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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Health and Social Services Committee members touched by Navajo elders at Winslow Campus of Care

WINSLOW, Ariz. — Davis Filfred, (Mexican Water/Aneth/Red Mesa) said tears came to each of his fellow Health and Social Services committee members eyes, and everyone's hearts were touched when the group visited Navajo elders at the Winslow Campus of Care Thursday, March 22.

Filfred added that the visit prompted him to think about building Navajo Nation assisted-living nursing homes for Navajo elders.

"My thoughts are with them, the masanii (grandmothers) and cheii (grandfathers)," Filfred said, adding that the afternoon visit to the Navajo elders was emotional and reminded each of the committee members to embrace the Navajo elders. "We can build out own facility within our four sacred mountains. With our long-term and short-term planning, we need to build facilities for our elders, our grandmothers and grandfathers."

"Let's carry this experience as we move on and make decisions," said Thomas Walker, Health and Social Services Committee Chairperson. "The people who taught us are here in this facility. This visit is a humanitarian gesture, and we are feeling it, it's moving and it's powerful."

Walker said he observed that there's 1,000 years of Navajo wisdom and teachings in the Navajo elders at the Winslow Campus of Care which is a 120-bed facility family-operated business, and has been a part of the Winslow Community for more than 30 years.

Currently, the facility has 115 residents, according to Patsey Herrera, Dietary Manager. A majority of the elder residents are Navajo Nation members.

Rocshelle Yazzie, Winslow Campus of Care Social Services Director, said that there are about 90 percent Navajo elders, eight percent are Hopi elders and two percent are other heritage such as Caucasian, Hispanic or Black.

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Alice Benally (Nahodishgish/Crownpoint), Vice-Chairperson of the Health and Social Services Committee, said she is “impressed” with the Winslow facility.

She added that the Winslow Campus of Care exceeded her mindset of what an assisted-living nursing home would like, and noted it’s exceptional cleanliness and sanitation.

“I spoke with an elder who is very articulate,” Walker said remembering the 87-year-old elder Navajo man vividly. “He’s here because of his physical limitations, it’s his hip.”

Filfred shared animatedly with the committee members that one feisty Navajo elder man was asking for his Navajo leadership members especially Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr.

Herman R. Morris (Naschitti/Tohatchi), Health and Social Services committee member, demonstrated his reverence for the Navajo traditional *K’e* (Positive relationships) philosophy and initiated shaking hands with the numerous Navajo elders whose ages range from mid-60 to 97-years-old as other committee members followed during the visiting session with the numerous Navajo elders in the brightly-lit campus care dining room.

Walker encouraged Navajo Nation members to visit the Navajo elders at the Winslow facility, and said not to forget the Navajo elders.

Walker said he observed that, “there is genuine authentic care here at this facility, the *k’e*, is here. It’s strong and authentic.”

Walker said he believes that when the Navajo Nation begins the process of building its own assisted-living nursing homes for Navajo elders that the Nation should exceed the Winslow facility’s services.

“We should raise the standard of care,” Walker said.

Toni Miller, a Title 19 Liaison from the Social Services Division, said there is only nursing home on the Navajo Nation located in Chinle, Ariz. Miller accompanied the committee members on the tour along with Division of Social Services licensed-clinical social worker with Quality Assurance, Genevieve Nez-Holona.

Morris said in the Navajo language that, “we, children, need to take care of our elders.”

The Health and Social Services Committee consist of Chairperson Walker representing At-Large; Vice-Chairperson Benally representing At-Large; Harry Claw (Chinle) representing Chinle Agency; Harry Hubbard, Eastern Agency; Jerry Freddie (Dilkon/Teesto) representing Fort Defiance Agency; Evelyn J. Acothley (Bodayway-Gap/Coppermine/Cameron) representing Western Agency; Filfred representing Nothern Agency and Morris representing At-Large.