



# THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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## Navajo President, Vice President, wives attend historic inauguration of Barack Obama as 44<sup>th</sup> U.S. President

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Wrapped in thick coats, gloves and scarves, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., First Lady Vikki Shirley, Vice President Ben Shelly and his wife Martha Shelly sat a couple hundred yards from the where President Barack Obama took his oath of office on the steps on the U.S. Capitol on Tuesday.

The Navajo leaders and their wives arrived here Sunday for the beginning of the inaugural events and concluded their visit at the Commander in Chief Inaugural Ball late Tuesday after the arrival of the new U.S. President and First Lady Michelle Obama.

President Shirley, expressing the sentiment that he was experiencing “history in the making,” said his “hope and dream is to see the stimulus package passed and get jobs to Native people and Navajos.”

He said seeing the first African American become the 44<sup>th</sup> U.S. President brings to mind the teaching of Navajo elders that “there are no impossibilities in life, that as children of the Holy People we are part holy ourselves.”

President Obama’s achievement springs from “hope and a sacredness of mind,” President Shirley said.

“There is hope in the world that we can do it by working together, praying together,” he said. “The Navajo Nation supports President Obama. Now we need to get to work

on the stimulus package, and certainly we need to get our own people working, too.”



*Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly, his wife Martha, President Joe Shirley, Jr., and First Lady Vikki Shirley are bundled up against the cold 20 degree day of President Barack Obama’s inauguration. Angie Cody Photo*

On Monday, the President and Vice President attended the tribal leaders meeting at the National Congress of American Indians conference being held this week in Washington. There they heard newly-confirmed Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

The secretary said the NCAI meeting was the only one he accepted before assuming his new job.

“There’s great hope and great expectation,” Secretary Salazar said. “We also know it’s going to take a tremendous amount of resolve.”

He was greeted with enthusiasm by dozens of tribal leaders and hundreds in attendance.

“We have to make sure that never again, that never again, like what has happened in the last eight years, that never again are Native American communities of the United States of America left outside the tent,” the Secretary said.

He said his work begins on Wednesday. One of the first things to work on is the trust litigation that has been going on for decades. He said it would be “a very high priority issue for me.”

President and Mrs. Shirley returned to Window Rock Wednesday evening where the President is now preparing to present his State of the Navajo Nation Address to the winter session on the Navajo Nation Council on Monday.



*President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama wave to the crowds of nearly two million following his inauguration as 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. Angie Cody Photo*



*President Shirley and Vice President Shelly greet new Interior Secretary Ken Salazar following his address to tribal leaders at the National Congress of American Indians conference in Washington, D.C., on Monday.*