



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 11, 2018

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Council members highlight Navajo Utah issues at the Utah Tribal Leaders Meeting

CEDAR CITY, Utah. – Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Tecnospos, Tófikán, Red Mesa), Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr. (Shonto, Naa'tsis'Áán, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin), and Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) participated in discussions related to road improvements, financial investments, drought conditions, health care, and other issues in the Utah Navajo area during the Utah Tribal Leaders quarterly meeting held on Thursday and Friday.

The Utah Tribal Leaders is comprised of elected tribal leaders from the Skull Valley Band of Goshute, Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe/White Mesa, Navajo Nation, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of Goshute Reservation, and the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation. The UTL's purpose is to push efforts and to advocate for the needs of the Native Americans residing in the state of Utah.



PHOTO: Utah Tribal Leaders chair Council Delegate Davis Filfred, Council Delegate Seth Damon, and Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr. at the Utah Tribal Leaders meeting hosted by the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah on June 7, 2018 in Cedar City, Utah.

Delegate Filfred, who serves as the chair for the Utah Tribal Leaders, provided a report that included updates on Navajo Nation initiatives related to the seven Utah Navajo communities including Mexican Water, Aneth, Tecnospos, Red Mesa, Naa'tsis'Áán, Oljato, and Dennehotso.

His report highlighted the upcoming Navajo Nation elections, preservation of the Bears Ears National Monument, the disqualification of a Navajo candidate for the San Juan County, Utah

Commission, capital projects appropriations, the 150th Anniversary of the Navajo Treaty of 1868, the proposed reorganization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and local Navajo businesses.

In addition, Delegate Filfred reported that the Window Rock District Court recently denied a motion by attorneys for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, regarding their request for the dismissal of sexual abuse lawsuits filed by Navajo plaintiffs.

“The lawsuits were filed in tribal courts as personal injury complaints alleging sexual abuse of Navajo and tribal children in the LDS Indian Student Placement Program, which is non-existent now. Attorneys of the church argued that the Navajo Nation lacked jurisdiction because alleged abuse was off the reservation,” said Delegate Filfred. “We need to take all measures to protect our children and justice must be recognized.”

During the discussion, Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr. (Shonto, Naa'tsis'Áán, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin) emphasized the need of road improvements, particularly for U.S. Highway 163, which extends through the community of Oljato, Utah and Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park.

“Oljato is a very busy location throughout the year. Millions of tourists travel on Highway 163 to see Monument Valley, however, there are many accidents and fatalities due to poor road structure and conditions. The need for better roads should be considered by Utah leadership,” said Delegate Daniels.

He added that the Utah Department of Transportation and county leadership would meet on June 12 in Oljato to discuss road improvements and safety with Navajo Utah chapters and leadership.

During the two-day Utah Tribal Leaders meeting, the tribal leaders also received reports from the National Forest Services, Utah Division of Indian Affairs, U.S. Census Bureau – Tribal Outreach for 2020 Census, Utah Department of Transportation, Utah Office for Victims of Crime, Utah Division of Water Resources, Utah Attorney General's Office, and others.

The next Utah Tribal Leaders meeting is scheduled for August 9 to 10, 2018, which will be hosted by the Northwestern Band of Shoshone Nation.

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