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President Shelly to tour and receive new Kayenta Justice Center

Navajo Nation Vice President Rex Lee Jim toured the Kayenta Justice Center in April. The project was still in construction at the time and many of the workers were Navajos. Bitco-Kitchell partnered to complete the construction for the $34 million project, which was designed by Sloan Architects. (Photos by Rick Abasta)

KAYENTA—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly will tour the new $34 million justice facility in Kayenta on June 20, marking the substantial completion of the American Recovery Reinvestment Act funded project.

He will be signing the official acceptance of the center on June 20 at 10 a.m. from the Bitco-Kitchell project team.

Designed by Sloan Architects, the 54,000 square foot building consists of 84 beds, a short-term holding facility for male and female inmates, and a 13,500 square foot support building that will house dispatch, police and criminal investigation departments.

"This new justice center will provide the Nation with needed infrastructure for detention services and a suitable headquarters for our Navajo Police in the area," President Shelly said. "The facility will allow our public safety officers to continue direct services to the Navajo people."

The facility is located next to the Kayenta District Court, which is another benefit. The location cuts down on travel distance because in the past, families had to travel to other detention facilities in Tuba City or Window Rock to visit incarcerated relatives.

Detention facility overcrowding will find some relief with the new facility, President Shelly added.

Other touches to the new center include culturally beneficial healing areas for a sweathouse, teepee ground and a hogan.

The Navajo Nation Department of Corrections emphasized the importance of maintaining family connections and cultural values in facility, which they believe will help incarcerated members rehabilitate and transition back into society.

Brad Gabel, a partner from Bitco-Kitchell, said the joint venture maximized job opportunities for local workers.

"The construction team created 'carve outs' of construction projects to maximize participation by community laborers," Gabel said. "The result was an 80 percent Navajo worker participation rate throughout the project."

He noted that his team was honored to be a part of the project, especially the cultural immersion, which increased their knowledge of Navajo traditions and customs.

Bitco is a leading Navajo owned construction management firm. Kitchell is a Phoenix-based construction company with more than 60 years in business.

Information: www.bitco-kitchell.net.

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