



**JOE SHIRLEY, JR.**  
*President*

**FRANK J. DAYISH, JR.**  
*Vice-President*

## THE NAVAJO NATION

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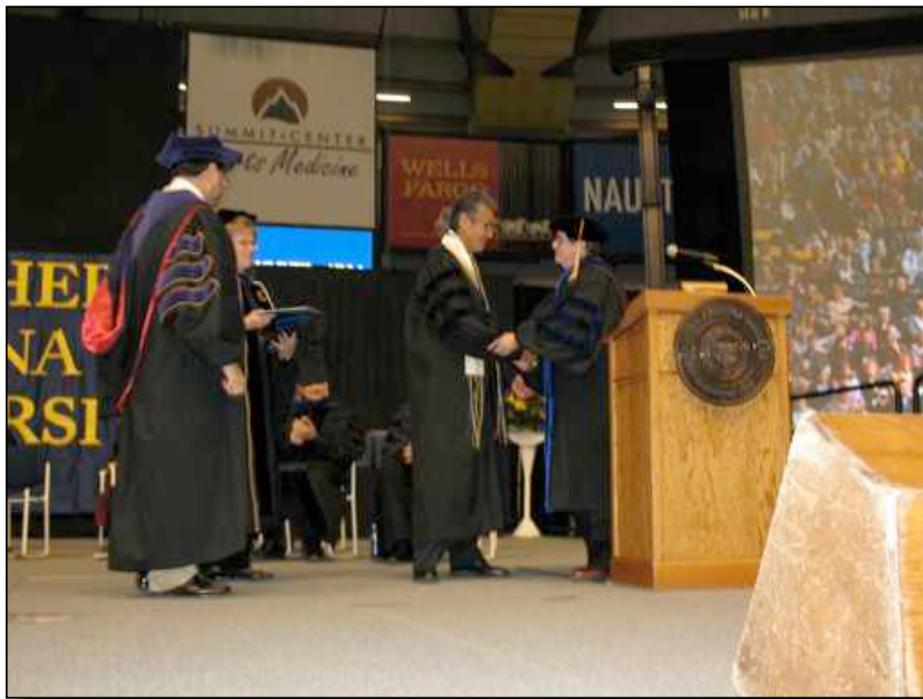
### Northern Arizona University confers honorary doctorate upon Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr.

**FLAGSTAFF, Ariz.** – Before an audience of several thousand parents, family and friends of new graduates, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree during Northern Arizona University's fall 2005 commencement exercises here Friday.

As the ceremony began, NAU President John Haeger introduced President Shirley as "an outstanding individual whose accomplishments, achievements and contributions warrant special recognition from the academic community of Northern Arizona University."

"Northern Arizona University recognizes his highest attainment of professional achievement by bestowing upon him an honorary doctoral degree," President Haeger said, noting that President Shirley was beginning his 38th year of public service.

Next, Liz Grobsmith, provost and vice president for academic affairs, and Regent Ernest Calderón placed the blue and gold hood over President Shirley's head and President Haeger presented him with his degree. President Shirley also wore a white satin sash from the Native American students of NAU.



**President Shirley is congratulated by NAU President John Haeger upon presentation of an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters at NAU's Fall 2005 commencement ceremony at the J. Walkup Skydome Dec. 16.**

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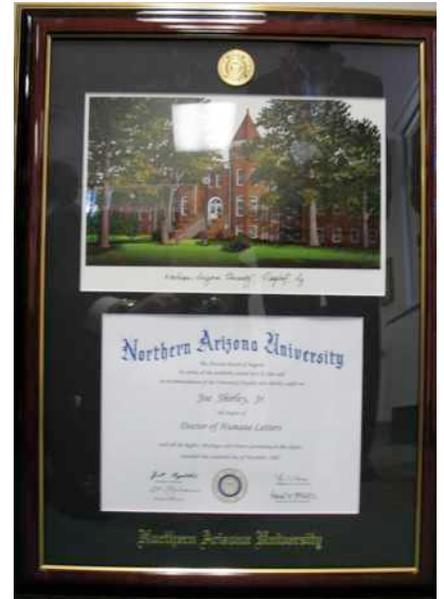
In his remarks, President Shirley said receiving the honorary degree was significant to him and his wife, First Lady Vikki Shirley, an NAU graduate, because their late daughter, Tona Vee Shirley-Paymella, was a 1997 NAU graduate. She was working on her Master's degree at NAU when she was killed by a drunk driver two days after Thanksgiving Day 2001.

The President, who holds a Master's degree in social work from Arizona State University, told the graduates that a degree from a university can mean independence and standing on one's own feet.

"If one is independent, one can look any man or woman in the eye," he said. "One does not have to shy away from anyone or anything."

He said that with a college degree, the opportunity to help millions and make the world a better place was within their grasp.

He said having knowledge means living a fuller and more rewarding life, leading to more laughter and enjoyment.



"For me, I have found out that time does have wings," he said. "You need to stay focused and continue to accomplish.

You already have only 492 months left before you retire from the workforce at age 65, and you have not even found a job yet."

**NAU President John Haeger presented President Shirley with a beautiful framed degree with a painting of the original Northern Arizona University building during a reception in President Shirley's honor.**

President Shirley has made education his Administration's top priority. Earlier this year, the Navajo Nation Council approved the Diné Sovereignty in Education Act, which amends the Navajo Nation's education code.

Among the changes is the creation of the Diné Department of Education, a Navajo Nation Board of Education and the implementation of Navajo language, culture and history in the curricula on Navajo Nation schools.

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**NAU President John Haeger, First Lady Vikki Shirley, an NAU graduate and President Shirley before the commencement ceremony begins.**