



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Navajo Nation Board of Education members take oath of office



PHOTO: (Front row) Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, current Navajo Nation Board of Education Vice Chair Priscilla Manuelito, Board of Education new members Emerson John, Dr. Pauletta J. White, Spencer J. Willie, Dr. Henry Fowler, Andrea K. Thomas, Joan Benally, and Navajo Nation Associate Justice Eleanor Shirley. (Back row) Health, Education, and Human Services Committee members.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Wednesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez joined the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee as Navajo Nation Associate Justice Eleanor Shirley administered the oath of office for six new Navajo Nation Board of Education members, during a ceremony held in the Navajo Nation Council Chamber in Window Rock, Ariz.

President Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer appointed each of the six members, which were then confirmed by the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee. The six new members will fill the 11-member board, which also includes five elected members from each Navajo agency – marking the first time the board has had full membership in many years.

President Nez spoke to the new board members about the importance of being accountable, maintaining integrity, and honoring the oath to serve our students and schools.

“Work hard for our children, our future, but also maintain your accountability to your people, to our kids, and all those that you will serve,” stated President Nez.

The six new Navajo Board of Education members are:

Dr. Pauletta J. White has served in the classroom in several capacities including a teacher, guidance counselor, and administrator for 34 years in the public school system. She is currently the Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services with Gallup McKinley County School overseeing the departments of special education, Indian education, English, bilingual education, counseling, libraries, and home school liaisons. Dr. White will serve a six-year term as the school administration representative on the board.

Andrea K. Thomas is a 5th grade teacher at Mesa Elementary in Shiprock, New Mexico and has over five years of teaching and managing experience in the classroom. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in elementary education from the University of New Mexico and serves on the New Mexico Teacher Leader Network and the New Mexico Teacher Evaluation Task Force. She will serve a six-year term as the teacher representative on the board.

Emerson John currently serves as a Culture Liaison Specialist at Tséhootsooí Medical Center in Ft. Defiance, Arizona and previously served as a traditional coordinator at the Navajo Nation Division of Behavioral Health Services. He is also a member of the Diné Hataafi Association and certified as a Navajo practitioner. He will serve a six-year term as one of two traditional Navajo culture representatives on the board.

Joan Benally is a mother and grandmother who currently teaches social studies to 7th and 8th graders at Kayenta Boarding School. She has worked at the school in various capacities over the last 10 years. She earned a degree in education from Northern Arizona University and is currently pursuing a master's degree from NAU as well. She will serve a six-year term as one of two parent representatives on the board.

Spencer J. Willie serves as a project manager for Tribal-D, Inc. software company that serves tribal governments and organizations. He also has extensive experience in government relations and previously worked with Navajo Housing Authority, Navajo Nation Head Start, and Rough Rock Community School. He has a Master's in Public Administration and a Bachelor's of Science in Political Science from Southern Utah University. He will serve a six-year term as one of two parent representatives on the board.

Dr. Henry Fowler currently serves as the Dean of Graduate Studies at Navajo Technical University (NTU). Among his extensive professional experience, he previously served as the chair of Undergraduate Diné Studies at NTU, chair of Math/Physics/Technology at Diné College and Dean of Faculty, and as the vice chair of the Navajo Nation Commission on Navajo Government Development. He earned a doctorate degree in education from Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, CA, a Master's in Education from Northern Arizona University (NAU), and a Bachelor of Science in secondary math education also from NAU. He will serve a six-year term as one of two traditional Navajo culture representatives on the board.

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