



# 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council

## Office of the Speaker

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## Speaker Damon Advocates for Traditional Values to Guide Sustainable Governance, Existence at Symposium



Speaker Damon delivers his remarks on sustainable development on the Navajo Nation at the Navajo Nation Sustainability Symposium at the High Country Conference Center on April 30, 2019.

**FLAGSTAFF, Ariz.** — Navajo Nation Council Speaker Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) delivered the General Session opening remarks on day two of the Navajo Nation Sustainability Symposium Tuesday, April 30.

The morning session's Master of Ceremonies was former council delegate Walter Phelps. Edward K. Dee, director of the Navajo Nation Office of Government Development, recapped the previous day's activities. His office, a unit of the legislative branch, developed and is hosting the symposium, along with Chinle and Tó Nanees Dízı Chapter Governments.

"In order to know what we want to preserve and ensure it exists for the next seven generations, we need to define what's worth preserving," Speaker Damon posed at the beginning of his remarks. "As a people, we've been through many transitions and shepherded waves of reemergence – but no matter the external influence, our pillars of guidance have always been our language, our culture, and our values."

The speaker focused his remarks on *what* needs to be preserved into sustainable systems of existence, what should guide those formulations, and how groups outside the Navajo Nation Government can work with the government to enact beneficial change.

In order to guide the sustainability dialogue, we need to focus on our common values, said the Speaker.

“We all descend from a people who emerged and resided in Dinétah – and used traditional teachings on how Diné fit into the world to guide them in it. Our traditional teachings of work ethic, how to respect and care for our Mother Earth, and where to find value and meaning in this world are some of the common aspects that we are entrusted to live by and pass down,” said Speaker Damon.

Once the playing field and guiding principles have been laid out, then all parties need to come to the table to define the future.

“Tackling sustainability and developing models to ensure that all those living on the Nation can live a life according to Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hozhoo means individual leadership, organizational leadership, and government leadership. Often, our government can be too insular – listening only to ourselves and not seeking out new voices. This symposium is the antithesis of that status quo, and I'm proud that a legislative branch program developed such an impressive event,” stated Speaker Damon.

Speaker Damon then outlined how organizations, individuals, and private industry can work with the Council's standing committees to effect the change they seek.

“This Council needs your ideas,” said the Speaker in his closing remarks. “All of us are expected to be leaders depending on the circumstance. As the saying goes, *it is not your responsibility to finish the work, but neither are you free to abandon it*. Thank you for picking up the mantle and continuing the work of our ancestors.”

Several council delegates were also participating in Tuesday's events. Delegates Vince James (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Łichíí, Steamboat), Eugene Tso (Chinle), and Edison Wauneka (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) were in attendance. Delegate Jamie Henio (Alamo, Ramah, Tóhajiilee) provided Monday's keynote address.

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