

## Fourth annual Diné Pride event held online

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 10 July 2020 06:32

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### We are Sacred Together

While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented a large gathering from taking place, Diné Pride, which has dubbed itself the official LGBTQ+ celebration for the largest Sovereign Nation in the United States, found a way to bring Indigenous LGBTQ people together in a virtual setting.

June is designated Pride Month, a month where people under the LGBTQ banner remember the Stonewall riots of 1969, which were a tipping point for the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States, as well as people who have been lost to HIV and AIDS.

A series of panels was streamed on Diné Pride's Facebook page from June 24 - 26 that are free for anyone to tune into. The schedule included discussions of LGBTQ youth, trans Indigenous leadership, art showcases, and more.

Alray Nelson, executive director for Diné Pride, opened the Indigenous LGBTQ+ Youth Panel by speaking about the importance of teaching children of their value.

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“Let us remind ourselves to pick ourselves up, to tell our young people that they matter and it’s okay for them to be who they are,” Nelson said. “To be LGBTQ, to be Indigenous, to be Diné, you are a sacred being.”

This idea plays into the theme of Diné Pride 2020, which is “Sacred Together.”

“Though we may not be able to be together physically, we’ll always know our identities are sacred and we’re going to be connected together with one mind, one soul, one heart,” Nelson said.

Francis “Geronimo” Louie, one of the youth directors for Diné Pride, spoke about how it feels to be one of the Indigenous LGBTQ leaders during the panel.

Specifically, he was asked about being a two-spirit person, a term for a gender role common in Native American communities and nations of someone that had a proper and accepted place within their societies. The term is rooted in traditional teachings that say all life is sacred.

“Being two-spirit is like being somewhat of a sacred being,” Louie said. “In our origin stories, we were told five other genders existed before this world we came upon. We helped them, through their sickness and gave them what they needed. When I think about myself and my identity, that’s how I want to be. I want to be someone who’s a role model who does something for the community, and that’s what I’m doing today.”

Navajo Nation Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown spoke during the Sovereign Nations Leadership Panel about steps the council is taking to support Diné Pride and other people involved.

“We are going to drop legislation on making the last week of June Navajo Pride week, and another [piece of] legislation from the Department of Justice to support the National Equality Act,” Brown said. “We’re working on the Navajo Equality Act to support our Navajo LGBTQ people.”

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One of the questions asked during the panel was about advice or guidance the panelists would give youth who want to serve in elected positions to help their fellow LGBTQ citizens. Navajo Nation Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton spoke about how she recalls the people she has met who then spurred her to make the decision to run for office.

“It’s about the people. We meet a lot of unique people who inspire us in little ways,” she said. “When we find ourselves in certain situations, we think back to that one time how we met that person and how their words were inspiring and stayed with us.”

The third panel was the Indigenous Trans Leadership Panel. Yué Clehona Begay, moderator for the panel and co-chair of Indigenous LA Pride in Los Angeles, spoke about how the efforts of the panelists in previous years as well as the elders, are paving the way for the future.

“We wouldn’t be here without the advocacy, without the work, the pioneering of folks like [Community Leader] Mattee Jim and other trans folks,” Begay said. “Oftentimes I feel like in cities off the reservation, we’re told our trans history starts with Marsha P. Johnson, which I think is good and valid, but I think for Native and Indigenous people, our history extends past that because of our elders.”

The panelists were asked how they take pride in being Indigenous and trans. Snow Otero, one of the Diné panelists, said it comes back to the theme of Sacred Together.

“It means reaching out to people to show we aren’t the monsters they think we are, that we’re not different,” Otero said. “We just want to get through life the same as everyone else. We are sacred, and we carry the traditions within us. It means showing everyone who we are and being proud of it.”

One in-person event that took place with proper social distancing guidelines was the Pride Cruise. Participants met in their vehicles in the Bashas’ parking lot in Window Rock, Ariz. on June 26 and drove around Window Rock and Fort Defiance, Ariz. to honor both the LGBTQ+ community as well as local health care workers.

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Diné Pride concluded on June 27 with the Closing Ceremony and the Extravaganza Drag Show, which featured models like Tomahawk Martini, Té Diamond, and Leslie Lewinsky among others.

Each of the panels and addresses are available to watch on **<https://www.facebook.com/NavajoNationPride>**.

Visitors to their Facebook page can also donate to a fundraiser to help make Diné Pride 2021, the fifth time the event will be held, a reality.

For more information on Diné Pride, visit <https://www.navajonationpride.com/> .

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