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NAVAJO NATION BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDS CANDIDATE FOR NEW SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dr. Harold G. Begay brings years of education experience

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - During a special meeting on March 18, 2021, the Navajo Nation Board of Education voted by a count of 5-4-0 to recommend Harold G. Begay, Ph.D., for the Superintendent of Schools position in the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education.

Dr. Begay has served in education as an elected public school board member, gaining extensive experience in K-12 educational leadership in the following positions: Federal Projects Director, Business Manager, K-12 principal, Human Resource Director, school construction, Assistant, Associate, and Superintendent over a span of over 28 years.

Following the board's recommendation, the decision goes to the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee for approval. Next, the Naabik'íyáti' Committee will discuss with final confirmation by the 24th Navajo Nation Council. The spring session is scheduled to begin April 19, 2021.

EDUCATION

Dr. Begay was born on the Navajo Nation. After graduating from Tuba City High School, he attended Arizona State University for one year before enlisting in the United States Marine Corps, where he served in the Tet Offensive of 1968 in Vietnam.

After serving in the USMC, Dr. Begay was an Iron Worker before finishing his college education. He earned a B.A. in psychology and an M.A. in counseling and secondary education from Northern Arizona University.

He finished in 1986 with a Ph.D. in school finance and education administration from the University of Arizona.

PREVIOUS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Dr. Begay is a published author with chapters in several books that are focused on education and the teaching of Navajo children. He has also published articles regarding finance and educational policy.

"I have entirely on my own converted five BIE-operated to BIE-funded [297] schools or to a combined state-funded [and] Impact Aid charter schools," Dr. Begay wrote of his tribal accomplishments in his introduction. "Those [previous] schools are Greyhills Academy High School, Shonto Prep School, Lukachukai Community School, and Nazlini Community School."

Dr. Begay's accolades have resulted in the opportunity to speak at prestigious venues and universities in Beijing, China; Oxfordshire, England; New Zealand; Ecuador, South America; and the United States.

MOVING DINÉ EDUCATION FORWARD

Dr. Begay stated the first order of business for the Navajo Nation is to ensure its schools are safe, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Once we have school buildings that meet the life-safety regulatory requirements, codes, guidelines, and standards of [the Occupational Safety and Health Administration], the Federal Government, the tribal government, and state school safety and security measures, we can begin instilling highly effective [and] highly performing school practices on Navajo land,” Dr. Begay said.

Dr. Begay stated the challenges facing Navajo adults could be traced back to a weak education system, and those experiences and cultural teachings have much to offer for current and future students, “Our future generation will no doubt come upon dire challenges wherein sovereign cultural selfhood will once again hold sway over the merciless life challenges.”

However, Dr. Begay added the educational divides and inequalities in Navajo education can be repurposed towards an empowering education with tribal funds and resources.

“I welcome our public to the new futuristic education for our future generation, an undertaking that will challenge and bring out the best in every one of us, for unity does make for accomplishing great deeds,” Dr. Begay wrote.