

Letter to the Editor

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 07 September 2018 03:17

Editor,

Never before has there been a field of eighteen (18) candidates contending for the seat of the Navajo Nation president until this election cycle 2018; a historic precedent that has been set which speaks to the leadership that is available to serve our great nation.

Even more impressive is the number of women who stepped up to the challenge and took the initiative to set high standards for the Dine' (Navajo) Nation, a matriarchal society. The biggest disappointment is the failure by both front-runners to have chosen a one as a vice-presidential running mate.

Nez's June 18 announcement of his candidacy for Navajo Nation president stated his hometowns are Kayenta and Shonto, Arizona. His Phefelia Herbert-Nez was a help in his decision to toss his hat into the ring; his children's names and clans are not cited. His other inspiration for public office were his grandparents, the elders and youth he met during his travels, notably at various concerts he attended. Nez is a well-known "metal-head".

Current Vice-President Jonathan Nez chose Myron Lizer, a businessman who owns an Ace Hardware store on the reservation and is president of the Navajo Westerners Ace Hardware Stores and Lumber Yards as his running mate. Lizer's background includes 28 years of business management and has worked for Fortune 500 companies. He was born in Ganado and raised in Ft. Defiance, Arizona. He is Numunu (Comanche Nation) and born for Tó'áhani. His family is originally from a small community known as Coalmine – located just northeast of Tse Bonito, New Mexico.

On Lizer's Facebook page, he has almost nothing posted as a background for referral to his political experience although he has Nez posted as his "friend" for two years on a "Friendversary Video. His Friendversary Video (since March 29, 2016) with Jonathan Nez states "Anybody know who this guy is who I've been friends with now for 2 Facebook Years (equivalent to 2 real years). Lol!" (about 5 months ago) On his contact and basic info posting he describes himself as a "Follower of Jesus."

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Traditionally, Navajo Nation presidential candidates chose their running mates from another state to increase their voter base, but Nez and Lizer are both from Arizona. Navajo elections do not have “party lines.”

The first choice of former Navajo Nation president Joe Shirley Jr., as his vice presidential running mate was Peter Deswood III from Shiprock, NM. That changed when the tribe’s election office stated that Deswood was not a registered voter and is ineligible to be a vice presidential candidate.

His second choice as running mate is Buu Van Nygren, a general contractor from the Utah portion of the reservation with a master’s degree in business administration from Arizona State University and doctoral program student at the University of Southern California. Buu Van Nygren is from Red Mesa, Utah. He is Oozéí Táchii’nii born for Náá’Ádaalts’ózí (Vietnamese).

Nez and Shirley both are from the Arizona portion of the Navajo Nation reservation, the United States largest at 27,413 square miles that also extends into Utah and New Mexico. The three states have border towns that have serious disconnects when it comes to government functions; even the more so with other cities with large Navajo populations like Albuquerque and Phoenix, Ariz., and Gallup.

The issues are serious when it comes to representation and the absence of chapter houses. Educational funding, family resources, cultural teachings and childcare are coupled with violence, beatings, robberies, rapes and unsolved murders.

With the Nov. 6 general elections upcoming, the choices have moved away from the traditional values of choosing our leadership. In this “Year of the Treaty of 1868” (“Year of the Naaltsoos San) the candidates have been chosen. With more than 93,000 Navajos registered to vote and 52,000 voters who were recently purged, a Navajo vote is more important than ever.

Mervyn Tilden

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