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## **NEWCOMB FIRST CHAPTER TO SIGN JPA WITH STATE OF NEW MEXICO**

The Newcomb Chapter President Thomas Joe Yazzie signed an historic joint powers agreement with New Mexico Department of Indian Affairs Secretary Bennie Shendo during a community celebration in Newcomb on March 29, 2006.

“We are here to learn and to witness the honorable leaders from the great State of New Mexico and the Newcomb certified Chapter make their marks to begin a new destiny together in answering the needs of the Newcomb Chapter,” Council delegate Edward V. Jim, Sr., said.

The Newcomb Chapter, as one of only five governance-certified Chapters, has now begun exercising its local authority by working directly with the state. The agreements that were signed were for the purchase of equipment such as a back hoe, trailer and truck - nearly \$200,000 worth of equipment.

Chapter manager Raymond Tsosie said that previously getting a joint powers agreement was a lengthy process as the agreement would have to go before the Navajo Nation Department of Justice, the Council’s Transportation and Community Development Committee and the Intergovernmental Relations Committee. This time, the agreements only had to be cleared by the Intergovernmental Relations Committee and the entire process less than a month.

Now funds can go directly to the Chapter from the state of New Mexico.

“We have been trying to educate the people that opportunities are there,” Tsosie said. “This is like a jammed door being opened. It’s autonomy at the Chapter level.”

Cabinet Secretary Shendo noted that while sovereignty can often seem like an abstract concept, events such as the joint powers agreement signing brought it into perspective.

“Newcomb will be a model for other Chapters in the state of New Mexico. With this signing it gives us a chance to work directly with the Chapter and be more efficient in how we utilize funds,” Shendo said. “It really means the Navajo Nation is exercising sovereignty. It means the Navajo Nation has given this Chapter authority to execute documents.”

Stanley Yazzie, from the Division of Community Development said that other Chapters should emulate Newcomb.

“These are some of the opportunities that other Chapters are missing out on,” Yazzie said.

Chapter members from the certified Chapters of the Navajo Nation were in attendance at the signing.

Before the signing, Kellywood Begay, Sheepsprings Chapter President, sang a Nataanii song, as past Navajo leaders did before the signing of the Treaty of 1868.

Jim said that the Newcomb Chapter was certified as a Chapter in 1984. It became governance-certified in June 2004. The Chapter is now preparing for its community-based land use plan to be certified by the Council’s Transportation and Community Development Committee.

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