



The 22nd Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Speaker Naize Looks to Economic Cooperation with Twin Arrows Groundbreaking

Leupp, AZ — At Monday's groundbreaking of the Navajo Nation's fourth casino operation, Navajo Nation Council Speaker Johnny Naize told the audience that through economic cooperation the Nation, other Arizona tribes, and their neighboring communities can continue to grow and benefit from the native gaming industry.

"Traditionally, the Navajo Nation and the city of Flagstaff haven't had the best relations on how to allocate natural resources or how to accommodate culturally significant sites, like the San Francisco Peaks, in our search to better our economic environments," said Speaker Naize. "I'm hoping this project, though the jobs and revenue it generates, will lead to more understanding between our communities."

Naize also reiterated that as Navajo gaming operations expand, they must also remain as a tool to generate economic opportunities for the other new and existing industries that would employ many Navajos. He noted this in the project's commitment to reducing the high unemployment rate on the Navajo Nation.

"Some have criticized the Navajo Nation's use of its Navajo Employment Preference Law, but it has leveled the playing field for small Navajo businesses to participate in the construction of these larger projects," said Naize. "I have been informed that, besides the Navajo employees that will go to work once this facility is completed, the primary construction company building this project will also focus on using Navajo labor."

Being the first Navajo casino operation in Arizona, Naize called on continuing a positive relationship with the state and its gaming tribes. Recently, there has been movement to expand gaming in the state as an effort to combat falling state revenues caused by the recession and the struggling real estate market.

Dignitaries at the ground breaking included Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly, Vice President Rex Lee Jim, Council Delegates Walter Phelps, Joshua Lavar Butler, Mel Begay, and former Navajo Nation Presidents Joe Shirley Jr., and Peterson Zah. Other representatives included those from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Coconino County officials, and Ernie Stevens, the President of the National Indian Gaming Association.

The Twin Arrows Resort & Spa will be the first Navajo casino to have a hotel and conference center and will be its largest operation employing approximately 800 people. It is scheduled to open July 1, 2012.

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