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VICE PRESIDENT NEZ ADDRESSES NEW MEXICO LEGISLATURE DURING AMERICAN INDIAN DAY

SANTA FE—On Feb. 4, Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez addressed the New Mexico Legislature for American Indian Day. “Broadening State-Tribal Relationships for Generations to Come” was the theme of the 2016 event.

Kick-starting the two-day event was a reception with the New Mexico tribal leadership, hosted by the Kelly Zunie, Cabinet Secretary for the Indian Affairs Department.

Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez spoke with the tribal leaders on common issues with the state of New Mexico.

On Feb. 5, Vice President Nez started his day early at the Roundhouse where he listened to the Ymelda Erin Coriz, who performed the national anthem in Navajo.

Four other tribal leaders joined Vice President Nez at the Rotunda to deliver speeches on challenges facing their respective nations.

Vice President Nez said a time of crisis demonstrates the true relationships that exist between tribal nations, such as the Gold King Mine spill in August, 2015.

“Thank you to the state of New Mexico for reaching out to the Navajo Nation to alert us about the spill and for being a willing and reliable partner in the fight for scientific and factual information about the safety of our water,” Vice President Nez said.

Since 2003, the Navajo Nation has applied for competitive state funding from the Tribal Infrastructure Funds and Capital Outlay to complete projects ranging from infrastructure, economic development, education, healthcare and language preservation.

Vice President Nez said, “The Begaye-Nez administration stands committed to streamlining internal tribal processes and working closely with our partners at the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department to maximize the use of state funds and track our progress to prevent the reversion of funds.”



Regarding TIF projects, Vice President Nez said the Begaye-Nez administration stands committed to streamlining internal tribal processes.



Vice President Nez stops for a photo with royalty, Miss Northern Navajo Teen, Nicole Keeswood.

He also acknowledged the elders in attendance and reminded attendees of the importance of native culture and language to sustain tribal nations and strengthen tribal sovereignty.

Native food such as Navajo beef was served at American Indian Day, which Vice President Nez said sustained the Navajo people for centuries.

“We ate our traditional foods and didn’t have to worry about diabetes and obesity,” he said. “Now, with all the fast food chains, we no longer consume traditional organic foods. Obesity, diabetes, and heart problems have negatively affected our native people,” he added.

Because of these unique challenges, tribal nations look to TIF and Capital Outlay funds to build fitness centers, and to actively engage tribal members in health and wellness programs, he noted.

Representatives from Navajo DOT were also in attendance to follow up on legislation aimed at improving the safety of Navajo Nation roads.

The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President continues to work with partners in the State Legislature in addition to tribal officials and citizens of Navajo chapters.

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