

THE STATE OF THE NAVAJO NATION

President Ben Shelly

and

Vice President Rex Lee Jim



*The Executive Branch Report:
Working Together for the Benefit of the Navajo People*

Presented to the
22nd Navajo Nation Council
July 21, 2014



**2014 SUMMER SESSION
STATE OF THE NAVAJO NATION
NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT BEN SHELLY
NAVAJO NATION VICE PRESIDENT REX LEE JIM
JULY 21, 2014**

Speaker Pro Tem Bates, members of the 22nd Navajo Nation Council, veterans, leaders, visitors, and my fellow Navajo people:

Yá'át'ééh and welcome to the 2014 Navajo Nation Council summer session. It is a privilege to join you here today inside this historic council chamber, the site of many great achievements that our past tribal leaders accomplished to bring our Nation forward.

I am thankful to provide a report on the Navajo Nation highlighting our significant accomplishments from the past quarter. Although we have not always seen things eye-to-eye, our administration is thankful for the cooperation and support we have received from the Council over the past three-and-a-half years.

Together we have accomplished many great successes on behalf of our Navajo people. It is important that our three branches of government work together to keep our tribal government moving forward, while strengthening sovereignty and pushing for economic growth.

Summer is here and that means the potential for forest fires and monsoon flooding. We must be cautious and be mindful of our elders in need of assistance in the remote areas of the Nation. Be sure to check up on your elders and see if they need any food or supplies.

ASAAYII LAKE FIRE

In mid-June, more than 14,000 acres was burned on the Chuska Mountains after catching fire near the Asaayii Lake Campgrounds. The high wind spread the flames and we are looking at costs in excess of \$8 million to pay for the fire. I want to say thanks to the Southwest Region Incident Management Team 3 and the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management for assisting us with the fire.

While this fire was devastating, it also opened our eyes to the need for responsibility and fire prevention. Most importantly, it was a time of working together to overcome a challenge facing our Nation. I am proud of the way we banded together to put the fire out in less than two weeks.

Several divisions and departments joined to fight the blaze, including Navajo Division of Transportation, Division of Health, Division of Public Safety, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and many others.



Many people and organizations also stepped forward to provide donations in the form of water, food, clothing, and financial contributions. These contributions were properly accounted for and distributed in accordance with tribal law.

NAVAJO DIVISION OF TRANSPORTATION

During the fire NDOT had to close several access roads leading into the Asaayii Lake area. These roads had to be closed to the public for safety purposes and they also had to be accessible to the firefighters battling the blaze.

In addition, NDOT worked with the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management and other tribal divisions and departments at the Emergency Operations Center to provide updates and maintain communications with chapters affected by the fire.

NDOT is also making great progress on other fronts. The division selected Wilson and Company from Albuquerque, N.M. to assist with the planning and development of priority projects. Included in the scope of work was identifying and developing gravel and borrow pits across the Nation for chapter road projects. This is a major accomplishment. For the first time in the history we are moving forward with our own gravel pits instead of relying on outside contractors.

The Huerfano Bridge Project is also moving forward. This bridge is a major bus route and the only bridge providing access to and from the community. Funded through the NDOT direct funding agreement with the Federal Highway Administration, this project is in cooperation with San Juan County to replace an outdated bridge. A wider bridge was designed and is under construction. The BIA Transportation Dept. also contributed funding.

DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The Title IV-E agreement between the Nation and U.S. Department of Human Services Children's Bureau is complete. The Navajo Nation is the first tribe in the country approved to administer the entire Title IV-E Program.

We will be providing direct funding reimbursements. This includes foster care, guardianship and adoption subsidies. Too often, our Navajo children in foster care are put in the care of state agencies. Their extended families are often unable to obtain guardianship due to financial hardships. This will address that need and provide a stable stream of resources for our kids.

The Division of Social Services also entered into an agreement with the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Casey Foundation is devoted to developing a brighter future for millions of children at risk from poor educational, economic, social, and health outcomes. Their work focuses on strengthening families and building stronger communities.

As the Navajo Nation collaborates with the Casey Foundation, we will be focused on keeping



kids safe, establishing permanency, and providing kinship placement of Navajo foster children.

DIVISION OF EDUCATION

The Navajo Technical University Navajo Language and Culture Teacher Summer Immersion Program is making progress at improving the technical expertise of our teachers at schools on the Nation. This summer, teachers participated in the program, learning about different areas of Navajo language and culture. They also earned six to seven credit hours in the process.

The curriculum for Navajo History and Government was also completed this quarter. The curriculum was developed by a committee of teachers for the instruction of Navajo and American history.

On June 9, Navajo Head Start passed their review for the comprehensive federal tribally designated renewal system. It was the first time in 20 years the Navajo Head Start passed the review process and it was a historic achievement for the program. Navajo Head Start will receive a five-year grant award of \$125 million.

In Sept. 2011, the Navajo Nation Washington Office informed me the Navajo Head Start was in non-compliance of federal regulations and that a reduction of funds was coming. Immediately, I met with the director of Head Start, Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, on Sept. 26, 2011.

Ms. Fuentes gave me a letter from the previous administration that stated the Navajo Nation was waiving authority over Navajo Head Start and would instead seek to privatize the program. I expressed my objection to the position of the previous administration and convinced the director not to accept waiving the authority of the Navajo Nation. We had hard work ahead of us and I knew privatizing the program was not the answer.

In Dec. 2011, she visited the Navajo Nation and reviewed our program with a team of experts from Washington, D.C. This began our effort to save Navajo Head Start, with the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation Washington Office and Navajo Department of Justice taking the lead.

Since that time, we have pushed hard for corrective action measures to be fulfilled for the program and ensuring that Head Start leadership was in compliance with our vision. Upon hearing the news of passing the federal review, we were happy beyond words.

NAVAJO GAMING REGULATORY OFFICE

The renewal of the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort was achieved this past quarter, after an April 29, 2014 inspection. As a result of passing the inspection, the Navajo Gaming Regulatory Office received the renewal license on May 1, 2014.



The renewal license was issued for a period of one year and is in accordance with our tribal and state gaming compact. The same day, Twin Arrows opened Phase II of their resort and added 110 additional rooms to the hotel. The Twin Arrows bingo hall is moving forward. We have received the bingo equipment and the procedures for operating the bingo hall have been approved. It is only a matter of time before we open the doors.

On July 17, Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort received the AAA Four Diamond Award. AAA evaluated our gaming facility and the recent 110-room expansion. The news of the award is cause for celebration, as our Navajo gaming facility and hotel are now the only Four Diamond rated hotel in Flagstaff.

DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES

The Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs is making progress with building 75 homes for Navajo veterans in the five agencies. Presently, we have 48 homes in various stages of construction. Over the next four years, we will have 300 new homes for our Navajo veterans in need of housing.

Since receiving the \$1.9 million funding contract for construction materials from Home Depot in Jan. 2014, Navajo Veterans Affairs has acquired certified house floor plans. They selected Witte Architect, Inc. to design and engineer the homes. Additionally, three Priority I contractors were selected to install the house wiring for the homes.

DIVISION OF PUBLIC SAFETY

The Department of Emergency Management presented a \$1.3 million reimbursement check to NTUA for the 2013 Operation Winter Freeze effort. This was the fastest FEMA reimbursement for Indian Country, which was completed within a year's time. Normally, the process takes three to five years to complete before reimbursements from natural disaster costs are received from the federal government.

On June 19, the Department of Corrections received the notice of substantial completion for the Kayenta Multi Justice Center. This \$34 million facility was funded by the American Recovery Reinvestment Act and was constructed by Bitco-Kitchell. They primarily employed a Navajo workforce during the construction.

The 54,000 square foot facility consists of 84 beds, a short-term holding facility and a 13,500 square foot support building for dispatch, police and criminal investigation departments. The building was signed over to the Navajo Nation and a request for insurance coverage has been submitted to the Department of Risk Management.

The Navajo Police Department is moving forward with updating General Orders for the command staff. The standing orders have been in place since 1979. Department personnel discussed the General Orders update and other issues during a work session in May. The department invested



in a 2014 Diamondback airboat and trailer for the Navajo Police Department Swift Water Rescue Team.

For the Department of Emergency Medical Services, six new ambulances were purchased to continue their mission of providing life support and transport services. The department ordered radios and other equipment for the vehicles, which will be deployed to six field offices.

DIVISION OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

The division administration recently received computers from the Social Security Administration. This computer hardware was distributed to various chapters for office use and chapter operations.

On April 24, the Community Housing and Infrastructure Department entered into a memorandum of agreement with the Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program for weatherization projects. Additionally, the department received a \$5.1 million NAHASDA grant award from Navajo Housing Authority for construction of new homes.

The Housing Improvement Program received \$1 million for the construction of seven new homes on the Nation. The program also completed the closeout of \$2.3 million in ARRA funding for housing.

Because the Navajo Nation did not receive funding for the FY 2013 funding cycle, the Community Development Block Grant Program submitted a letter of concern to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development headquarters in Washington, D.C. The department completed two power line projects in the last quarter for LeChee and Rock Point. The Weatherization Assistance Program closed out their \$9 million ARRA grant after completing 836 weatherization projects. They submitted their final financial report on June 27.

DIVISION OF HEALTH

The 2014 Division of Health and Navajo regional consultation was conducted on April 22 in Window Rock. The regional consultation group shared ongoing issues related to the health and welfare of Navajo people for visiting federal agencies.

The division also released a report to Congress on the feasibility of a Navajo Nation Medicaid Agency in May 2014. Mandated by the Reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act through the Affordable Care Act of 2010, the study concluded that with the Navajo Nation's experience with other programs, a Navajo Nation Medicaid Agency is feasible.

Additionally, the division advocated for healthcare facilities construction to federal officials in Washington, D.C. The Navajo Nation Washington Office assisted in the promotion of five IHS healthcare facilities that are on the construction priority listing. The division made contact with 12 congressional offices. \$1.5 million was also paid to 18 downwind victims and nine uranium



workers.

Other items the Executive and Legislative Branches have completed together in the past quarter include the \$554 million settlement for the trust litigation suit against the federal government, the approval of the five-year CIP plan, federal approval of the General Leasing Act, and enactment of the Navajo Nation Adult Guardianship Act of 2014.

LOOKING AHEAD

There's plenty more news to share with you regarding our accomplishments and everything is detailed in the Executive Branch quarterly report. One thing is certain: our collaboration and dedication to hard work must continue in order to move this Nation forward.

As we work for the Navajo people, we must never lose sight of that fact that many of our Navajo people, young and old, are struggling. The Navajo people must be kept in the forefront of efforts, whether it is tribal legislation, federal charters, tribal enterprises, or any other area of work requiring government participation. It is the Navajo people that are the governing body of this Nation and that basic fact cannot be disputed.

Thank you for working with us to move the Navajo Nation forward. I realize there is still much more work ahead of us, and the only way this will be achieved is by working together. We look forward to continued relations with the Council for the benefit of our people. Ahe'hee.



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