

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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FIRST FEDERAL CRIMINAL TRIAL HELD ON NAVAJO NATION  
BEGAN TODAY IN SHIPROCK DISTRICT COURT

SHIPROCK, N.M. The first federal criminal trial ever to be held on the Navajo Nation began today in the Shiprock District Court.

Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., who attended the trial during the morning, said he felt an overwhelming sense of history in the making.

<sup>1</sup>It's awe-inspiring to know a federal court judge thinks enough of the Navajo people to hold a criminal trial here,<sup>2</sup> President Shirley said. <sup>3</sup>While what's occurring is unfortunate for the participants, this is an historic moment for the Navajo Nation and the judicial process.<sup>2</sup>

Presiding over the trial is New Mexico Federal District Chief Judge Martha Vazquez of Santa Fe. Judge Vazquez and President met twice this fall to discuss the high rates of incarcerations among Navajo defendants. In the course of the discussions, President Shirley recommended holding court on Navajoland.

Arrangements were made through the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch to use the Shiprock District Court.

The trial involves an assault with a knife by one Navajo man on another Navajo man on July 22, 2004.

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