

Summary of Navajo Rural Development Roundtable

T'Saile, Navajo Nation

June 17, 2010

Those in Attendance:

Don Albrecht – Western Rural Development Center
Kado Holiday – Teecnospos Che
Wallace Tsosie – Indian Nation Conservation Alliance
Mary Manuelito – BIA Regional Office
Benita Litson – Dine College Land Grant
Michael Clani – Navajo RC&D
Roland Tso – Grazing Comm, SWCD
Laverne Gene – NRCS RC&D
Kathy Arthur – Many Farms Chapter
Lyle McNeal – Navajo Sheep Project - Utah State University
Nancy McNeal – Navajo Sheep Project – Utah State University
Suzanne Jamison – Diné bé iina'
ThNibaa Naataanii – Diné bé iina'
Collen Biakeddy – Diné bé iina'
Carol Albrecht – Utah State University

Session One: What do we value about the rural areas of Navajo Nation?

Participants were asked to list their two-three most important positive features about Navajo Nation's rural areas. Their responses were:

1. People, their clans (K'e) and culture, language and history – Diné philosophy of life
2. Open space, clean air, natural beauty and abundant natural resources
3. A Sovereign Nation – Self government – potential of government to government relationships

Session Two: Priorities for Strengthening the Future of Rural Areas

Participants were asked: As you ponder the future of your nation's rural areas, which of the following general rural development topics would you (personally) identify as being of highest priority to promoting the long-term survival and strength of these areas? That is, what **THREE** broad areas listed below would you select as being of "highest priority" for the future of rural communities in your nation?

- Economic Development
- Economic/Social Inequality and Poverty
- Education and Workforce Development
- Health and Nutrition
- Housing
- Information and Communication Technologies

- Leadership, Citizen Participation and Rural Public Policy
 - Population Change/Migration Patterns
 - Public Land Use and Management
 - Public Services/Public Infrastructure
 - Renewable Energy Development
 - Rural and Entrepreneurial Development
 - Rural-Urban Interface and Growth Management
 - Water, Biodiversity and other Natural Resources
 - Other areas not listed above (please list):
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Then the group narrowed down the individual responses into the following three priorities:

1. Management of land and natural resources.
2. Education, leadership and workforce development
3. Economic, infrastructural (electricity, roads, internet, water, etc.) and entrepreneurial development

Session Three: Digging Deeper into the Three Priority Areas

Next participants were asked to take these three priority areas they identified during Session Two and identify challenges and strategies/initiatives that could be launched to address the challenges. Their responses were:

1. Management of land and natural resources.
 - a. This issue is made much more complex by trust-land status and politics.
 - b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched:
 - i. Integrated resource management planning.
 - ii. Change in mentality to allow people to change.
 - iii. Referendums and change trust regulations – be fair to everyone
 - iv. Governance certification of all Chapters on Navajo Land
2. Education, leadership and workforce development.
 - a. This includes hands-on, applied, and mentoring and cultural education. There is a need to upgrade educational standards.
 - b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched:
 - i. Learn how teach basic principles of fundamental law – much has to be done by the family from home.
 - ii. Gauge whether or not people have both feet in fundamental law – how much do people rely on fundamental law or western law?
 - iii. Set up leadership and workforce development trainings and service learning programs.

- iv. Get grants for education, agriculture and technology.
 - v. Better utilize local students – get them involved in local leadership
3. Opportunity for economic, infrastructural (electricity, roads, internet, water, etc.) and entrepreneurial development and the subsequent brain drain.
- a. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched:
 - i. FIX NUMBER ONE!
 - ii. Develop infrastructure
 - iii. Eliminate red tape for business development
 - iv. Establish community organizations and build trust
 - v. Get a grant writer on WRDC staff to help disadvantaged communities
 - vi. Plan a grant-writing workshop