president spoke primarily in the Navajo language underscoring the

critical importance of language preservation and revitalization with anecdotes that kept the audience engaged.

“Our children listen to us and learn from us. I don’t want the next generation to be raised without knowing Hózhó and Ké,” he said. “I want them to be able to reach out to one another and help each other. In our history we have been taught to do this. We need to return back to our roots and foundations.”

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