

Reforming the Navajo government with prayers, people

Written by By Marley Shebala Sun Correspondent
Friday, 05 June 2015 14:05



Norman Brown is not afraid of challenges and that is probably why he's taken on the gargantuan task of returning the Navajo Nation government to the people.

And Brown knows that he's not the first one to try.

But he knows that he needs to succeed where the others have failed because he truly believes that the Navajo Nation is running out of time.

Brown, who is originally from Chinle, Ariz., said he feels like he really had to choice in pushing for the restructuring of the Navajo government.

He lets out a long sigh, looks down at the floor for about a minute and then he looks intensely at the Gallup Sun reporter for about half a minute before speaking and carefully choosing his words.

"I want to be humble in how I explain how I became involved," Brown explained. "I've been on a spiritual journey of healing and I've always been talking about change. I realized that if I couldn't change myself then how could I help my nation change.

"So in this spiritual process of healing and growth, I saw what laid ahead for my people and I didn't like what I saw," he said sadly. "And I couldn't sleep for days. I couldn't eat because of what I saw."

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The vision

Brown said, "What I saw was land with no water, no life; a land barren of all its riches, animals. That is what I saw.

"And I realized that prophesies weren't shown to happen, but shown so it won't happen," he emphasized. "So after I saw that I was given another vision or view that showed us as strong people.

"Then I saw this fire within the Four Sacred Mountains and there was a corn pollen trail to that fire," Brown said with amazement. "And it was a real tiny fire because it was so far away. And I thought that is a long path. It's going to take decades, a lifetime."

As he thought about the fire and the corn pollen trail, he smoked some tobacco to help him understand.

"After smoking the holy tobacco, I understood that there is no time and space and that the fire was made with hope, faith, unity, K'e'," Brown said. "What I saw was this constitution. I shared what I saw with others. One sister mentioned that maybe we (Navajo people) need a constitution."

He said he was asked to lead this movement for a Navajo constitution and he said no.

As more and more people heard about his vision, the question of who could lead was repeatedly raised.

After six more months of prayer and meditation and talking with his relatives and family about whether he should initiate the Navajo constitution movement, Brown said he started hearing

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people say that this could be the “last chance to create this ideal independence.”

Dedicating his life

He said that’s when he finally decided to ask a core group of Navajo community members and leaders to help him lead the transformation of the current Navajo government into a constitutional government.

“It took half a year for me to decide if I would dedicate my life,” Brown said. “But for me, this is our last chance. If we don’t do this now then we’ll never do this because right now we still have our language, our philosophy, our land, our way of life. It’s still strong.”

He added, “For myself, as a lifelong activist, my main concern in helping to produce this (constitutional reform) document is the future. By developing this document, we can assure future generation a more stable, more fair, more transparent Navajo government.

The legacy

“We want to leave a legacy that will ensure that our future generations will continue to evolve as a nation with language, culture, and a plan for our own destiny,” Brown said. “Our youth don’t need to go through the same government turmoil’s that we have been experiencing since 1989.”

He emphasized, “We want to leave a Navajo government that honors all citizens and a system of government that honors our rights over corporate and federal rights. And it will be through this constitutional reform document that the world recognizes the Dine’ people as truly independent.”

Brown said that independence and self-determination are words that are familiar to the people.

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But the proper inclusion and legal definition of those words in this government reform document would give the people, not the Navajo Nation Council, the legal right to decide how to use their homeland, he explained.

Brown said, "The people would have the power to decide how to use their water, their natural resources without pressure from outside corporation or the federal government forcing us to follow their plan. The federal government and corporations have been telling us that these are the rules that we have to follow. We are saying, no."

He said that the first public forum on the transformation of the Navajo government was at the Whitecone Chapter in May.

The second one is June 6, at the Phil L. Thomas Performing Arts Center in Shiprock from 9 am to 5 pm.

Brown said that the first gathering generated four areas of concerns.

Number one is how this document, which could be called a constitution, would insure that the people – not elected officials, political appointees and attorneys – determine their future.

Second is the protection of our homeland, the air, water and natural resources.

The third concern is the preservation of our way of life, which includes our language.

The fourth area of interest is whether this government reform involves a total makeover or taking the best of our current government and making it better with Dine' wisdom.

For more information, go to: <https://www.facebook.com/norman.p.brown.3?fref=ts>. Or email:

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