

Nygren welcomes first Navajo veterinarian in two years

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren welcomed Dr. David Manuelito, the Navajo Nation's first veterinarian in over two years, to the Navajo Nation Veterinary Management on Feb. 26.

Office of the President and Vice President Division of Natural Resources Director W. Mike Halona and Department Manager Leo Watchman attended the meeting and also expressed their appreciation and congratulated Manuelito.

"Our Nation has a variety of large and small animals, and most pet owners are at a disadvantage traveling long distances for services and care," Nygren said. "I am so excited that we finally have a Navajo veterinarian familiar with our land and the needs of all our animals."

The Navajo Nation Veterinary Management Program has needed a veterinarian since 2022, hindering the program in offering complete veterinarian services specific to the animal owners of the Navajo Nation.

Manuelito is a Tohatchi High School alum, and he graduated from New Mexico State University

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Animal Science Program and Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. He also has over 15 years of experience working at Thal Equine Regional Equine Hospital in Santa Fe and Cedar Animal Medical Center in Gallup.

Navajo Technical University continues to create pathways for students to transition to larger institutions to encourage Navajo veterinary students to return to the Navajo Nation and provide vital services.

Last year, President Nygren signed a memorandum of agreement with the University of Arizona to reward seven eligible Navajo veterinary students with a full scholarship, with its funding shared between the Navajo Nation and the University of Arizona College of Veterinary Medicine.

“I’m glad Dr. Manuelito grew up in the Navajo Nation and knows of our land, our animals,” Nygren said. “We look forward to expanding and creating partnerships to bring in more Navajo veterinarians.”

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