



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo Vice President Ben Shelly presents \$1.8 million to Shonto Community Governance to build new complex

SHONTO, Ariz. – Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly presented a check for \$1.8 million to Shonto Community Governance here Friday for construction of its government services building.

“Since receiving its Local Governance Act certification, the Shonto community has made many milestones and this agreement is indicative of their progressive spirit,” Vice President Shelly said.

“The Navajo people are a progressive people and Shonto, through its community driven government, is the epitome of where local Navajo government should be.”

Since receiving LGA certification in 1999, the Shonto Community Governance, governed by an alternative form of government, the “Council of Na’taa and Atsilasdai,” initiated planning and feasibility studies needed to develop the framework for its community-based economic development initiatives.

Building a multi-purpose government center is the first goal of Shonto Community Governance.

Working with the Navajo Nation Council, Council Delegate Jonathan Nez, a member of the Budget and Finance Committee, requested \$1.6 million for Fiscal

Year 2009 to construct a multi-purpose government services building.



From Left to Right: Shonto President Lorenzo Isaac, Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelley, Shonto Vice President Felix Fuller, Manager Robert Black, Jr., Council Delegate Jonathan Nez, Grazing Representative Frank Laughter, Shonto Community Development Corporation Board Member Jones Grass, Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth Whitethorne-Benally. Sherrick Roanhorse Photo.

“Through support from community members and the Shonto leadership, we were able to get a quick turnaround from the Navajo Nation,” Mr. Nez said. “In Window Rock, we worked with the Navajo Nation Council to include money for Shonto during the budget session.”

While moving legislation through the Navajo Nation Council, Shonto Community Governance leadership and staff worked with the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development’s Capital Improvement Office

and Design and Engineering Services Department to formalize an administrative agreement to design and construct Shonto's government services facility.

Division of Community Development Executive Director Arbin Mitchell said that under the Local Governance Act, language exists that says LGA certified chapters can request direct capital improvement funds.

"DCD encourages chapters to start handling their own money," Mr. Mitchell said. "Shonto Community Governance was the first LGA certified chapter to come forward to request its full share of CIP funds. To receive these public funds, a chapter must be accountable. Shonto has stepped forward and agreed to take care of its own affairs."

The Division of Community Development and Shonto Community Governance combined the Navajo Nation FY 2009 allocation and earlier CIO allocations to total \$1.8 million.

"Shonto Community Governance has been keeping the momentum going by implementing its strategic plans, especially in areas related to community-based economic development projects," Mr. Nez said. "Progress is being made in the development plans for a commercial site, the Shonto Artist and Travel Plaza, and a public facilities project, the Shonto Community Public Service and Housing Complex."

To accomplish that, the local government hopes to secure an estimated \$7.2 million.

Shonto Community Governance plans to participate in the U.S. Treasury Department's New Market Tax Credit Program, a program that attracts investment from the private sector by providing tax credits for investing in developing communities.

"Negotiations will now get underway by Shonto Community Governance with a lender and investor using New Market Tax Credits, an innovative method of financing available for community development around the United States," Mr. Nez said.

Last summer, Shonto Community Governance was delegated business site leasing authority by a business site leasing management plan approved by the Navajo Nation Council's Economic Development Committee.

A check was presented to the Shonto Community Governance at their Spring General Assembly meeting, Mr. Nez said. The alternative form of government adopted by the Shonto community helps keep the community membership involved in decision-making by having a general assembly four times a year which coincide with the four seasons, he said.

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