



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Delegate Phelps pushes for ecotourism development on the Navajo Nation



PHOTO: Council Delegate Phelps, Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development executive director Crystal Deschinny, and Small Business Development manager Elaine Young meet with Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures and Red Circle on August 18, 2017.

MINNEAPOLIS – Last week, Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tside To ii), Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development executive director Crystal Deschinny, and Navajo Nation Small Business Development manager Elaine Young, visited the Prairie Island Indian Community, the Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures, Red Circle, an advertising agency, and Advanced Capital Group, an investment agency, regarding possible economic development partnerships that may benefit the Navajo Nation.

“The Prairie Island Indian Community and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe are economically thriving and self-sustaining tribes, and the Nation could learn from them. The Nation has tremendous

potential for economic development, especially ecotourism. This visit will give us a guide to strategically plan to begin successful businesses,” stated Delegate Phelps.

During the visit, Delegate Phelps toured Treasure Island Resort and Casino, a Prairie Island Indian Community gaming enterprise, which utilizes its generated revenues to improve infrastructure, provide employment, and support tribal and non-tribal philanthropies.

“The overall goal of economic development within the Nation is sustainability and the ability to improve infrastructure and services. I am highly interested in the two tribe’s government and gaming corporation structure. Their structure seems to be working successfully and that’s the challenge we have on the Nation,” stated Delegate Phelps.

The group also met with Red Circle, a hospitality and gaming advertising agency, and Mille Lacs Corporates Ventures, who successfully operate two tribal casinos, numerous hospitality developments, marketing firm, and small businesses based on the tribe’s signature and unique market brand.

Deschinny stated that the Nation has potential to create and market its own brand. The name, ‘Navajo,’ is globally known and the Nation needs to establish that business opportunity because the market already exists. The Nation has a lot to learn and share as we begin to create a new economic pathway, added Deschinny.

“The two tribes serve as great examples for the Nation. The Nation is in a unique position to look at various economic development models. The Western Navajo Agency has great potential to develop state-of-the-art hospitality facilities and succeed in ecotourism. I am currently working with one of my chapters to make this a reality,” said Delegate Phelps.

According to Delegate Phelps, the Cameron Chapter officials and NNDED have been working adjacently to develop a hotel and cultural center in the vicinity of Cameron to attract the high flow of traveling tourists.

“Millions of tourists travel through the Nation every year and we need to capture that huge market. The opportunity is there and all we have to do is capture it. Capturing the ecotourism market can change the economics and state of the Nation,” stated Delegate Phelps.

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