



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., featured on cover of AZ Business magazine, story about Navajo economy

Can Joe Shirley save the Navajo economy, magazine asks?

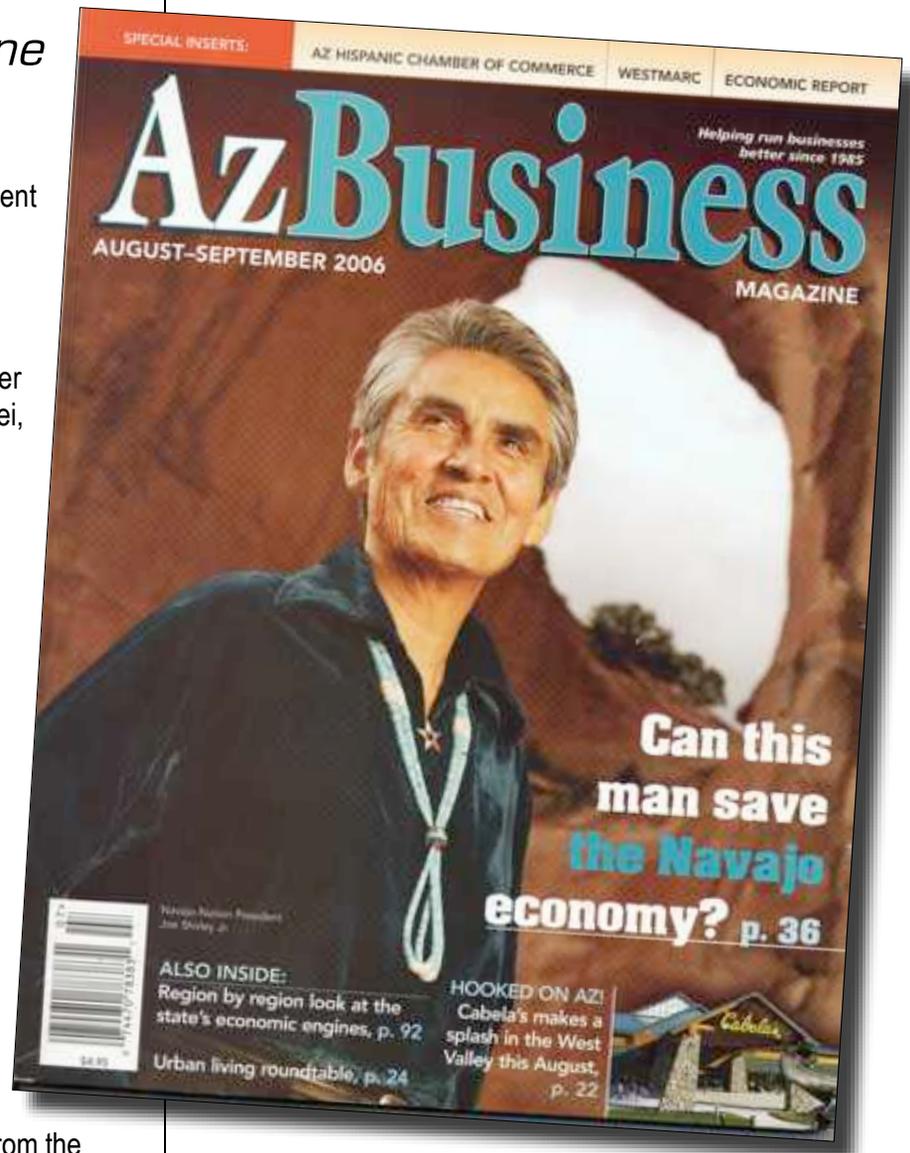
WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., standing before the renowned Window Rock, is featured on the cover of this month's issue of AZ Business Magazine.

The cover story, written by Managing Editor Peter O'Dowd, and photographed by Cassandra Tomei, is titled "Can Joe Shirley Save the Navajo Economy; A president and the window to his Nation's Future."

"We want businesses to come to the Navajo Nation, to make a lot of money here," President Shirley said regarding the article. "When a business makes money on Navajo, the Navajo people make money. The whole idea is to turn that buck over, and that's the key to developing any economy."

The story examines the successes and challenges the Navajo Nation has faced for decades in trying to develop its own economy. Principle among these is the continual flow of cash off the Nation to bordertown businesses.

"On the busiest afternoons," writes Mr. O'Dowd, "a steady line of automobiles snakes from the center of quiet Window Rock, the Navajo capital, to Gallup's commerce-laden main street. To some who worry about the state of the Navajo economy, the daily exodus is summarized by that single bill jutting from the hitchhiker's hand – just one more dollar, among millions, sucked from the reservation."



Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., is featured on the August issue cover of AZ Business Magazine and in an article that takes a look at the Navajo economy, the struggles it faces and the steps President Shirley has taken to turn it around.

Patrick Sandoval, chief of staff in the Office of the President and Vice President, describes the Navajo economy as hemorrhaging dollars.

He estimates that \$2.75 billion circulate through the Navajo Nation annually and that 85 percent of it leaves.

He says this is the reason President Shirley issued an executive order in December 2004 to have all executive branch meetings held on the Navajo Nation in order to keep dollars here.

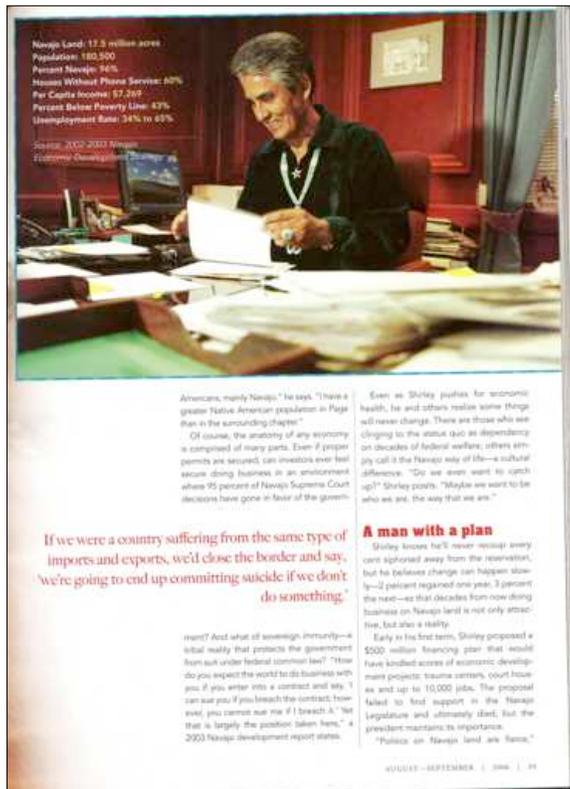
The article also points out Navajo success stories to bolster its economy, such as approval of gaming by Navajo voters and the President's initiative to get it on a fast track. Gaming is estimated to bring in \$100 million a year in revenue.

Also on the list is the planned Desert Rock Energy Project, which includes the construction of a \$2.5 billion, clean coal technology power plant. Not only is this the largest economic development project in Native America but it is the cleanest technology available and will use a tenth of the water used in conventional plants. The Desert Rock plant is estimated to bring in \$37 million to the Nation.

The article also notes the recent elimination of the Bureau of Indian Affairs from the business site leasing process. Before that, some businesses have had to wait as long as three years to have their land site appraised before a lease can be issued.

The story reports that the BIA's business site leasing process has been seen as the most formidable barrier to Navajo economic development.

"Because the federal government holds 17 million acres of Navajo land in trust, applications for business development must pass a series of stringent requirements: archeological clearance, appraisals, environmental assessments and legal surveys," Mr. O'Dowd writes. Speaking before the Navajo Nation Council in 1996, Sen. John McCain said, 'It takes three to five years to get the governmental approvals necessary to open a dry-cleaning shop in Window Rock. The same approvals can be obtained in Flagstaff in just three days.'"



"A man with a plan" describes President Shirley's and the Navajo Nation's economic development initiatives of the last three and a half years.

The article also quotes University of Colorado law professor Charles Wilkinson, who specializes in Native American issues.

"The business-lease approval situation is a vestige of the old-style, wet-blanket presence of the BIA," Prof. Wilkinson says. "It's just a bureaucracy that grew over the years and much more than most bureaucracies. It was stultifying."

The article also discusses President Shirley's \$500 million bond initiative which would build projects for all 110 Navajo chapters. The CIP was not considered by the Navajo Nation Council but the President says he plans to pursue it should he wins a second term in office, first by asking the federal government for a \$500 million interest-free loan.

To view the AZBusiness magazine article online, go to www.azbusinessmagazine.com/azb/AS06/as06_cs.html

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