



## THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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# Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., sworn in to second term, Navajo Vice President Ben Shelly takes his oath of office

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Under a brilliantly sunny sky Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., and Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly took their oaths of office as their wives, the Navajo Nation Council and five former Navajo Nation leaders looked on.

“This is so awesome, so inspiring, and I’m so glad to be part of the history that is being made today.”

Chief Justice Emeritus Tom Tso administered the oath of office to Vice President Shelly, and Chief Justice Herb Yazzie administered the oath to the members of the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council, the new members of the Navajo Nation Board of Education and Navajo Nation Board of election Supervisors.



*Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., waves to the crowd moments after taking his oath of office for his second term. AP Photo by Donovan Quintero*

Former Navajo Judge Evelyn Bradley administered the oath to President Shirley as First Lady Vikki Shirley held a family bible. President Shirley is the first Navajo president to be re-elected to the top Navajo office in 28 years.

Judge Bradley, who is now 89 years old, thanked former Navajo Nation President Peterson Zah for her appointment to the bench 20 years ago – 12 for the Navajo Nation, eight for the State of Arizona – and told the 6,000 people in attendance,

In his inaugural address, President Shirley recounted the struggle the Navajo people have faced since the mid-1800s with the first arrival of U.S. soldiers. He said the end to the dependency that was thrust upon them from that time is finally within reach of the Nation.

“Today, we, as a Nation, stand at a point where the independence we lost long ago is again within our sight,” he said. “Through time, we have grown tremendously in number. Our homeland is established and expanding. We have embraced

education. We have asserted our sovereign right to make our own laws and live by them, to seek the respect of other governments and receive it, and to confer with the leaders of other jurisdictions as equals and partners.”

“Within a few years, the Navajo Nation will see the result of all its planning and action in increased revenues and jobs,” the President said. “Through the financial independence that will come, our sovereignty will flourish, and our dependency will end.”

As the ceremony began, Kathryn C. Arviso sang the National Anthem in Navajo. The Chinle High School JROTC and Navajo veterans led by David F. Yazzie, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, posted the colors. President Shirley's father-in-law, Victor Begay, said the invocation.

The three-hour-long Inauguration ceremony included the President's and First Lady's children, Jacoby James and Jolan Victoria, singing the Navajo Nation Flag Song while Jacoby played a drum. The Navajo Nation Band performed several numbers to entertain the audience. Also performing on Native American flute was Travis Terry and Quintanya Claw. Singer/songwriter Jay Begaye performed an honor song.

As with previous inaugurations, the 30-by-30-foot Navajo rug, woven by 10 Navajo women from Chilchimbeto and known as "Big Sister," hung as background to the event.

Ervin Keeswood, Navajo Nation Council delegate from Tse Daa Kaan, N.M., and who was elected Speaker Pro Tem on Tuesday, presented the welcoming address.

President Shirley's 10-minute inaugural address contained four parts which discussed the history of the Navajo people from the time they made contact with U.S. soldiers, the loss of their independence, the promise of independence regained today, and the President's wish to see Navajos continue long into the future with the same perseverance that delivered them here today.

"One hundred sixty years ago, as the United States bridged a continent and laid claim to everything within two distant shores, Navajos were known as a proud, fierce and independent people," President Shirley said. "We were self-sufficient, raising and hunting all that sustained us, making all we used, traveling within our Four Sacred Mountains as we pleased, praying and healing ourselves as our ancestors and the Holy Ones had instructed us.

"We had aggressive enemies, fought many wars, but had never been conquered. When threatened, we defended ourselves, and our reputation as warriors – which we carry to this day – preceded us. Our greatest leaders, known both as warriors and peacemakers, come from that period in our history, and are remembered with reverence by our people today."



***Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly takes the oath of office while Mrs. Shelly holds their family bible.***

One of those leaders was the 83-year-old Narbona, the President said. Although the Navajo leader intended to negotiate peace with the more powerful "New Men," he was shot and killed when one of the soldiers under Col. John Washington's command claimed one of the Navajos was on a horse stolen from him. Seeing what was about to occur, the Navajos scattered, Col. Washington ordered his soldiers to fire their weapons, and when it was over seven Navajos, including the aged Narbona, had been killed.



***Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., and First Lady Vikki Shirley are surrounded by well-wishers following the Inauguration Ceremony on Tuesday.***



*Jacoby and Jolan Shirley sing the Navajo Nation flag song at their father's inauguration on Tuesday.*

"The peace Narbona sought would not come soon, but instead our people were plunged into 15 more years of fear and dread,

culminating in the holocaust of the Navajo people, and known to the world as The Long Walk," President Shirley said. "The independence we had always known, and always loved, had been torn from our lives. Even with the Treaty of 1868 and the return of our freedom, from the moment of our release from Fort Sumner, our independence was replaced with dependence."

Even after the Navajos were released from captivity in 1868, they suffered the historical trauma of the livestock reduction era, relocation, boarding school and land dispute issues, the President said.

"Although education was meant to improve our lives, we were told becoming doctors and lawyers was beyond our reach, and that we were better suited to manual labor because we were better with our hands than with our minds," he said. "Many of us here today remember being told as children that our language should never be spoken, that our culture was uncivilized, and that our spiritual beliefs are untrue."

Much has changed today, however, he said. Navajos attend colleges by the thousands, many receive advanced degrees, and high school students are winning many of the championships they compete for.

The President also noted that despite political differences, "there has always been more that unites us as Navajos than divides us."

"We may disagree on what is best," he said. "But beyond our differences, we are all Navajos. We all have clans. We all hold the same land sacred. We all respect those who came before and the teachings that they gave us. And we all feel the same emotion when we raise our voice to say, 'I am proud to be Navajo!'"

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