



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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President Shelly cuts ribbon to open new Shiprock Youth Center



President Shelly provided the keynote address for the Shiprock Youth Center before the obligatory ribbon cutting ceremony. (Photo by Michele Morris)

SHIPROCK, N.M.—It’s for the kids.

This morning, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly attended the grand opening of the Shiprock Youth Center and snipped the ribbon to officially open the spacious facility to the general public.

On March 6, 2013, President Shelly broke ground for the new youth center. The grand opening comes almost two years to the day.

“Our Navajo kids need opportunities to do something constructive with their time. This new facility will give them the opportunity to play sports and have a safe and sanitary place to meet,” President Shelly said.

The \$6.6 million facility was funded by the U.S. Department

of Housing and Urban Development. Measuring 22,000 square feet, the center features rooms for art, games, learning, technology, media and the open ceiling gym.

The new facility is a welcome distraction for Navajo kids seeking recreational activities that don’t involve drug or alcohol abuse.

President Shelly said the war against drugs and alcohol on the Navajo Nation is a daily challenge.

“We need to teach our children about the dangers of these addictive lifestyles,” he said.

The new multipurpose building goes a long way toward addressing those dangers, in addition to replacing the

dilapidated old facility, which is more than 50 years old.

Our kids are the future leaders of tomorrow, the president said, adding that more youth centers like the one in Shiprock need to be constructed at chapters across the Navajo Nation.

“First Lady and I have dedicated our lives to protecting Navajo children,” President Shelly said. “It started at our home with our kids and grandkids.

“Our homes are the first learning centers for our kids,” he added.

Thanking the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development, Navajo Housing Authority, Division of Dine’ Education and the Office of Dine Youth, President Shelly said it

was a collaborative effort that made the project a reality.

Design and Engineering Services worked with Dyron Murphy for the architecture and design. Oakland-Arviso provided the construction.

President Shelly said the 2014 presidential election taught the Navajo people the most important lesson of all – the preservation of self-identity.

“(The election) taught us the importance of preserving our Navajo language and culture. I have great hope that this new facility will help us preserve those elements in our lives,” he said.