



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Nez-Lizer move forward with assisted-living facility for elderly



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, First Lady Phefelia Nez, Council Delegate Jimmy Yellowhair, Miss Navajo Nation Shaandiin Parrish, and Navajo Nation Division of Social Services Executive Director Deannah Neswood-Gishey with officials from Whippoorwill Chapter and Navajo Housing Authority during a signing ceremony in Window Rock, Ariz. on Feb. 26, 2020.

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez was joined by First Lady Phefelia Nez, Council Delegate Jimmy Yellowhair, Whippoorwill Chapter officials, Miss Navajo Nation Shaandiin Parrish, Navajo Housing Authority officials, and Navajo Nation Division of Social Services Executive Director Deannah Neswood-Gishey, as he signed off on a master lease agreement on Wednesday, that will allow Navajo Housing Authority to access funds to construct an assisted-

living facility in the community of Whippoorwill, Ariz. that will benefit many Navajo elderly people.

“As Navajo people, we are taught to love and cherish our elders. When our grandparents reach an age where they require daily care, they should be able to remain closer to their families and loved ones rather than relying on facilities in border towns and beyond. As Navajo people, we have an obligation to care for our elders and that’s what we are doing by finalizing this lease agreement,” said President Nez.

The agreement allows Navajo Housing Authority to use nearly 20-acres of land in Whippoorwill to develop the facility. Council Delegate Jimmy Yellowhair, who represents the Whippoorwill Chapter as a member of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, credited local leaders and community members for pushing the project for many years.

According to Division of Social Services Executive Director Deannah Neswood-Gishey, the Nation expends an average of \$8.5 million annually for adult care services off of the Navajo Nation for Navajo people — the majority of which are elderly people. She added that 90-percent of referrals for group homes or residential treatment, including specialized medical or nursing facilities, are sent outside of the Nation and that all individuals requiring hospice care are also sent to facilities off of the Navajo Nation.

President Nez said his administration is working to change those statistics by developing assisted-living and nursing care homes in Navajo communities to make it easier for Navajo families and to retain more revenue for the Nation.

“T’áá hwó’ ajít’éego, or self-reliance and self-determination, is the teaching of our elders that we are striving to re-instill in our people and our communities. We have the ability within ourselves to take better care of our parents and our grandparents,” added President Nez.

Whippoorwill Chapter Secretary-Treasurer Peter Sage thanked President Nez for supporting the lease agreement and spoke about the need for local leaders to support elderly people. He added that he is a caretaker for his 85-year-old mother who continues to live in her home.

“Today is one of the most wonderful days we have had, to help our elderly people in our communities,” said Sage. “Our need is there and I feel like it is our responsibility to address the problems in our communities.”

Whippoorwill is one of several sites on the Navajo Nation that the Nez-Lizer Administration has identified for possible assisted-living and nursing care facilities. The development of these sites remains a top priority for President Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer.

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