



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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25th Navajo Nation Council focus on critical strategies to address public safety at Diné Action Plan Winter Session



Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez speaks to the Diné Action Plan Task Force during their Winter Session.

ALBUQUERQUE, NM. — The 25th Navajo Nation Council convened for the Diné Action Plan (DAP) Winter Session 2024, focusing on critical strategies to address the interconnected challenges of public safety, substance abuse, and youth advocacy across the Navajo Nation.

Over the two-day session, leaders emphasized the importance of combining traditional teachings with innovative approaches to foster community resilience and long-term well-being.

“Our communities experience multitudes of challenges, and we all have a shared responsibility to approach these issues with a blend of traditional wisdom and contemporary solutions,” said Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez. “By centering our efforts with cultural values, we can build trust, address systemic barriers, and ensure that future generations have the resources and opportunities they need to thrive right here at home.”

The session featured discussions on leadership transitions, advocacy for youth and families, public safety reforms, and the integration of cultural practices into community wellness initiatives.

Delegate Dr. Andy Nez led the conversation on youth-centered advocacy, calling for increased collaboration with educators and community leaders. He emphasized the role of schools as safe spaces where trusted figures can support youth through challenges such as homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health struggles.

“Our teachers are on the frontlines, often becoming the only trusted confidants for our youth,” Council Delegate Dr. Nez stated. “Empowering educators and communities to provide culturally informed support and including youth voices in policy development is essential for creating impactful and sustainable solutions.”

Proposals included implementing peer-support networks, fostering teacher-student advocacy programs, and leveraging local chapter funds to create traditional health workshops and family-strengthening activities. These measures aim to provide youth with culturally sensitive resources to navigate modern challenges while staying grounded in Diné teachings.

Yvonne Lee, Prevention Specialist at the Department of Behavioral and Mental Health Services discussed alarming statistics related to opioid overdoses in high-risk areas such as Tuba City, Ojo Encino, and Shiprock. Data from Emergency Medical Services (EMS) programs revealed significant increases in Narcan administration, underscoring the urgent need for expanded intervention measures.

Task forces recommended enhancing surveillance systems, broadening access to Narcan for first responders, and integrating the Navajo Wellness Model into rehabilitation programs. DAP Task Force leaders also highlighted the need for tribal-specific data collection to better represent the Navajo Nation in state and federal opioid response initiatives.

“Substance abuse affects every corner of our community, but by blending traditional healing practices with modern medical approaches, we can offer comprehensive care that respects both the individual and our cultural values,” said Michael Henderson, Chair of the DAP Advisory Group.

Dr. Theresa Nez from the Navajo Nation Department of Health, underscored the importance of integrating traditional practices into all aspects of community planning. “Our children live in two worlds, and it is our duty to prepare them to succeed in both while preserving their cultural identity,” she concluded.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council reaffirmed its intent to address systemic challenges with a holistic approach. By blending traditional Navajo teachings with modern strategies, the Council aims to empower communities and ensure a safe, equitable, and culturally enriched future for all Diné people.

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