



Navajo Thaw/Cameron Win National Competition for Grant

The Navajo Thaw Support Team assisted the Cameron Chapter and the Cameron Community Land Use Plan Committee (CLUP-C) to secure a federal grant from USDA Rural Development to conduct “placemaking” activities over the next two years.

The Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge grant was one of five winners in a national competition which included 67 applications.

The purpose of the project is to develop a long-range plan designed to empower the people of the Cameron Chapter to envision and implement activities leading to creating a “great place to live, work and play.”

The grant proposal was led by a very active and engaged CLUP-C committee. “This plan is so very important for our Chapter in order to gain a sense of where new housing needs to take place for our people,” said Marilyn Reed, Chairwoman of the CLUP-C. “We do not see this as a plan sitting on a shelf, but rather leading to a ‘living project.’”

Reed was especially grateful for Tolani Lake Enterprises (TLE) for sponsoring the grant application. “They are a great non-profit and have been so helpful to our Chapter and our part of the Navajo Nation for so many years.” TLE intends to be active in supporting the activities of the project.

Stan Robbins, a very active member of the Cameron Chapter, spoke of the importance of the project focusing on a “*Sustainable Journey of Beauty*.” Robbins noted that “Beauty” is central to the Navajo belief system, and an excellent focus of the planning activities.

The lead consulting contractor, Swaback, an architectural and planning firm based in Scottsdale Arizona, developed the most comprehensive plan for housing in the history of Indian Country in 2012. “We recognized sustainability and beauty as central themes for the Navajo people in the work that we did eight years ago,” said Chris McKibben with Swaback. “It will be the people of Cameron that will drive this planning process. We are honored to work with this important Chapter and place on the Navajo Nation.”

The grant was written by Brian Cole of Building Communities, the subcontractor to Native Builders, LLC which is leading the Navajo Thaw Implementation Plan. “These are such challenging times for everyone. It is simply a matter of survival right now,” said Cole. “Yet we know that the Navajo people are resilient, and times will get better. This is a plan for those better future days.”

Native Builders, LLC will provide a strong supporting role for the project. “We have been so impressed with the engagement of the Cameron Chapter in the Navajo Thaw process,” said Thomas Tso, President

of Native Builders, LLC. “Their CLUP-C has been very active in pursuing this grant and the Chapter leaders have been most supportive.”

One big reason why Cameron was successful with the grant application was the matching funds provided by Blackstreak Holdings, the company working with Cameron Officials to develop a new Navajo-owned and operated motel and tour company in Cameron. Blackstreak Holdings operates Adventurous Antelope Canyon Tours at LeChee. “We are so happy to be a partner with Cameron in this planning project,” said Lionel Bigthumb, Chief Operating Officer for Blackstreak Holdings, of behalf of his family. “We are doing these development projects for the people. This planning project will help to make sure that the people of Cameron benefit from all future development and progress.”

In addition to the Masterplan for the future of Cameron, the Cameron Chapter will receive funding for people to participate in the process. Federal funds will also be used to purchase laptop computers and hotspots so that people can participate during these pandemic times.

USDA Rural Development released the press release shown below.

