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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vice President Nez Visits Iyanbito Chapter for Motor Grader Celebration



Left to right, Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon, Councilman Edmund Yazzie, Vice President Jonathan Nez, and Sen. George Munoz await delivery of the motor grader.

IYANBITO, N.M.— Community members, tribal leaders, state lawmakers and elders gathered at Iyanbito Chapter House on March 11 to celebrate the delivery of a new motor grader.

The Caterpillar Model 120M2 Motor Grader was shipped on a diesel tractor-trailer from Little Rock, Ark. to Farmington, N.M. before finally reaching its destination in Iyanbito.

“We have been waiting for over three years for this day to arrive,” exclaimed Jacynthia Nachin, community services coordinator for the chapter.

She said there is already a waiting list of more than 70 families that need the dirt roads leading to their homes graded.

The motor grader cost \$206,851 and was paid by funding from capital outlay resources from N.M. and funds from Iyanbito Chapter.

The crowd gathered around the tractor-trailer as chains holding the machinery in place were disconnected one by one. Finally, the motor grader was driven off the trailer and parked in the dirt for the traditional blessing ceremony.

Navajo medicine man Henry A. Yazzie provided the blessing ceremony, including songs and prayers for safe use of the heavy equipment and successful grading of community roads.

At the conclusion of his prayer, Navajo elders stood up to sprinkle corn pollen on the motor grader and offer prayers of their own.

For most communities across the country, delivery of new heavy equipment would be just another daily activity. But not for the Navajo chapter of Iyanbito, located near the Continental Divide and nestled near the majestic red rocks of this area.

“This is a good example of a partnership between two lawmakers who have the authority to recommend state dollars and one of our Navajo chapters,” said Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez.

The fact that the chapter contributed funds, including in-kind contributions in the form of equipment research, request for proposals and bidding from Navajo Division of Transportation, demonstrates empowerment and cooperation, he said.

“There’s true partnership here, we’re not just wanting the equipment to be given to us,” Vice President Nez said in reference to Gov. Susana Martinez’s decision earlier in the week to veto funding in House Bill 219 for Navajo Nation infrastructure projects.

Two members of the N.M. Legislature worked together to secure funding for purchase of the new heavy equipment for Iyanbito Chapter.

Sen. George Munoz, D-Dist. 4, agreed with Vice President Nez that the new motor grader was a successful use of state capital outlay funds to help rural N.M.

“(Gov. Martinez) doesn’t really understand that people out here are still hauling water and that these capital outlay resources are so vital to people,” Munoz said.

His colleague in the House was more outspoken about the governor’s reasoning.

Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon, D-Dist. 6, said the governor’s decision to veto capital outlay

and Tribal Infrastructure Funds from the Navajo Nation was unfair and done out of vengeance.

In a world where the governor spends \$25,000 for a coffeemaker and she vetoes \$90,000 for bathroom additions for Navajo communities, it just doesn’t make any sense, he noted.

“Her lifestyle is such that she has no idea how we and our constituents live. It is totally unfair and it is wrong,” Alcon said.

Navajo Nation Councilman Edmund Yazzie was thankful for the new motor grader and said it would be useful for clearing snowy roads and for maintenance of dirt roads in the chapter area.

“Not all of our roads are paved, so the need is there. We don’t have the luxury of people who live in the city and metropolitan areas,” Yazzie said. “I’d like to invite Gov. Martinez to visit our chapter.”

The new Caterpillar Model 120M2 Motor Grader’s main capability is road repair and improvement.

In the winter, it is useful for snow removal on roads. It has an average lifespan of 20,000 hours and Iyanbito Chapter residents are committed to its maintenance and upkeep.

For one Navajo community in northwest N.M., the new motor grader is a quality of life improvement that will benefit hundreds of families in the area, the intent and purpose of capital outlay dollars from the state. ☺