



The Navajo Nation
Yideeskáadi Nitsáhákees

DR. BUU NYGREN **PRESIDENT**
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Navajo President Buu Nygren, University of Arizona strengthen public health collaboration with MOU

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz – Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, alongside key representatives from the Navajo Department of Health and the Navajo Epidemiology Center, on Monday signed an MOU with the University of Arizona to collaborate on data related to COVID-19 infections.

The MOU is to identify risk factors and increase community preparedness should a future pandemic strike.

“In Navajo, we have a saying,” President Nygren said. “*Yideeskáadi nitsákees*. Prepare for the future. Never wait around for things to happen. This MOU embodies this philosophy.”

Dr. Karletta Chief, director of the Indigenous Resilience Center at UA, said that communities that speak more English have lower rates of COVID-19, whereas communities that speak more Navajo have higher rates of COVID-19.

The MOU will help to understand how factors like language, socioeconomic conditions and even lack of access to water impact *Diné* health across the Nation.

“We are Indigenous led,” said Dr. Chief. “We have a unique perspective, and through our work a deep commitment to Native communities. Factors like food security, food insecurity, electricity and lack of electricity all impact public health.”



Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, the Navajo Nation Department of Health, Navajo Epidemiology Center and the University of Arizona sign an MOU to collaborate on data collection regarding the impacts of COVID-19.

The agreement sets the stage for a collaborative effort to enhance public health initiatives and research benefiting *Diné*. Analyzing socioeconomic risks like insufficient household infrastructure and education levels are essential to understanding their impact on health.



Dr. Karletta Chief, director of UA's Indigenous Resilience Center and professor & extension specialist in the Department of Environmental Science, presents a UA football to President Nygren.

"We are a family now," said Sherylene Yazzie, executive director of NDOH. "Let's move swiftly to collect and analyze the data and integrate solutions that serve the well-being of our people."

Dr. Robert Robbins, president of the University of Arizona, said he was honored to begin this work.

"I am proud to work with the Navajo Nation," he said. "I am proud of University of Arizona in its work to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in our communities."

President Nygren responded, "My hope is that the findings from this partnership will enhance the lives of our Navajo people, building on our cultural beliefs and traditions to better prepare for future challenges."

Miguel Flores Jr., chief executive officer of Holistic Wellness Counseling & Consultant Services, LLC, concluded the signing when he presented President Nygren with a bundle of sage and a necklace of white shells from the Pascua Yaqui and Tohono O'odham people.

"We ask that our Creator bless our body, mind and spirit," Mr. Flores said. "I pray that our medicine, from the earth, the plants and the water, allows you to continue to do this important work for our people."

