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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The Fourth Annual Navajo Treaty Day Celebration Honors the Navajo Ancestors and Way of Life at 7:30 a.m. June 14, 2007

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – During the late 1860s, life for the Navajo ancestors on the sparse plains in Fort Sumner (Hwééldí), N.M. was miserable and tragic.

For Navajo leader, Chief Manuelito, life there filled him with shame and sorrow to see his once-strong Navajo people thin and weak.

Chief Manuelito and the Navajo ancestors endured four years of imprisonment at Hwééldí beginning in 1863.

Chief Manuelito and the other prominent Navajo leaders, Barboncito, Armijo, Delgado as well as 25 more headsmen signed on June 1 the Treaty of 1868.

It is reported that more than 2,000 Navajo ancestors died at Hwééldí from starvation, disease and imprisonment. About 7,000 Navajos returned to Navajo Territory from Hwééldí during the summer of 1868.

To celebrate life and the strength of the Navajo ancestors, the Eddie McCarthy, the Fourth Annual Navajo Treaty Day Celebration at Mariano Lake Chapter Planning Committee Chairperson, said the celebration is scheduled for 7:30 a.m. Thursday, June 14, 2007 at the Mariano Lake Chapter House in Mariano Lake, N.M.

McCarthy said the event is free and for the Navajo people, sheep herders, family members and community members.

The Opening Ceremony is scheduled for 7:30 a.m. and is a Health Fun Walk that is sponsored by the Department of Youth. The Master of Ceremony is Ernest Begay.

McCarthy who was born in nearby Smith Lake, N.M. will deliver the welcome address.

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Council delegate and Mariano Lake native Young Jeff Tom (Mariano Lake/Smith Lake) will introduce visiting dignitaries, Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) and Vice-President Ben Shelly.

Rita Todachine will introduce the visiting royalty.

A special highlight of the celebration is the arrival of a Pony Express Rider at 10 a.m. The Pony Express Rider is the deliverance of the Proclamation Letter that is a re-enactment of the presentation of the Treaty of 1868 to the Navajo ancestors.

The Honorable Speaker Morgan will read the Proclamation Letter in the Navajo language, and Grace E. Laurence will read the Proclamation Letter in the English language.

Honorable Vice-President Ben Shelly is scheduled to be a guest speaker at 10:15 a.m.

"This is very important because we remember what the Navajo ancestors suffered," Young Jeff Tom said, adding that Navajo living are the reason the Navajo ancestors lived. "Today, we have life; we have our grazing and our livestock."

Other activities such as a horse shoe tournament, exhibits, food booths, arts and crafts, gourd dance, song and dance, live country music, motorcycle run and youth activities are scheduled to begin at 10:30 a.m. until 4 p.m.