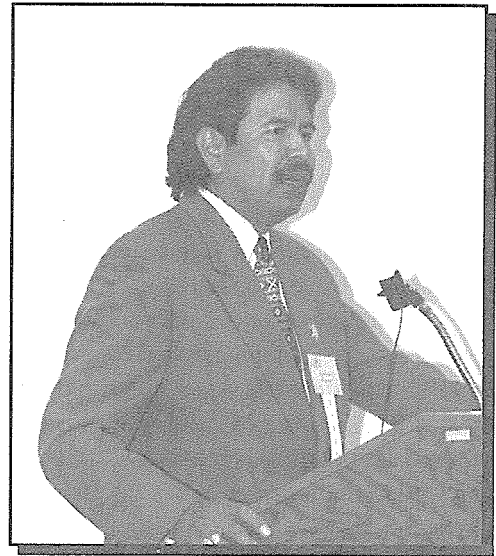


Albert Hale assumed the office of Navajo Nation President in January 1995. His parental clans are Áshiihi and born for Tódich íi nii. President Hale is an attorney licensed in New Mexico and has practiced law for 17 years having earned a law degree from UNM School of Law and a B.S. degree in political science from Arizona State University. Hale's clients have included Navajo Tribal enterprises, including Navajo Agricultural Products Industry, Navajo Community College, Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority, Navajo Arts and Crafts Enterprise, Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc, Navajo Nursing Home and numerous others. He also assisted with Navajo uranium miners seeking compensation under the 1990 Uranium Exposure Compensation Act. Hale served as the Assistant Attorney General for the Navajo Nation and as Legislative and Special Counsel to the Navajo Tribal Council. He co-authored amendments which created a permanent Navajo Nation Supreme Court and separated the judicial branch into one of the three branches of government.



WELCOMING REMARKS FROM THE NAVAJO PRESIDENT

Navajo President Albert Hale
Navajo Nation
P.O. Box 9000
Window Rock, AZ 86515

Good morning and welcome to the Navajo Nation. Farmington Mayor Taylor tells me that he is a member of the Áshiihi Clan and I refuse to accept that because I am a member of the Áshiihi Clan, that is, the Salt Clan. [At this point, President Hale makes a statement in the Navajo language]. In Navajo it is said that any time you go somewhere and speak to a group or you meet with people you always tell them your clan membership. I belong to the Salt Clan, Born for Bitter Water. My paternal grandfather is from the Walkabout Clan and on my mother's side, the Towering People Clan. It is said in Navajo that if you introduce yourself like this, then the Holy People will know who are you and where you are and that

anything you say will be blessed. So with that, I introduce myself the Navajo way.

I see from your agenda that you will be visiting one of our major projects, the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project. That project utilizes water from the San Juan Basin watershed and has done so since 1962. We continue to have problems with the use of San Juan River water and during the course of this conference, I am sure you will hear a lot about the problems we are having in resolving the Navajo Nation's water rights.

We can all agree upon a couple of things when it comes to water. One is that water is essential to life regardless of who we are, the color of our skin, whether we are farmers, lawyers, city mayors, or law

Navajo President Albert Hale

professors. Regardless of who we are, water is essential. No life can be sustained without water. Secondly, in this part of the country, in the southwest, water is of limited supply. We have not had much rain this year and as a result we are going to continue to have very little water to supply all our needs. Those two things I think we can agree on.

On the legal side, because of cases that have been decided, such as the *Winters* decision and *Arizona v. California*, the Navajo Nation, as a sovereign nation and a sovereign people, has been allocated a certain amount of water—and that is what we are in constant dispute about with other water users in the San Juan Basin and in other places as well. The Navajo Nation, as a sovereign nation, has asserted its water rights with regard to numerous projects. In reality what has happened, is that we have asserted that right but the right has not been quantified. While we have asserted our water rights and laid claim to all the water that exists in the San Juan River, others continue to take that water without accommodating the rights of the Navajo Nation. The rights of the Navajo Nation have been ignored in the process of allocating the limited water from the San Juan River.

Imagine, if you will, that the pitcher of water sitting on that table represents the San Juan River. Imagine if I pour water for each individual sitting at that table—four glasses of water. That, in essence, is what has been happening with the allocation of water from the San Juan River. We have taken a glass of water from that pitcher for endangered species, another for the state, another for the city, another for the Animas-La Plata Project. For all the users along the river we have allocated water, we have taken another glass from that pitcher. However, we do not know now how much water is left in that pitcher. During the process of taking each glass of water, there has been no water reserved for the Navajo Nation. If there remains less than a glass of water in the pitcher, that means the Navajo Nation receives less than what it needs. Therein lies the problem with which we are dealing. Since my inauguration, we have taken an aggressive approach to resolving these water rights issues and other issues as well.

Some of you may have noticed on CBS television this morning a story about New Mexico Governor Johnson and me riding separately across the state of New Mexico bringing attention to the trash that has

accumulated along the highways and throughout the state. The Governor started from Raton and rode his bicycle to Las Cruces. I did the same starting from Hogback, just outside Farmington, and rode all the way down to Socorro where the Governor and I met Monday at noon. When the Governor issued the challenge to me to ride through the state to bring attention to the trash problem, I told him I would do him one better. I told him that riding a bicycle is easy. I would make the trek the hard way, the old way, the traditional way, the Navajo way—I would ride a horse, and I did.

Governor Johnson has received another letter from me regarding another issue. The same type of coordination, communication, and a challenge to resolve this issue also needs to be addressed. That issue involves water rights. My letter asks him to start the process of negotiating a water rights settlement. Without negotiation, development along the river will be hampered because the Navajo Nation will say to any developer requiring water that all the water in the San Juan River belongs to us. We must move toward negotiating exactly how much of that water belongs to the Navajo people. The sooner we do that, the sooner we proceed with development along the river. So I ask state and city officials present today that we join in this effort and commit ourselves to discussing a resolution. After all, as I said before, water is essential. Regardless of who we are, we need water. Because of the scarcity of this commodity, it is imperative that we communicate, coordinate and reach a resolution.

With that, may the Holy People be with you as you attend this conference and may the Holy People bless you wherever you may go. Thank you very much and welcome again.