



JOE SHIRLEY, JR.
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THE NAVAJO NATION

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Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., calls San Francisco Peaks ruling extension of 1800s policy of extermination of Native people

Pledges to continue efforts to save Dook'o'osliid from further development, desecration

WINSLOW, Ariz. – In some of his strongest sentiments to date, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., has equated a U.S. district judge's recent decision regarding the San Francisco Peaks to the federal extermination policies of the late 19th Century.

President Shirley said that to Navajos and other Native Americans, U.S. District Judge Paul Rosenblatt's ruling to allow expansion of the Arizona Snowbowl ski area and the use of reclaimed effluent to make artificial snow harkens back to the policies of U.S. President Andrew Jackson.

Those policies led to the removal of Creek, Cherokee and Choctaw tribes from their aboriginal homelands, freeing millions of acres for the occupation and development by non-Natives who coveted the land. Jackson is credited with pushing the Indian Removal Act through Congress in 1830. The Navajos were subjected to forced removal beginning in 1863 and were kept in captivity until 1868. Thousands died en route and in captivity.

Because Native people refused, resisted or fought to remain on their lands – unsuccessfully trying to use the court system to help themselves – they were deemed savage, uncivilized or expendable.

President Shirley made his comments following the showing of the documentary film "The Snowbowl Effect" by Klee Benally at the La Posada Hotel here on Saturday. He said the federal government's policies and actions were reflected in the saying of the time, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian."



Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., and First Lady Vikki Shirley meet Hopi Tribal Vice Chairman Todd D. Honyaoma, Sr., at the La Posada Hotel in Winslow. They attended the showing of "The Snowbowl Effect," a documentary film by Klee Benally of the Save The Peaks Coalition.

"It's really unfortunate that a government respected around the world, trying to spread freedom around the world, to have a policy like that," he said. "If you desecrate and destroy the peaks, you're doing away with a way of life. When is that going to be understood? That's killing Native American nations. That's killing us."

Dr. Shirley said Judge Rosenblatt's decision is the third recent one to go against 13 tribes that have repeatedly expressed the sacred nature of the mountain to government officials. The first decision against the tribes came March 8, 2005, when Coconino National Forest Supervisor Nora Rasure approved the Snowbowl plan. The second decision occurred June 9, 2005, when Southwestern Regional Forester Harv Forsgren of the U.S. Forest Service in Albuquerque upheld Ms. Rasure's decision.

"When we're talking about the San Francisco Peaks, that's our essence, and that essence is the whole of me," Dr. Shirley said. "It's my mind, my heart. It's what identifies me. It's what makes me a Diné person."

President Shirley's concerns were echoed by Hopi Tribal Vice Chairman Todd D. Honyaoma, Sr. He said the court ruling was especially disappointing because it came the night his clan was beginning kachina dances.

"It really hurt, what that judge has done," the Vice Chairman said. "Money is what they're basing that decision on. They never made a courtesy to come out to our reservation, sit down and tell us what's going on."

Vice Chairman Honyaoma agreed with President Shirley's call to have tribes unite with a single voice.

"Not just in Arizona but throughout the U.S.," he said. "We are the caretakers. Let's all get together. Forget about other issues, political issues, and challenge what has happened. We will appeal this decision."

President Shirley said it hurt when the judge said there's no place that Native Americans go that could be called a shrine.

"What more need we say to be understood?" the President said. "The whole of the San Francisco Peaks is our mother. The whole of it is a shrine and we go there all the time."

He said he believes the mentality that would create policies and arrive at legal judgments that damage, desecrate or destroy Native culture is very much in evidence.

"I'd sure like to have my children and their children and their children continue to be, the way the Creator created us," he said. "I continue to pray and hope that somewhere in there the higher powers will listen, will hear our plea. It hurts to know that there are those out there against sacred ways who worship money. I think this is what it's all about."

"It's very unfortunate that there are people like that out there," he said. "These are the ones who we are standing up against."

The President told the organizers of the showing, the Save The Peaks Coalition, that he supported their efforts and would do what he could to help them achieve their goals.

"As long as I'm President, I'll stand with you to the best of my ability."

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desecration at it's peak.



expansion
no "upgrade", no snowmaking on sacred ground.

RESPECT.
the San Francisco Peaks are sacred to 13 tribes.