

## Division of Economic Development hosts successful economic summit

Written by Gallupsun Staff  
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### ***The Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development***

TWIN ARROWS, Ariz.-The fourth annual Navajo Nation Economic Summit concluded May 1 with more than 500 registered attendees and 48 businesses and organizations. The Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development, in partnership with Raven Events, hosted the summit at the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort from April 22-24.

Raven Events, an indigenous First Nations company from Canada, facilitated the Advanced Business Match event, successfully scheduling 527 meetings between 48 businesses, chapters, and entrepreneurs.

The main conference included 20 breakout sessions across four main tracks: tourism, international, commercial development, and entrepreneurship.

Division of Economic Development Director JT Willie expressed his appreciation, “The division is proud to have the support of Diné Development Corporation, an enterprise of the Navajo Nation, in organizing this summit and giving back to entrepreneurs and small businesses. “A special thank you to Small Business Development Department Manager Elaine Young and Jennifer Jones for leading and managing the summit planning,” director Willie stated.

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This year, exhibition space at the summit reached maximum capacity at 35 exhibitor booths, including sponsors, government agencies, not-for-profit companies, Navajo artisans, and more. Dave W. “Famous Dave” Anderson, founder of Famous Dave’s of America, delivered the summit’s keynote address. Anderson is a member of the Ojibwa nation, and a former Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Dave W. “Famous Dave” Anderson (Ojibwa) of Famous Dave’s restaurants addressed the Navajo Nation Economic Summit audience April 30.

Winners of the Seventh Generation Business Plan Competition were announced April 29 after a full day of presentations and judging. The business plan competition was held in partnership with the Northern Arizona University Center for American Indian Economic Development. The business plan competition winners are Vernon Livingston of Navajo Technology Services, Marisa Mike of Marisa Mike Designs, Chad Etsitty of Etsitty Contracting, and Shirleen Jumbo-Rintila of SJR Equine Ranch in first, second, third, and fourth place, respectively.

Eight businesses of the year awards were presented during the awards reception on April 30. The awardees and categories are: Ayani Neez Incorporated, Distinguished Business of the Year; Teec Nos Pos Trading Post, Distinguished Business of the Year; Gilbert Sons Electric LLC, Small Business; Lowe’s Market, Commercial; Indigenous Design Studio & Architecture LLC, Professional Service; LAM Corporation LLC, Construction; Rock Gap Energy, Industrial; and Navajo Weavers Association of Crownpoint, Tourism. The Division of Economic Development thanks these businesses for their continued support of the Navajo economy.

The Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development extends an appreciation to the partners and sponsors that contributed to the summit, including the Diné Development Corporation, the summit’s presenting sponsor. Other sponsors include: Tonaneesdizi Chapter Governance, Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise, Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority, Lowe’s Shop n’ Save, Bashas’ Diné Market, SRP, PTAC, Advertising Ideas, Navajo Shopping Centers, McCabe CPA Group LLC, Junction Restaurant, Navajo YES, Navajo Nation Hospitality Enterprise, Antelope Canyon Navajo Tours.

The Division of Economic Development additionally thanks the panelists, speakers, and presenters for their contributions.

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The Division of Economic Development is also hosting the Diné Entrepreneur Series to be held May 20-22 at the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, Arizona. Registration for the series is free and ongoing online at <https://dineentrepreneurseries.eventbrite.com/>. The three-day series will feature workshops and sessions focused on helping Navajo entrepreneurs establish and grow their businesses.

***For information about the Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development, visit [www.NavajoBusiness.com](http://www.NavajoBusiness.com). You can also keep up with the latest news and information from the Navajo Nation DED on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NavajoEconomic Development](https://www.facebook.com/NavajoEconomicDevelopment).***