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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

President Begaye Urges Senator John McCain to Appropriate Funding to Construct Navajo Code Talkers Museum



President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez celebrated Navajo Code Talkers Day in Window Rock and urged Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) to appropriate funding for the construction of the museum. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— Hundreds gathered today to celebrate the beloved Navajo Code Talkers, Navajo warriors and national heroes who created the radio code that could not be broken during World War II.

Several dignitaries joined this year's parade, including Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Senator Carlyle Begaye (D-Ariz.), Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.), Arizona Governor Doug Ducey, Speaker David Gowan (R-Ariz.), Senate President Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.), Arizona Secretary of State Michele Reagan, and Speaker LoRenzo Bates.

Festivities began with a parade from the Navajo Nation Museum to the Window Rock Tribal Park. Eight years ago, when the parade first began, there were only four floats in

the parade.

Today, there were more than 20 entries, with the Navajo Code Talkers sitting on a float to receive the heroes welcome they never had when World War II ended. American flags with placards of names from the Original 29 Navajo Code Talkers lined Morgan Boulevard.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez marched in the parade, shaking hands with spectators, talking with elders and accommodating photo opportunities along the route.

They walked alongside Navajo Code Talker and Iwo Jima survivor Thomas H. Begay, a Congressional Silver Medal recipient from Chichiltah, N.M.

The celebration continued at the Window Rock Park, under the shade of a white tent erected for the festivities. The smell of burning sage filled the

air and purified all who entered the tent.

The Ira Hayes American Legion Post No. 84 posted the colors and Miss Northern Navajo Teen, Alexandria Holiday, sang the National Anthem in Navajo.

During the welcome address, President Begaye, speaking in Navajo, said, "Thank you to the Navajo Code Talkers, they bring strength and resiliency to the Navajo people, including the leadership."

"You made this day! We designated this day for the Code Talkers," President Begaye said, which was welcomed with cheers and applause.

"How will we remember them? Where is the museum for the Navajo Code Talkers? It hasn't happened yet and we want a museum for the Navajo Talkers, we want them to see it in their day," President Begaye said.

Turning toward Sen. McCain, a veteran and formal Naval pilot, President Begaye said the Navajo Nation and the Navajo Code Talkers needed his support to fund construction of the museum.

"I want to give him a proposal from the Navajo Nation for Congress to do an appropriation to build this museum. I have it broken down to the last penny, the last cent," President Begaye said. "They fought for the United States flag, the United States of America.

"It is time for the leaders of

this country to put this money forward and build that museum to recognize our Code Talkers. Senator McCain, make it happen, make it happen," he said.

On July 28, 1982, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed August 14, 1982 as Navajo Code Talkers Day. It was the first time that such a day was designated to honor the proud Navajo Marines that were told to never speak of their service because the code was top secret.

Proclamation 4954 states, "The Navaho Nation, when called upon to serve the United States, contributed a precious commodity never before used in this way. In the midst of the fighting in the Pacific during World War II, a gallant group of men from the Navaho Nation utilized their language in coded form to help speed the Allied victory.

"Equipped with the only foolproof, unbreakable code in the history of warfare, the code talkers confused the enemy with an earful of sounds never before heard by code experts. The dedication and unswerving devotion to duty shown by the men of the Navaho Nation in serving as radio code talkers in the Marine Corps during World War II should serve as a fine example for all Americans."

The Navajo Code Talkers continue protecting the legacy and strength of Dine' bizaad, the Navajo language, which ended the war in the Pacific more than 70 years ago