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PRESIDENT BEGAYE ADDRESSES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON TRIBAL LANDS

During his presentation on Tribal Economies at the Reservation Economic Summit, President Begaye said that it's important for business leaders to know how successful enterprises are structured while having knowledge of tribal law and corporation code.

POJOAQUE, N.M.-During the Reservation Economic Summit (RES) on Tuesday, Nov. 15, held at Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino, President Russell Begaye spoke on developing and sustaining enterprises on tribal lands.

The breakout session focused on the goals of tribal and business leaders in pursuing self-determination, self-sufficiency and efforts in achieving economic growth, job creation and business development.

Leading into this presentation, President Begaye talked about how the Navajo Nation is preparing to work with President-elect Donald Trump's administration by identifying and deciphering Trump's ideologies to merge them with the priorities of the Nation.

"We need to connect with the new administration within the first two weeks while the President-elect is putting his philosophies into place and while his cabinet-level positions are being filled," President Begaye said.

It's important to identify the president-elect's core values in order to work effectively with his administration and facilitate dialogue on issues that face the Nation.

"We don't want to always be fighting but we will if we have to. We have to be stronger under this administration rather than weaker," he said. "Before the election, I said that we, as Native American nations, need to stand together stronger. We've survived every presidential administration and we will survive this one."

Regarding the development of tribal economies, President Begaye said it's important to select educated and informed business leaders and board members. For tribal enterprises to progress and generate positive revenue, tribal nations need business leaders that understand their respective industries.

"It's important for our business leaders to know how successful enterprises are structured and to have knowledge of tribal law and corporation code," he said.

Earlier in the session, Governor of Pojoaque Joseph Talachy said that tribal nations should "take politics out of business but shouldn't take government out of business because business serves the interests of the government."

In his presentation, President Begaye posed the question, "Should we be putting council members on boards?"

This can be a double-edged sword, in that there is a tendency for council members, who serve on enterprise boards, to serve their own interests or the interests of their communities.

"Selfish thinking can get in the way of growing tribal enterprises. What we need are good workers who don't have a personal agenda," he said. "However, the flip side being that council members can fast track legislations that can be assistive to businesses and thus the economy."

President Begaye also posed the question, "How much authority do we give our enterprises?"

To exemplify a solution he's taken, President Begaye said that he recently signed off on legislation that gives full authority to Navajo Technological University (NTU) to sign off on contracts and select their own board members.

"This is not my role. But this is the authority of NTU to take responsibility for these decisions," he said. "We need our enterprises to focus on the communities they serve and how they can best develop business and revenue."

The selection of educated and informed business leaders is key in developing successful enterprises, President Begaye said.

"They need to be passionate about growing the enterprise."

Governor Talachy, who hosted the RES Summit at the Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino, said he was grateful to President Begaye for his support and leadership among tribal nations.

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