President Shelly meets with Council to iron out letter of agreement

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—A Jan. 24 meeting between Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council at Quality Inn resulted in a letter of agreement that President Shelly remains in office until somebody was elected and installed into office.

The president signed the agreement along with delegates Kee Allen Begay, Seth Damon, Norman Begay, Mel Begay, Tom Chee, Amber Crotty, Davis Filfred, Tuchoney Slim, Raymond Smith, Otto Tso, Leonard Tsosie and Nelson Begay.

“What I hear from the people is, ‘Let’s get the election done.’ We need to continue working together to keep the Nation running,” President Shelly said.

Speaker Pro Tem Kee Allen Begay agreed with the president and said both branches need to work together to quickly have the election resolved. He said having leaders sit down and meet to discuss the issues is the way business should be conducted.

Once the floor was opened up for comments, Tsosie was the first to speak.

“If I don’t mind the agreement, it captures what we talked about. I ask the president to keep your door open to resolve this problem,” Tsosie said. “In defense of the council, we didn’t start this.”

He said it was two disgruntled former candidates running for the presidency that filed a lawsuit in court that started it.

“Council only came in to try and provide a solution,” he said.

Filfred said the agreement to keep President Shelly in office should be direct and simple.

“If we start adding on to it, it’s only going to make us look bad,” he said.

Begay thanked the president for promoting unity and coming to the table to work out the issue of the presidency. He said the president and former council needed to be thanked for bringing stability back to the Nation.

However, he cautioned against losing track of the budget and going on a spending spree that will be questioned by the public and council.

“If the expenditures are shared with us, that would be good,” he said.

Chee took a traditional approach and said the Navajo way must be embraced. He was leery about western education and asked why traditional values took the backseat to the western way of thinking.

“What convinced us to be educated? We were already educated. This (meeting) is a return to our values,” he said.

Basic teachings like listening to our elders, treating people with decency and Navajo kinship are slipping through the cracks, he maintained.

“We have a complete breakdown of values. When we move from Navajo to English (language), we lose sight of that. We become enculturated,” he said. “Let’s honor the Office of the President. The Legislative Branch. The Judicial Branch.”

Begay had respecting the president’s office in mind too and questioned why the meeting was taking place.

“I don’t like this agreement. He’s sworn in already. If we want the president to respect us, then by golly, we got to respect him too. That’s basically what K’e is. Let president do his job,” Begay said.

Tso said there are other more pressing needs by the people that need to be addressed aside from the presidency.

“People want new homes, firewood and jobs. Hozho’ and K’e are very sacred. We must have respect for one another,” he said. “The teachings come from our elders. I’m thankful to be sitting together because that’s working together.

Slim said the issue was bigger than any one person.

“This isn’t about us. Out there, our constituents have given us the responsibility of looking out for them. Our president is worried. He doesn’t want people attacking him,” Slim said. “We need to do this right way to appoint a leader.”

President Shelly thanked the council and said he will be in close communication with them. He said the OPVP spent seven percent of its FY 2015 budget for the first quarter and the office would be mindful of spending.

“I like what you’re doing: coming together like this, working together. I like what I hear,” President Shelly said.

The agreement stated, “In the spirit of K’e and in consideration of the fact that both parties believe in a stable Navajo Nation government, the parties agree to following goals:

“The parties agree that President Shelly will remain in the Office of the President until such time that there is an election so as to promote the stability of the Navajo Nation. Both parties agree to efficiently work towards an election for the President and Vice President to enable that process in whatever way possible.”

-30-
Navajo Nation begins drawdown of $1.2 billion Tronox settlement

President Shelly praised the drawdown of more than $1.2 billion for the cleanup of 50 abandoned uranium mine sites and a former uranium mill on the Navajo Nation. However he said more funds were needed. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—The Navajo Nation is finally receiving funds from the $5.15 billion Anadarko v. Tronox settlement. According to terms of the settlement, the U.S. EPA will receive $985 million for cleanup of 49 sites on the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Environmental Protection Agency is also receiving funding from the settlement, a total of $43 million. The initial drawdown from the settlement will be 60 percent, or $26.4 million, which will be deposited in the next 10 days. The remaining 40 percent will be paid after three months.

“These funds will go toward the cleanup of 50 abandoned uranium mines on the Navajo Nation. On Dec. 12, 2013, we announced that we prevailed in the bankruptcy case involving Anadarko Petroleum and Kerr-McGee Corporation,” said Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly.

Although we are receiving more than a billion dollars, much more is needed to address the 520 abandoned uranium mines on the Navajo Nation, he added.

“All funds resulting from this lawsuit are welcomed and long overdue,” President Shelly said.

The claims against Anadarko and Kerr-McGee involved cleanup for a number of former uranium mines and uranium processing site located in Cove, Ariz. and Shiprock, N.M. The Navajo Nation Department of Justice and Navajo EPA worked together to bring the settlement to a conclusion.

President Shelly became involved with the bankruptcy case when he was previously serving as vice president. During the previous administration, he met with Allison McFarlane, chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission about prioritizing cleanups on the Nation.

On Jan. 23, 2015, Stephen Etsitty announced that since an appeal was not filed with the presiding judges, the Navajo Nation would begin receiving settlement funds in the next several days. Etsitty is the executive director of Navajo EPA.

“I understand the initial amount we will receive is $26.4 million. This is 60 percent of the total amount we are set to receive,” Etsitty said. “The remaining 40 percent will come in a few more months to the Nation and U.S. EPA.”

Other claimants, including U.S. EPA, will also begin receiving funds from the settlement. U.S. EPA is set to receive approximately $600 million to cleanup 50 abandoned uranium mines on the Navajo Nation. In addition to the U.S. EPA, other claimants in the case included 22 states, four environmental response trusts, and a trust for a number of environmental and tort plaintiffs.

According to Etsitty, the $26.4 million will be wired to the Navajo EPA Hazardous Substances Fund. The fund is authorized by a fund management plan that was approved by the Budget and Finance Committee and the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act, he added.

On Jan. 23, the U.S. EPA issued a news release from Region 9 in San Francisco that stated the Anadarko and Kerr-McGee settlement was finalized and that funds are to be disbursed for cleanups around the country.

Jared Blumenfeld, U.S. EPA Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest, said communities from the Navajo Nation to Henderson, Nev. are finally getting funding needed to take critical steps toward cleaning up toxic legacies that pollute their environment.

“After decades of trying to avoid their environmental responsibilities, Anadarko is today paying billions of dollars to immediately fund these and other critical environmental cleanups,” Blumenfeld said.

The cleanup of radioactive waste remaining from cold war era Kerr-McGee mining operations will begin later in 2015, including the former uranium mill in Shiprock.

-30-
President Shelly meets with Congressional delegation, discusses ONHIR

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— On Jan. 24 and 25, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met a Congressional delegation in Window Rock to discuss the Office of Navajo Hopi Indian Relocation.

Congressional members of the U.S. House of Representatives representing the House Appropriations Committee and Subcommittees on the Interior and Environment traveled to Ariz. to meet with the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe.


Jodi Gillette, Senior Policy Advisor for Native American Affairs for the White House Domestic Policy Council joined the delegation. The federal delegation toured the Nahata Dzil community and families in Jeddito to see the firsthand results of relocation.

President Shelly explained the countless socio-economic disparities that resulted from lack of infrastructure and economic development. Before being relocated, many of the Navajo families were self-reliant and maintained a healthy lifestyle through livestock and farming.

However, relocation has disrupted that lifestyle and many entered into a modern world that they had no experience in.

“Our history is tied up in the land that you see,” President Shelly said. “The relocation of Navajos from land they lived on created traumatic ripples that continue to disrupt and destroy lives 41 years later.

“These people lost their homes, their heritage and their livelihood,” he added.

Still today, many families have not received compensation. Others, mostly elderly, are forced to go before ONHIR in Flagstaff and are often subject to interrogation to establish benefits. Far too often, these individuals are denied benefits and have to endure a review process to overturn the decision.

“This costly and unjust process puts added stress on our people and only increases the cost of relocation,” said the president.

For families that have not been relocated, the tremendous needs for infrastructure development and roads continue to dominate. Other considerations include the deteriorating school facilities, in spite of 2004 commitments by the federal government to replace 14 schools.

“The Little Singer Community School which you will see later today, is one of the last schools on the 2004 replacement school construction priority listing,” President Shelly said.

He noted that Navajo children learn better when traditional culture and language are supplant in their curriculum.

Although the two-day meeting and tour of the Navajo Nation was brief, President Shelly strongly advocated for the continued funding of ONHIR and recommended addressing the pitfalls of the accommodation agreement entered into by the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe.

He also shared issues impacting families in the former Bennett Freeze area, where time has stood still for more than four decades. Families in the impacted area continue to live without running water, roads and substandard housing.

“Some families are forced to live in camper shells. I hope the subcommittee has listened to our concerns and will provide us with a favorable outcome,” President Shelly said.
President Shelly delivers State of the Navajo Nation address in Navajo

Highlights spirit of cooperation between Executive and Legislative Branches

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— President Ben Shelly delivered the State of the Navajo Nation on Jan. 25, outlining significant accomplishments from the past quarter and providing a vision for the future.

Flanked by Vice President Rex Lee Jim and Chief of Staff Arbin Mitchell, the president delivered his address in Navajo and highlighted the partnership between the Executive and Legislative Branches that made the accomplishments possible.

He began by lauding the efforts between both branches to fund the remediation of Administration Building No. 1, which reopened in early Jan. Funding came from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance, indirect costs and carryover funding, which totaled more than $5.5 million for construction.

“Several tribal divisions and departments stepped up to the plate and housed our displaced employees until the building could be renovated,” President Shelly said.

He noted that the health and welfare of tribal employees was the primary concern and that renovations have already begun on Administrative Building No. 2, which was also shutdown due to black mold infestation. The president said construction was expected to begin by the spring of 2015.

President Shelly said he approved $8.3 million in supplemental funding for chapters on Jan. 6. The approval came after discussions with his legal counsel and the Office of Management and Budget.

“Our projects were not in compliance with the Appropriations Act, but we worked around that to approve the projects because of their importance to their respective chapters,” he said.

The president also mentioned that the Appropriations Act states that project funding will be approved only if they are listed on the five-year CIP plan, which was recently approved in the summer of 2014 after 14 years of limbo.

He said fiscal conservatism resulted in a $30 million surplus in the UUFB, which was in the red by $22 million when the Shelly-Jim administration took office.

“I loosened the purse strings,” President Shelly said.

$500,000 was approved for the Oljato Chapter to pay professional technical services for the architecture and design of their new multipurpose building. $5 million was approved for the Nahata Dzil shopping center. Tonahe-Red Lake Chapter was approved for $500,000 for their demolition project. Cameron Chapter received $180,120 to go toward their new multipurpose facility. Navajo Transit System will purchase a new bus with the $600,000 that was approved. And finally, more than $1.5 million was approved for elected officials to receive operating, planning and regular chapter meeting expenses.

President Shelly spoke of the repatriation mission to Paris, which was undertaken by Vice President Rex Lee Jim on Dec. 11, 2014. The purpose of the trip was for the return of sacred Yei Bi Chei masks that went up for auction by a private collector.

Members of the Navajo Human Rights Commission and the Navajo Nation Washington Office joined the vice president.

Seven masks were purchased at a cost of $9,000 by the Navajo delegation before they went on auction. The president said the action sent a message to the world that sacred cultural resources should not be sold and that they violate the human rights of indigenous people around the globe.

President Shelly said, “We are grateful for the efforts of the U.S. State Department, U.S. Embassy-Paris and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for their assistance in returning these traditional masks back to the Navajo Nation.
The president also spoke about a Dec. 8, 2014 town hall meeting in Gallup regarding the Gallup Detoxification Center. He said more funding was needed to address the alcoholism epidemic in the city.

In June 2013, the former Na’nízhozhi Center Inc. closed its doors after providing more than 20 years of service when funding dried up. Realizing the importance of the facility, the Navajo Nation invested funding and reopened it as Gallup Detox Center.

“To date, we have spent more than $1.6 million providing services,” President Shelly said. “Despite our partnership with the city, it is not enough to operate the facility and provide needed services.

“We are looking at more than $2 million annually that is needed,” he added.

The president also mentioned a House bill on Indian Energy that was introduced during the 113th Congress by Congressman Don Young, chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee.

“The bill proposed to streamline the federal bureaucratic process in energy development for large land base tribes,” President Shelly said.

After passing the House, the bill is now at the Senate for deliberation. The Navajo Nation Washington Office reported that the bill would be reintroduced in the 114th Congress. Another bill being monitored by the D.C. office is the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act, which proposes authorization of an eight-year trust asset demonstration project that would enable tribes to develop plans.

President Shelly also praised the enactment of the Navajo Department of Health and said it was a major step toward tribal self-determination because it allows the Navajo Nation to regulate healthcare on tribal lands.

“Our newly formed Navajo Department of Health will ensure the public health service needs are met through assessments, policy development and quality assurance,” he said.

While changes won’t happen overnight, the president said creation of the first tribally administered Medicaid agency was a possibility, after a recent feasibility study conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The president also mentioned a recent visit by members of the U.S. Congress to follow up with the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe on by the Office of the Inspector General. The report was on the status of the federal relocation program administered by the Office of Navajo Hopi Indian Relocation Program.

President Shelly said the federal government’s failed relocation program that was imposed on tribal members has resulted in dismal living conditions.

“We have many families without running water, electricity and unfinished homes. Others are still awaiting relocation,” he said.

The Navajo Nation encouraged the federal delegation to continue funding ONHIR and provide for adequate benefits to all families forced off their ancestral homelands more than 41 years ago.

President Shelly concluded that it is his responsibility to ensure continuity of government and direct services to the Navajo people, regardless of the political climate that exists.

“Vice President Jim and I stand prepared to continue providing stability for these government functions until a new president has been elected and installed into office,” President Shelly said.

The State of the Navajo Nation, as delivered by Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly, was accepted by the 23rd Navajo Nation Council by a vote of 20-0-4. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
THE STATE OF THE NAVAJO NATION
President Ben Shelly
and
Vice President Rex Lee Jim

The Executive Branch Report

Presented to the
23rd Navajo Nation Council
January 26, 2015
Mr. Speaker, members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, visitors, and my fellow Navajo people:

Yá’át’ée! Thank you for joining us today. Let’s welcome our new Navajo Nation Council for the start of the 2015 winter session. These leaders will join the long and distinguished list of leaders that gathered inside this historic chamber to create laws for the Navajo people.

Vice President Jim and I are very honored to join you here today. The Vice President and I are prepared to provide continuity of government.

**ADMINISTRATION BUILDING NO. 1 RENOVATIONS**

We are proud to announce that Administration Building No. 1 is open for business. Many of our displaced tribal employees are now back inside the renovated building and providing direct services to the Navajo people. They have endured many challenges over the past two years, as we worked with the Council to identify funding to begin construction.

Remediation began on Sept. 15, 2011, when black mold was discovered as the cause of the many health issues affecting tribal employees in the building. We had to close the building down immediately to begin remediation. Lack of maintenance resulted in water leaking into the walls and causing black mold.

Several tribal divisions and departments stepped up to the plate and housed our displaced employees until the building could be renovated. Funding from the UUFB, indirect cost and carryover funds were utilized to cover the more than $5.5 million in construction costs. We worked with our legislators in the Council to address this legacy issue that other administrations chose to ignore.

The health and welfare of our tribal employees was the primary concern. Renovations have already begun on Administration Building No. 2 and we anticipate construction to be in full swing by Spring 2015.

**APPROVAL OF $8.3 MILLION IN SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING**

On Jan. 6, I approved more than $8.3 million in supplemental funding for several chapter
projects. Some of these projects were not in compliance with the Appropriations Act, but we worked around that to approve the projects because of their importance to their respective chapters.

However, we must be clear here: all projects selected for funding must be in compliance with the Appropriations Act. Furthermore, they must also be listed on the five-year CIP plan that was approved last summer after 14 long years of waiting. The more than $30 million that was saved in the UUFB has allowed these supplemental funding requests to be funded.

$500,000 from the UUFB will go to the Oljato Chapter for professional technical services and architecture for the design of the new multipurpose building. $5 million will go to the Nahata Dzil Shopping Center. This was added as an amendment to the legislation. $500,000 will go to the Tonalea-Red Lake Chapter for professional technical services and demolition project.

Cameron Chapter will receive $180,120 from the UUFB for their multipurpose facility. $600,000 will go toward the purchase of a new bus for the Navajo Transit System. Finally, $1,559,250 from the UUFB will provide elected officials operating expenses, planning and regular chapter meetings.

The cost breakdown will provide district grazing officials $877,500. Farm boards will receive $483,750 and the Eastern Land Board will receive $198,000.

RETURN OF SACRED MASKS FROM PARIS
On Dec. 11, 2014, Vice President Rex Lee Jim left for Paris, France for the return of Navajo Yei Bi Chei masks that were put up for auction. A private collector put them up for auction through a Paris auction house.

Members of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission and a staff member of the Navajo Nation Washington Office joined the vice president for the return of these sacred masks. My staff from the Navajo Historic Preservation Department worked closely with the council’s Sacred Sites Task Force for the return of the masks.

Thankfully, the Navajo delegation was able to purchase the masks outright before they were auctioned. This action sent a message to the world that these sacred cultural resources are not for sale and that they violate the basic human rights of native peoples across the globe. HPD recently held a special blessing ceremony for the masks to bring things back into harmony.

We are grateful for the efforts of the U.S. State Department, U.S. Embassy-Paris, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for their assistance in returning these traditional masks back to the Navajo Nation.
GALLUP DETOXIFICATION CENTER
On Dec. 8, 2014, we met with Senator George Munoz and city leaders in Gallup to discuss the epidemic of alcoholism on the streets of the city. Specifically, we talked about the Gallup Detox Center, formerly known as Na’nizhoozhi Center, Inc. In June 2013, funding for NCI dried up and the responsibility to operate the facility fell squarely on the shoulders of the Navajo Nation.

We accepted the responsibility of helping the people suffering from alcoholism and began working with the center through the Navajo Department of Behavioral Services. After more than 20 years of service, NCI closed its doors and we opened the facility, the name changed to Gallup Detoxification Center. To date, we have spent more than $1.6 million providing services.

The city of Gallup contributed $320,000 to DBHS, bumping up the annual operating budget up to $1.6 million. Despite this joint effort, it is not nearly enough to operate the facility and provide needed services, including counseling and rehabilitation. Estimates from DBHS indicate that to provide that level of service, we are looking at more than $2 million annually.

In the late 1980s, I joined the senator’s father, Eddie Munoz, the former mayor of Gallup for his march on Santa Fe. We marched from Gallup to Santa Fe to bring awareness to the alcoholism issue and in the end, $400,000 in seed money was provided by the legislature to conduct a feasibility study for the detox center. Eventually, a $3 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation got the facility off the ground.

Today, the Gallup Detox Center averages about 2,400 people per month. We need help to address the revolving door effect for the center. This means medical detox services and increasing the 12-hour hold for clients to 72-hours for protective custody. Other issues include needed repairs for the HVAC system and an increased budget for protective custody, intervention, treatment, medical detox and aftercare treatment.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION
During the 113th Congress, Congressman Don Young, Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, introduced a house bill on Indian energy. The bill proposed to streamline the federal bureaucratic process in energy development on large land base tribes. It passed the House, and was in the Senate for deliberation. The time ran out for the 113th Congress. Our Navajo Nation Washington Office reports that the bill will be reintroduced in the 114th Congress, now under new leadership.

During the 113th Congress, some 142 standalone bills were introduced. Several of them were important to the Navajo Nation, yet the bill we were monitoring was the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act. This bill was introduced in both the House and the Senate. It proposed to
authorize an eight-year trust asset demonstration project to enable tribes to develop plans. It is our understanding that this bill will be reintroduced during this Congress. It is our strong recommendation to support this and the many other proposed bills during this new Congress.

NAVajo DEpArtment of heAlth SIgneD Into lAw
On Nov. 6, 2014, I enacted the Navajo Department of Health Act of 2014 and affirmed the Navajo Nation’s sovereignty in the process. This was a major step toward tribal self-determination because it allows us to regulate healthcare on the Navajo Nation. Many of the 638 contract organizations were against this legislation because it provides the Nation the authority to oversee their programs.

As a sovereign nation, there are certain essential governmental functions that we cannot give away to other sovereigns, entities and organizations. This authority to regulate and monitor healthcare programs within the Navajo Nation’s jurisdiction is one of them. Our newly formed Navajo Department of Health will ensure the public health service needs are met through assessments, policy development and quality assurance.

This is a long-term vision that we have for the Nation and all of these changes will not happen overnight. Instead, we must build capacity and hire new experts in policymaking and rulemaking. For the Navajo people, this means consultations and public hearings to ensure their voice is included in these new policies. We will work with tribal, state and federal healthcare providers to begin our next goal: creation of the first tribally administered Medicaid agency.

A recent study conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services concluded that it is feasible for the Navajo Nation to begin operating its own Medicaid agency. The potential for the future of our healthcare is tremendous, thanks to the enactment of the Navajo Department of Health. A generation from now, our kids will realize the great investment that was made for the future of the Nation.

NAVAJO-HOPI INDIAIn RELOCATION OFFICE
Over the weekend, we had a historic visit from members of the U.S. Congress, and we are grateful that the House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and related agencies came to the Navajo Nation.

The purpose of their trip was to follow up with the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe as to the Office of the Inspector General report that was requested by the subcommittee on the status of the federal relocation program administered by the Office of Navajo Hopi Indian Relocation Program.

Jodi Gillette, Senior Policy Advisor at the White House joined the Congressional delegation.
They toured the Nahata Dzil community and families in Jeddito. The Inspector General has asked for our comments to the recommendation of ONHIR’s fate.

The federal government imposed a failed relocation program that has many of our families still without running water, electricity, and unfinished relocation homes. Meanwhile, many of our families are still waiting relocation. Therefore, the message was that the Navajo Nation urges the subcommittee to continue funding ONHIR and finish providing adequate benefits and relocation to all those families who were forced off their ancestral land more than 41 years ago.

The accommodation agreement was entered into between the Hopi Tribe and Navajo Nation. A federal mediator approved it and the subcommittee also addressed the courts. There are pitfalls relating to the agreement that impact Navajo families who signed it. The agreement ends in the year 2071. There are no accommodations provided for them, their life is substandard, there is no infrastructure, no housing and their main livelihood, their livestock, is impounded without proper notice and due process of law.

Other issues shared with the subcommittee were the ongoing impacts of the Bennett Freeze area. The families impacted live without running water, power lines, or roads. Their homes are substandard. Some are never able to construct a home and instead, are forced to live in camper shells or shacks.

We are hopeful the subcommittee listened to our concerns and will give us favorable feedback.

LOOKING AHEAD
As leaders, it is our responsibility to ensure continuity of government and services to the Navajo people, regardless of the political climate that exists. Vice President Jim and I stand prepared to continue providing consistency for these government functions until a new president has been elected and installed into office. We are here for the Navajo people, not for personal self-interests.

With all of the challenges and confusion on when the election will take place and who will be on the ballot, we will continue providing a balance that will keep the Navajo Nation on a direct course for the future. What the Navajo people need is consistency and we are here to provide that support until a successor has been identified.

We appreciate the term of office that we completed by working with our partners on the Navajo Nation Council.

We made our relationship with the tribal legislators of the 22nd Navajo Nation Council strong and one that resulted in progress for the Navajo people. Just as we pledged to do, we
will get through these new challenges facing our Nation and achieve these results through commitment as we uphold the oath of office.

Thank you, 23rd Navajo Nation Council for the opportunity to report on the Executive Branch. Ahe’hee.
President Shelly lauds building renovations, tours facility

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—A crowd of tribal employees and officials gathered on a dreary Monday morning to celebrate the renovations of Administration Building No. 1. The cold weather did not deter them from participating in the celebration held in a white tent outside the building.

Thanks to Oakland-Arviso Construction Co., the renovated building is finally after 28 months of renovation activities.

Housed inside the newly improved building are Division of General Services, Finance, Office of Management and Budget, Department of Personnel Management, and Design and Engineering Services.

President Shelly said the building’s completion was the product of cooperation between the Executive and Legislative Branches of tribal government.

“Whoever is taking office next, I hope you took notes because this is how you get things done: by working together, not against each other,” President Shelly said.

He said Operation Breathe Safe began on Sept. 15, 2011 and closed the administration building due to black mold contamination. Employees were complaining of headaches and other medical issues.

Personal protective gear was required for employees to retrieve documents and equipment that needed to be decontaminated. The mold infestation was the result of non-maintenance.

“Water began to leak into the building and the walls,” the president explained.

The mildew eventually resulted in a strong odor that gave employees headaches. Something had to be done. Closing the building meant employees had to find available workspace from other tribal divisions and departments.

“More than $5 million was spent to remediate the building. Thank you Speaker Pro Tem Bates and Delegate Hale for securing the funding
that made these renovations possible,” President Shelly said.

Vice President Rex Lee Jim spoke next and provided his remarks entirely in Navajo.

He said the renovated building was like your own home; it is the center of learning and thinking for family and the Navajo people.

“Take good care of (the building). Be responsible for it. If you see trash, don’t just walk over it, pick it up and dispose of it,” Vice President Jim said. “Talk to each other and work with each other in a good way. Incorporate K’é into your office.”

He also encouraged employees to quickly process the requests from the public.

“You were all in crowded workspaces. You know what it’s like to be waiting. For this reason, quickly process your work for the people,” Vice President Jim said.

Chief of Staff Arbin Mitchell also gave words of thanks and encouragement.

“We worked very hard on this building. I would like to thank Design and Engineering Services. Also Facilities Maintenance and NOSHA,” Mitchell said. “Those are a few departments that assisted with making this happen.

“It took a lot of money, just like president said,” he added.

Funds were pooled together from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance and indirect cost monies. Carryover funds were also leveraged to cover the costs of construction.

“We’re working on Administration Building No. 2 right now. When you add these two buildings, it probably runs close to $10 million,” he said.

Jonathan Hale, chairman of the Health, Education and Human Services Committee, said Navajo elders would use this building renovation as a lesson to learn from.

“We’re at a time when our buildings are aging and in need of repairs. Our elders have always said to us, don’t you see the needs of your home? Are you going to fix it? I’m thankful for your work here,” Hale said.

He said employees had to endure cramped conditions for the past two years and that many complained about illness being spread and other issues.

“Thank you. Take care of it. When this building was first constructed, it wasn’t done right. Now it’s up to code and has blueprints for the work that was done. Take care of it in case something like this happens again 10 years from now,” Hale said.

Virgil Brown, director for the Division of General Services, took a lead role on the project and directed his crew from Facilities Maintenance to work with DES to complete the work.

“It was a team effort. That’s the only was that things get going fast. Administration Building No. 2 is being built right now and it will probably be finished a lot faster than this one,” Brown said.

He said it was a long journey that’s finally been completed.

President Shelly took a tour of the newly renovated administration building, led by Division of General Services director Virgil Brown. The group stops to take a look at the employee lounge for DGS staff. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

Vice President Rex Lee Jim said the new building is like an individual’s home: it is the center for learning and teaching tribal employees and clients alike. He challenged employees to process work quickly. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

One of the biggest additions to the administration building was the spiral stairway on the eastside of the building, which included elevator access for the disabled. More than $5.5 million was invested to repair the building from black mold infestation. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
President Shelly, Vice President Jim take oath of office

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and Vice President Rex Lee Jim took the oath of office at noon today and extended their presidency.

The decision to extend the term of office for President Shelly came on the heels of a late night negotiation meeting and subsequent letter of agreement between Executive and Legislative Branches of government.

The terms of the agreement state, “In the spirit of K’é and Hózhó the Executive and Legislative leaders have come together to talk things out in resolving a controversy that would impact the stability of the Navajo Nation.”

The agreement further states that President Shelly will maintain all power and duties under the provisions of the Navajo Nation Code. The president will meet with members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council during the winter session to discuss the best interests of the Nation moving forward.

Until then, President Shelly and Vice President Jim will maintain the continuity of government until a new president is elected.

Chief Justice Herb Yazzie administered the oath of office at the Office of the President and Vice President. The State Room was packed with cabinet members, OPVP staff and members of the media to witness the event.

Standing in front of the mahogany Great Seal of the Navajo Nation, President Shelly placed his left hand on the Bible and raised his right hand to take his oath of office.

President Shelly repeated the oath after Chief Justice Yazzie:

“I, Ben Shelly, do solemnly swear to continue to uphold and abide by the laws of the Navajo Nation and Treaty of 1868 between the Navajo Nation and the United States of America; and will faithfully execute the Office of the Navajo Nation President, representing the Navajo Nation; and will to the best of my ability continue to preserve, protect and defend the laws and government of the Navajo Nation; and advance the interests of the Navajo people, having due regard for the ethical duties and responsibilities of the office. So help me God.”

First Lady Martha Shelly held the Bible and witnessed her husband’s historic swearing in ceremony for the second time. Navajo Nation Vice President Rex Lee Jim was next and took his oath of office for the second term by swearing on his jish (medicine bundle), which was held by his mother.

“I, Rex Lee Jim, do solemnly swear to uphold and abide by the laws of the Navajo Nation and Treaty of 1868 between the Navajo Nation and the United States of America; and will faithfully execute the Office of the Navajo Nation Vice President, representing the Navajo Nation; and will to the best of my ability continue to preserve, protect and defend the laws and government of the Navajo Nation; and advance the interests of the Navajo people, having due regard for the ethical duties and responsibilities of the office. So help me God.”

Vice President Jim signed the affidavit of certification, followed by President Shelly.

“We’ll keep it together until somebody shows up,” President Shelly said after he signed his name.

Cabinet members and others filed through to congratulate the president and vice president. The event was low key and lasted about 15 minutes. A press conference followed, where President Shelly spoke about conducting “business as usual.”

“There’s a lot of work to be done, the Navajo people need help,” he said.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, OPVP staff and cabinet members convened with the president and vice president at the Navajo Nation Museum to discuss plans moving forward.

For the short time in office, staff must give 110 percent or more was the message, in order to complete projects that are still in progress. President Shelly told everybody that maintaining continuity of government was the order of the day.

All of his staff and cabinet members will continue working with the administration until a successor is elected into office.

Approval or veto of tribal council legislation will continue, he added, noting that his standing as president will move forward with all authorities in place.

President Shelly’s staff and cabinet will continue on, if they chose to, he said. For those choosing to leave, they will be replaced with young Navajo professionals. For his future, the president will return to private business as an entrepreneur.

Other options included running for state and national leadership.

“For his future, the president will return to private business as an entrepreneur.”

“All of his staff and cabinet members will continue working with the administration until a successor is elected into office.

The decision to extend the term of office for President Shelly came on the heels of a late night negotiation meeting and subsequent letter of agreement between Executive and Legislative Branches of government.

The terms of the agreement state, “In the spirit of K’é and Hózhó the Executive and Legislative leaders have come together to talk things out in resolving a controversy that would impact the stability of the Navajo Nation.”

The agreement further states that President Shelly will maintain all power and duties under the provisions of the Navajo Nation Code. The president will meet with members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council during the winter session to discuss the best interests of the Nation moving forward.

Until then, President Shelly and Vice President Jim will maintain the continuity of government until a new president is elected.

Chief Justice Herb Yazzie administered the oath of office at the Office of the President and Vice President. The State Room was packed with cabinet members, OPVP staff and members of the media to witness the event.

Standing in front of the mahogany Great Seal of the Navajo Nation, President Shelly placed his left hand on the Bible and raised his right hand to take his oath of office.

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“I, Rex Lee Jim, do solemnly swear to uphold and abide by the laws of the Navajo Nation and Treaty of 1868 between the Navajo Nation and the United States of America; and will faithfully execute the Office of the Navajo Nation Vice President, representing the Navajo Nation; and will to the best of my ability continue to preserve, protect and defend the laws and government of the Navajo Nation; and advance the interests of the Navajo people, having due regard for the ethical duties and responsibilities of the office. So help me God.”

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All of his staff and cabinet members will continue working with the administration until a successor is elected into office.
Presidential oath of office ceremony changed to noon Tuesday

MEDIA ADVISORY

WHO : President Ben Shelly
   THE NAVAJO NATION
   Vice President Rex Lee Jim
   THE NAVAJO NATION
   Herb Yazzie, Chief Justice
   THE NAVAJO NATION

WHAT : Presidential Oath of Office

WHERE : Navajo Nation State Room
       Office of the President and Vice President
       Window Rock, Ariz.

WHEN : Jan. 13, 2015
       12 p.m.

CONTACT : Deswood Tome, Special Advisor to the President
           Office of the President and Vice President
           THE NAVAJO NATION
           Phone: 928-871-7925
           Mobile: 505-506-7729
           Email: deswoodtome@yahoo.com

           Rick Abasta, Communications Director
           Office of the President and Vice President
           THE NAVAJO NATION
           Phone: 928-871-7884
           Mobile: 928-206-8460
           Email: rickyabasta@navajo-nsn.gov

The oath of office ceremony has been changed to 12 p.m. due to a statutory requirement that was cited by Chief Justice Herb Yazzie, from the tribal code. A press conference will follow immediately after President Shelly and Vice President Jim have been sworn into office.
President Shelly signs into law special run off election, NBOES pardon

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—On the afternoon of Jan. 10, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly signed the special run off election legislation passed on the last day of the year by the Navajo Nation Council into law, as well as a bill that grants a pardon to the members of the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors who were stripped of their offices by order of the Navajo Nation Supreme Court.

“It is in the best interest of the Navajo people that we give the thousands of voters a new opportunity to choose their next leaders,” President Shelly said. “There have been too many discrepancies over the last several months. A new election will restore some hope among the voters and the people that their voice will be heard.”

Believing that individual rights are undeniable, President Shelly signed legislation CD-81-14 and pardoned the NBOES members from sanctions imposed upon them by the Supreme Court.

The legislation sets forth a special election for June 2015, in which the 17 candidates who were contenders for the 2014 primary election are eligible to reapply as candidates for president. The two candidates with the highest votes will proceed to a special general election in Aug. 2015. The legislation calls for the oath of office to be administered to the President-Elect and Vice President-Elect on Sept. 9, 2015.

In other election related news, the Supreme Court vacated a motion filed by the Navajo Department of Justice seeking clarification from the court on the election before Jan. 31, 2015, and additionally, an opinion on whether President Shelly remains as president beyond Jan. 13, 2015.

During the late hours of Jan. 9, President Shelly met with the Speaker Pro Tem LoRenzo Bates and members of the Navajo Nation Council, along with attorneys from the DOJ and the chief legislative counsel to fashion an agreement for the president to remain as president beyond Jan. 13. The agreement will require President Shelly to take an oath of office on Tuesday.

It was agreed by the parties that stability is important to the functioning government and to ensure a greater sense of continuity. The agreement does lend opportunity for the incoming lawmakers to introduce legislation that would otherwise address the matter of the presidency until an election is held.

-30-
RESOLUTION OF THE
NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

22nd NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL—FOURTH YEAR, 2014

AN ACT

RELATING TO NAABIK’IYÁTI’ AND NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL; PARDONING NAVAJO BOARD OF ELECTION SUPERVISORS FROM ANY VIOLATIONS OF LAW IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR WORK IN PRESIDING OVER THE 2014 ELECTION INCLUDING INDIRECT CIVIL CONTEMPT FINDINGS AND REINSTATING THE NAMED INDIVIDUALS TO THEIR OFFICES AS NAVAJO BOARD OF ELECTION SUPERVISORS

BE IT ENACTED:

Section One. Findings

A. The Navajo Nation Council established the Naabik’iýáti’ Committee as a Navajo Nation standing committee and as such proposed legislation that requires final action by the Navajo Nation Council shall be assigned to the Naabik’iýáti’ Committee. 2 N.N.C. §§ 164 (A)(9), 700 (A) (2012); see also CO-45-12.

B. The Navajo Nation Council is the governing body of the Navajo Nation and all powers not delegated are reserved with the Navajo Nation Council. 2 N.N.C. § 102 (A), (B) and (C) (supervise all powers delegated) (2012); see also CO-45-12.

C. The pardon power is an attribute of governance which the Navajo Nation has not delegated to any Navajo Nation governmental entity and the Navajo Nation Council established precedence when the Council pardoned Mr. Peter MacDonald. Memorandum from the Office of the Attorney General, Herb Yazzie, to the Navajo Nation Council (Apr. 17, 1995).

D. The Navajo Nation Council recognized in Diyin Bits’aadéé Beehaz’áanii that they will “use their experience and wisdom to always act in the best interest of the people [and]...ensure the rights and freedoms of the generations yet to come...[and] enact policies and laws to address the immediate and future needs...” 1 N.N.C. § 203 (A) and (D) (2009).
E. Hozho and k'é calls for the Navajo Nation Council, as Naat'ąanii, to acknowledge their duty and aid the Navajo Nation in healing.

F. Wallace Charley, Jonathan Tso, Norman L. Begay, Harry D. Brown, Sr., Michael Coan, Tom M. White, Jr., Lenora Fulton, Frannie George, and Ruth Watson were elected on a staggered term basis by Navajo voters and properly installed as the Navajo Nation Board of Election Supervisors.

G. Navajo Board of Election Supervisors was established as an independent entity, 11 N.N.C. § 321, and has the duty to provide for the efficient and uniform administration and conduct of elections.

H. The Navajo Board of Election Supervisors was presiding over the 2014 election when its conduct was intertwined with private parties litigating before the Navajo Nation Supreme Court in Tsosie, et. al, v. Navajo Board of Election Supervisors, et. al, No. SC-CV-68-14. The Court indicated that it was enforcing its own order dated October 23, 2014 against the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors and Director of Navajo Election Administration. Tsosie, et al. v. NBOES, et al., No. SC-CV-68-14, slip op. 10 - 11, (Navajo Sup. Ct., Nov. 4, 2014).

I. In a hearing on October 31, 2014, the Court removed the Supervisors by indicating that the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors, as Respondents, failed to comply with the Court’s Order and “took deliberate actions in violation of the Election Laws.” The Court’s action to hold Navajo Board of Election Supervisors in contempt is questionable and troubling as:

a. The Court failed to expressly identify the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors to carry out a certain act in the October 23, 2014 Order, but issued its order directed to the Navajo Election Administration, Tsosie, No. SC-CV-68-14, slip op. at 10 (Nav. Sup. Ct., Oct 23, 2014);

b. The Court did not give due process to the members of the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors in failing to specifically delineate how the members did not abide by the Court Order in violation of the Navajo Bill of Rights, 1 N.N.C. § 3;
c. The Court did not give an opportunity to the members of the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors to have individual hearings where the members can defend themselves; in removing them under the Penal provisions of the Election Code, Section 365 the Court denied the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors equal protection and due process in a misdemeanor offense allegation, 11 N.N.C § 367;

d. The Court Order and appellate hearing was originally based on an appeal from the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) and it was later discovered that the hearing officer may not be qualified pursuant to Navajo Nation law to issue a decision; and this is particularly concerning in light of the Court order regarding the Hearing Officer and the Presidential decision on continued employment of the Hearing Officer. The Court relies on this debatable OHA Order of October 9, 2014, to indicate that the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors was on notice. Further, Navajo Board of Election Supervisors was not a party to the case that the Court refers to.

J. The Court references 11 N.N.C. § 8(F) (as amended in 2014) (CJA-02-14) to indicate that the Board is “to maintain their qualifications throughout their term of office or face removal.” The Board’s qualifications are listed at 11 N.N.C. § 324. An indirect contempt of court by an appellate court is not listed as reasons to disqualify the members of the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors and the Court is over-reaching in doing so.

K. The Navajo Nation Council and Naabik’íyáti’ Committee has invited the Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation Supreme Court to explain its decision but he declined to do so.

L. Navajo Nation People, communities and Chapters are expressing great concern of the removal of the members of the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors and the action of the Navajo Supreme Court.

M. The Navajo Nation finds the pardon and restoration of the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors, named in SC-CV-68-14, is in the Navajo Nation’s best interest.
Section Two.  Pardon of Navajo Board of Election Supervisors

A. The Navajo Nation pardons Wallace Charley, as a member of the Board of Election Supervisor, of indirect civil contempt, of violation of Navajo Election Laws and of knowingly and willfully failing or neglecting to perform duties under the Election Code as ruled in Case No. SC-CV-68-14.

B. The Navajo Nation pardons Jonathan Tso, as a member of the Board of Election Supervisor, of indirect civil contempt, of violation of Navajo Election Laws and of knowingly and willfully failing or neglecting to perform duties under the Election Code as ruled in Case No. SC-CV-68-14.

C. The Navajo Nation pardons Norman L. Begay, as a member of the Board of Election Supervisor, of indirect civil contempt, of violation of Navajo Election Laws and of knowingly and willfully failing or neglecting to perform duties under the Election Code as ruled in Case No. SC-CV-68-14.

D. The Navajo Nation pardons Harry D. Brown, Sr., as a member of the Board of Election Supervisor, of indirect civil contempt, of violation of Navajo Election Laws and of knowingly and willfully failing or neglecting to perform duties under the Election Code as ruled in Case No. SC-CV-68-14.

E. The Navajo Nation pardons Michael Coan, as a member of the Board of Election Supervisor, of indirect civil contempt, of violation of Navajo Election Laws and of knowingly and willfully failing or neglecting to perform duties under the Election Code as ruled in Case No. SC-CV-68-14.

F. The Navajo Nation pardons Tom M. White, Jr., as a member of the Board of Election Supervisor, of indirect civil contempt, of violation of Navajo Election Laws and of knowingly and willfully failing or neglecting to perform duties under the Election Code as ruled in Case No. SC-CV-68-14.

G. The Navajo Nation pardons Lenora Fulton, as a member of the Board of Election Supervisor, of indirect civil contempt, of violation of Navajo Election Laws and of knowingly and
willfully failing or neglecting to perform duties under the Election Code as ruled in Case No. SC-CV-68-14.

H. The Navajo Nation pardons Fannie George, as a member of the Board of Election Supervisor, of indirect civil contempt, of violation of Navajo Election Laws and of knowingly and willfully failing or neglecting to perform duties under the Election Code as ruled in Case No. SC-CV-68-14.

I. The Navajo Nation pardons Ruth Watson, as a member of the Board of Election Supervisor, of indirect civil contempt, of violation of Navajo Election Laws and of knowingly and willfully failing or neglecting to perform duties under the Election Code as ruled in Case No. SC-CV-68-14.

Section Three. Reinstatement of Navajo Board of Election Supervisors


Section Four. Effective Date

The Act is effective upon its approval pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §221.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Navajo Nation Council at a duly called meeting in Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona) at which a quorum was present and that the same was passed by a vote of 11 in favor and 1 opposed, this 30th day of December 2014.

LoRenz0 Bates, Pro Tem Speaker
Navajo Nation Council

12-31-14
Date

Motion: Honorable Danny Simpson
Second: Honorable Charles Damon, II
ACTION BY THE NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT:

1. I hereby sign into law the foregoing legislation, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §1005 (C)(10), on this 10th day of January 2014.

   [Signature]

   Ben Shelly, President
   Navajo Nation

2. I hereby veto the foregoing legislation, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §1005 (C)(11), this ______ day of ______ 2014 for the reason(s) expressed in the attached letter to the Speaker.

   [Signature]

   Ben Shelly, President
   Navajo Nation
RESOLUTION OF THE
NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

22nd NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL - Fourth Year, 2014

AN ACTION

RELATING TO AN EMERGENCY; TO ADDRESS A MATTER OF NAVAJO VOTER
DISENFRANCHISEMENT; AND PROVIDING FOR A SPECIAL RUN-OFF ELECTION
AND A SPECIAL GENERAL ELECTION FOR THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT

BE IT ENACTED:

Section One. Findings

A. 2 N.N.C. § 164(A)(16) provides, in part, that an emergency
is limited to matters which directly threaten the
sovereignty of the Navajo Nation and that such emergency
matters must arise due to the pressing public need for such
resolution and must be a matter requiring final action by
the Council.

B. The Navajo Nation election cycle for 2014 began with the
primary election being held on August 26, 2014 and for the
office of the President, seventeen (17) candidates filed;
the two candidates with the most votes were slated to face
each other in the general election which was scheduled for
November 4, 2014.

C. After the primary election, election grievances were filed
by two candidates who did not prevail in the election and
the grievances by the two candidates have been finalized by
Navajo Nation tribunal bodies; however, Navajo People
remain dissatisfied as their voice through their votes are
being ignored and continued disharmony remains.

D. Navajo Nation Supreme Court has issued an Opinion in the
court case: Tsosie, et al., v. Navajo Board of Election
Supervisors, slip op. SC-CV-68-14 (October 23, 2014) in a
2-1 majority vote with one (1) justice dissenting. The
Opinion orders the name, Christopher C. Deschene, to be
taken off the ballot.
E. The decision of the Navajo Nation Supreme Court has disenfranchised the ample number of voters who voted in the 2014 primary and general election and no remedy was provided for them.

F. The decision of the Navajo Nation Supreme Court indicates that it "is unavoidable that the November 4, 2014 election must be postponed...." The Navajo Nation Council agrees.

G. The late filing of grievances, the different interpretations of the laws and the late decisions by the Office of Hearings and Appeals and the Navajo Nation Supreme Court has caused instability and confusion in the 2014 Navajo Nation Election. Such on-again, off-again appearance with respect to the carrying out of the Navajo Nation laws is damaging to the image of the Navajo Nation. In the meantime, community leaders are requesting the voters to have a civil dialogue and resolve the matter through the concept of hozho.

H. Navajo Nation Council has received hundreds of Navajo Chapter resolutions, petitions or letters from Navajo voters. The request of the Navajo People should not be ignored and, rather, be seriously considered by all Navajo Nation branches and departments. If the confusion is not resolved, civil unrest may develop.

I. Navajo Nation does not have a constitution but has a set of developed laws, including election laws. Navajo Nation Supreme Court’s decisions should be given due deference when it identifies ambiguities in Navajo Nation laws; however, Navajo Nation Council, as the representative body of the elected representatives of the Navajo People, has the prerogative and the authority to address matters by determining if laws were properly applied, to reduce confusion in the interpretation of the laws, and to resolve emergency matters facing the Navajo Nation or its residents.

J. Navajo Nation Council, as the representative body of the elected representatives of the Navajo People, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 102(A), has the prerogative and the authority to amend laws to provide for certain remedies and pass resolutions, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 164(A)(1).
K. "Resolution" is defined as a form of legislation, which means a formal action of the Navajo Nation Council or its Committees adopting its approval of or stating its opinion on a matter. 2 N.N.C. §110(T).

Section Two. Amendments to Title 11 of the Navajo Nation Code

This Resolution does not amend Title 11 of the Navajo Nation Code, and other relevant laws, but shall be interpreted as a Resolution to provide for a special remedy to address the disenfranchisement of Navajo voters pursuant to the authority of the Navajo Nation Council over election matters.

Section Three. Authorizing a Special Run-off Election and a Special General Election

Notwithstanding certain election laws contained in Title 11 of the Navajo Nation Code, and other relevant laws, the following provisions shall be used to implement a special run-off primary election and a special general election:

A. Except for the Office of the President and Vice President, the general election results of November 4, 2014, for all Navajo Nation elected offices shall be certified by the Navajo Election Administration.

B. The Navajo Nation Council hereby authorizes a special run-off election and a special general election for the offices of the President and Vice President pursuant to the laws existing at the time of the special primary election.

C. Navajo Nation Council hereby authorizes the following procedures to be used to conduct the 2015 special run-off election, if necessary, and the 2015 special general election:

1. A special run-off election shall be scheduled for June 2, 2015.

2. A special general election shall be scheduled for August 4, 2015.
3. Laws existing at the time of the special primary election shall be used to allow presidential candidates who filed for and participated in the 2014 primary election to be given an opportunity to participate in the special run-off election for the offices of the President and Vice President.

4. The requirements under 11 N.N.C. § 26 regarding filing fees shall be waived for candidates.

5. Subject to laws existing at the time of the election only the 2014 primary election candidates shall be qualified to be a candidate for the special run-off election and the Navajo Election Administration shall contact them to determine if they wish to file an application for candidacy for the Office of the President, to wit:
   a. Donald Benally;
   b. Edison J. Wauneka;
   c. Moroni Benally;
   d. Hank Whitethorne;
   e. Dan Smith;
   f. Ben Shelly;
   g. Chris Deschene;
   h. Kee Yazzie Mann;
   i. Myron McLaughlin;
   j. Joe Shirley, Jr.;
   k. Duane H. Yazzie;
   l. Dale E. Tsosie;
   m. Carrie Lynn Martin;
   n. Cal Nez;
   o. Edison "Chip" Begay;
   p. Kenneth Maryboy; and
   q. Russell Begaye.
6. Navajo Election Administration shall maintain a record of how the contact with each candidate was made and the candidate's answer. Personal contact is preferred, but the Administration may contact the candidates by telephone or other form of electronic means. The candidate shall be allowed to file their application for candidacy for the Office of the President no later than April 3, 2015.

7. Candidates for the special run-off election shall be certified by the Navajo Election Administration no later than April 4, 2015.

8. If only two candidates file their applications for candidacy for the special run-off election, the special run-off election shall be canceled and the two candidates who filed shall be allowed to run in the special general election for the Office of the President.

9. If three or more candidates file their applications for candidacy for the run-off election, then all candidates who filed their candidacy application shall be allowed to run in the special run-off election. A special ballot shall be printed for the special run-off election. If a special ballot cannot be printed within the timeline herein, Navajo Election Administration shall arrange for in-house printing and the hand-counting of the ballots, along with security measures to prevent voting fraud.

10. Unless otherwise prohibited by Navajo Nation law, voters who are registered to vote by May 4, 2015, shall be allowed to vote in the special run-off election and the special general election.

11. Early voting for special run-off election shall be allowed from May 21, 2015 to May 29, 2015. Voters may be allowed to bring their special early voting ballot and cast it on special run-off election day.
12. Absentee ballots for special run-off election shall be mailed to all voters who requested absentee ballots in the regular primary election and regular general election no later than May 4, 2015, and the due date for the return of absent ballots shall be June 2, 2015. Additional absentee ballot requests may be allowed for the special run-off election.

13. Final certification of the result for the special run-off election shall be done no later than June 15, 2015 the Navajo Election Administration. The candidates with the two highest votes in the run-off election shall be certified as candidates for a special general election.

14. Grievance filed by a candidate for the special run-off election shall be filed no later than June 12, 2015; and the Navajo Nation Office of Hearings and Appeals shall render a decision no later than June 13, 2015. Appeals of the decision of the Navajo Nation Office of Hearings and Appeals shall be made to the Navajo Nation Supreme Court no later than June 14, 2015; and the Navajo Nation Supreme Court shall render a decision no later than June 16, 2015.

15. A special ballot shall be printed for the special general election and included on the ballot shall be the two certified candidates.

16. Early voting for the special general election shall be allowed from June 22, 2015, to June 31, 2015 if no grievance is filed for the special run-off election. If a grievance is filed in the special run-off election, then early voting for the special general election shall be allowed from June 27, 2015, to June 31, 2015. Voters may be allowed to bring their special early voting ballot and cast it on special general election day.
17. Absentee ballots for special general election shall be mailed to all voters who requested absentee ballots in the regular primary election and regular general election no later than July 6, 2015, and the due date for the return of absent ballots shall be August 4, 2015. Additional absentee ballot requests may be allowed for the special general election.

18. Absentee voting for the special general election shall be allowed from July 6, 2015, to August 4, 2015 if no grievance is filed for the special run-off election. If a grievance is filed in the special run-off election, then absentee voting for the special general election shall be allowed from July 11, 2015, to August 4, 2015.

19. Final certification of the result for the special general election shall be done no later than August 17, 2015 by the Navajo Election Administration. The candidate with the highest votes shall be certified as the elected official to take the oath of office on September 9, 2015.

20. Grievance filed by a candidate for the special general election shall be filed no later than August 14, 2015; and the Navajo Nation Office of Hearings and Appeals shall render a decision no later than August 18, 2015. Appeals of the decision of the Navajo Nation Office of Hearings and Appeals shall be made to the Navajo Nation Supreme Court no later than August 21, 2015; and the Navajo Nation Supreme Court shall render a decision no later August 25, 2015.

21. Campaign reports for the special run-off election and the special general election, as required by 11 N.N.C. §§ 201 - 209 shall be filed no later than June 12, 2015 and August 14, 2015.

22. Poll officials used in the 2014 regular general election may be used as poll officials for the special run-off election and the special general election.
23. Navajo Election Administration shall take all precautions and necessary steps to promptly send absentee ballots to persons who have voted by absentee ballots in the 2014 election cycle.

24. Navajo Election Administration shall use the special provisions contained herein in a congruent manner with the current Election Code provisions.

25. Elections scheduled by Navajo Election Administration for President and Vice President should be canceled for 2014.

D. Navajo Election Administration shall make arrangements for the public announcement of the procedure adopted herein in Navajo and English languages on a daily basis until January 13, 2015.

E. Navajo Election Administration shall prepare a budget to cover the costs of the special run-off election and the special general election and communicate this to the Navajo Nation Council so it may allocate additional resources.

F. Employees of the Navajo Nation government shall be given time off beginning at 1:00 p.m. on special run-off election day, if necessary, and on special general election day only if they use the leave to go vote.

G. The Oath of Office for all Navajo Nation elected officials shall be September 9, 2015.

Section Four.

The special primary and general elections shall be funded at the Amount of $317,891.00 and said funding shall be expended pursuant to budget documents inserted hereto as Exhibit "B".

Section Five. Effective Date

These amendments are effective upon its approval pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §221 and shall be in effect for the 2015 Navajo Nation Election subsequent Navajo Nation elections.
Section Six. Saving Clause

Should any provisions of this ordinance be determined invalid by the Navajo Nation Supreme Court, or the District Courts of the Navajo Nation, without appeal to the Navajo Nation Supreme Court, those portions of this ordinance which are not determined invalid shall remain the law of the Navajo Nation.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Navajo Nation Council at a duly called meeting in Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona) at which a quorum was present and that the same was passed by a vote of 11 in favor and 1 opposed, this 30th day of December 2014.

LoRenzO BAtes, pro Tem Speaker
Navajo Nation Council

12-31-14
Date

Motion: Honorable Duane Tsinigine
Second: Honorable Roland Tso

ACTION BY THE NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT:

1. I hereby sign into law the foregoing legislation, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §1005 (C)(10), on this 10th day of January 2014.

Ben Shelly, President
Navajo Nation
2. I hereby veto the foregoing legislation, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §1005 (C) (11), this _____ day of _______ 2014 for the reason(s) expressed in the attached letter to the Speaker.

________________________
Ben Shelly, President
Navajo Nation

3. I hereby sign into law the foregoing legislation, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §1005 (C) (10) and 2 N.N.C. §164 (A) (17), on this _____ day of _______, 2014. The justification of my line-item veto is set forth by memorandum.

________________________
Ben Shelly, President
Navajo Nation
President Shelly approves $8.3 million in supplemental appropriations

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—On Jan. 6, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met with the Office of Management and Budget to discuss council resolutions requesting supplemental appropriations amounting to more than $8.3 million.

“It’s important that we ensure funding for these projects are in line with the Navajo Nation Appropriations Act,” President Shelly said. “We have more than $30 million in the UUFB right now, but we must be prudent with those funds.”

President Shelly signed CD-71-14, which provides $500,000 from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance for Oljato Chapter. The funds will be for professional technical services and architecture and design for the chapter’s new multipurpose building.

The same bill provides $5 million to the Nahata Dzil Shopping Center project. The president had reservations about signing the legislation because the two projects are not listed in the five-year Capital Improvement Plan.

The Appropriations Act states, “All budget requests for capital improvements shall be in compliance with an adopted Capital Improvement Plan and shall not be approved unless in compliance with the plan.”

The legislation was originally only for the Oljato Chapter, but the shopping center was added as an amendment.

“I compromised and signed this legislation because the shopping center project is shovel-ready and listed on the five-year Economic Development Plan,” President Shelly said.

The legislation was originally only for the Oljato Chapter, but the shopping center was added as an amendment.

Resolution No. CD-75-14 was also signed for approval of $500,000 from the UUFB for Tonalea-Red Lake Chapter’s professional technical services and demolition project. President Shelly approved this project, but again, it is not listed on the five-year CIP. The project, however, is also listed on the five-year Economic Development Plan.

“I’ve worked with the council on approving these projects, but they need to ensure their legislation is in compliance with the law for any future legislation,” President Shelly said.

Legislation No. CD-69-14 was also approved by the president and allows Cameron Chapter to receive $180,120 from the UUFB for their multipurpose facility. The project is on the five-year CIP and is in compliance with the Appropriations Act.

Resolution No. CD-72-14 was approved for $600,000 from the UUFB for the purchase of a new bus for Navajo Transit System. The president had a small concern with the proposal summary because it does not mention the bus purchase, but OMB will apply an administrative fix.

President Shelly also approved Legislation No. CD-73-14 for $1,559,250 from the UUFB for elected officials operating expenses, planning and regular chapter meetings. The funds will be distributed to the elected officials as follows:

The district grazing officials will receive $877,500. The farm boards will receive $483,750. The Eastern Navajo Land Board will receive $198,000.

“During this administration, we have held tight to the Nation’s purse strings to ensure the UUFB was maintained above the minimum balance allowed,” President Shelly said. “Today, we have let go of the purse strings to approve these projects for the people.”
President Shelly vetoes amending fluency requirements for election code

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—On New Year’s Eve, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly vetoed CD-79-14, a Navajo Nation Council resolution to amend the Navajo language fluency requirements for Office of the President and Vice President.

The council attempted to pass a similar legislation in Oct. 2013, which was also vetoed by President Shelly, who favored a referendum vote brought before the Navajo people for amending the language. He said a thoughtful and deliberative conversation needed to occur with the Navajo people before changing the qualifications for tribal leadership.

“This conversation has yet to occur and, as such, my feelings on the matter have not changed,” President Shelly said. “The people are divided and we need their participation in this decision that will affect the generations to come.”

He said piecemeal changes to the Election Code in the form of council resolutions and Supreme Court opinions will not suffice. A major overhaul is need to ensure clear, concise and fair laws, he noted, adding that such important change can only be done through a referendum vote of the Navajo people.

“It’s the people’s right to determine this, not myself, the Council or the courts,” President Shelly said.

The same day, President Shelly also signed into law three bills. Legislation no. CD-64-14 was for amendments to Title 11 of the Navajo Nation Code by authorizing the Navajo Board of Elections Supervisors to eliminate filing fees for elective positions filled by appointment. Currently, filing fees by candidates are submitted when they file their candidacy application. The filing fees are non-refundable.

“The people are divided and we need their participation in this decision that will affect the generations to come,” he added.

Legislation No. CD-68-14 was also signed into law by President Shelly and established the Sihasin Fund for the $554 million settlement.

Establishment, purpose, investment, definitions, expenditure, annual audit report and expenses of the Sihasin Fund were outlined in the legislation.

“The Navajo people can rest easy knowing that the $554 million from the trust settlement is properly accounted for and audited through the Sihasin Fund,” President Shelly said. “This is the Navajo people’s money and they deserve to know what it’s spent on.

Such transparency in government has been a hallmark of this administration and we will continue to keep the Navajo people informed,” he added.

-30-
President Shelly approved FTA grant and purchase of allotment land

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—On Dec. 30, 2014, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly enacted two bills to provide funding to the Navajo Transit System and approval of purchasing individual allotment land.

Legislation No. CD-65-14 was for approval of the $166,000 grant to the Navajo Transit System from the Federal Transit Administration for public transportation operation. Also included was approval of the indirect cost rate of 10 percent.

“The Navajo Transit System continues to provide important services to the Navajo people, that of mobility,” President Shelly said. “I applaud their tenacity in seeking funds outside the Nation to continue their mission of public transportation.

“I hereby sign into law the foregoing legislation, pursuant to 2 NNC Subsection 1005 (C) (10), on this 30th day of December 2014,” he added.

The FTA awarded the Navajo Transit System the grant award of $166,000 on Jan. 8, 2013. The maximum rate of 10 percent was levied on the FTA, which waived the Navajo Nation indirect cost rate of 16.95 percent.

The FTA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation that is tasked with providing financial and technical assistance to local public transit systems. With headquarters in Washington, D.C. and 10 regional offices, the FTA oversees public transportation including buses, subways, light rail, commuter rail, monorail, passenger ferry boats, trolleys, inclined railways and other modes of transportation.

The resolution was approved by a vote of 18-0 by the Navajo Nation Council on Dec. 23. Speaker Pro Tem LoRenzo Bates signed the resolution on Dec. 29 before sending it to the Office of the President and Vice President.

Legislation No. CD-67-14 was for approval of purchasing of individual allotment land for 160 acres located within the Ramah Chapter by Roy Chap Martinez. The cost of the purchase, including closing costs, amounted to $128,000.

Martinez made contact with the BIA Southwest Regional Estate Office and expressed his decision to sell his allotment to the Navajo Nation. On Sept. 24, 2013, Martinez agreed to the purchase price of $800 per acre for a total sale price of $128,000.

The Navajo Land Acquisition Trust Fund will cover the purchase price of the land, which will be utilized for the development of residential subdivisions, mutual help housing, home site leasing and community development purposes for the Ramah Chapter.

“I hereby execute the real estate purchase agreement on behalf of the Navajo Nation for purchase of lands held by the Roy Chap Martinez allotment,” President Shelly said. “The Navajo Nation will utilize this land to build homes for those living in the Ramah Chapter boundaries.”

The Navajo Nation Council approved the legislation by a vote of 18-0 on Dec. 23 and was signed by Speaker Pro Tem Bates on Dec. 29 before it reached President Shelly’s desk for approval.

-30-
President Shelly urges caution when traveling during winter storm

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—It’s going to be cold and snowy on parts of the Navajo Nation for the next week as a major winter storm rolls in on Feb. 27.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly encourages tribal members to check on the elderly and ensure they are taken care of before hunkering down as the storm hits home.

“Please visit your elders and make sure they have enough wood, food and water for the storm. A lot of our elders live in remote areas and they are the ones most in need of assistance,” President Shelly said.

He noted that some elders might be in need medical attention or assistance with feeding their livestock.

“Use caution when traveling, especially under snowy and icy conditions. Please don’t attempt to travel if it isn’t necessary,” President Shelly said.

During the recent snowstorm earlier this week, five to six chapters were affected by the heavy snow, which made travel on several roads impossible.

Mexican Water, Montezuma Creek, Navajo Mountain and Teec Nos Pos faced heavy snow and requested snowplows to clear the roadways.

The Navajo Division of Transportation implemented their snow removal plan and is working with state and county resources to provide snowplow services on essential roads and school bus routes.

The winter storm will last from Friday through Thursday next week.

The National Weather Service in Flagstaff has alerted travelers that a hazardous weather outlook is in effect for the next week. One to three inches of snow is expected in the lower elevations, with anywhere from one to three feet of snow expected in higher elevations.

The NWS also expects periods of heavy rain during the storm and potential flooding in the lower elevations. The greatest amounts of precipitation will be around the central and eastern Mogollon Rim and White Mountain areas.

If it is absolutely necessary to travel, please ensure you have tire chains or cables, water, blankets and road flares, if available. Make sure you have enough time to reach your destination and tell family where you are traveling to and your expected time of arrival.

The Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management and Department of Emergency Management will be on standby during the storm, along with the road crews of NDOT.

President Shelly reminds all tribal members that NDOT snowplows focus on school bus routes and roads with high average daily traffic numbers. Snow removal for private and residential roads is the responsibility of the homeowners.

For snow emergencies, please contact NNDEM at 928-871-6892/6893.

-30-
Navajo veteran commanders provide updates, plan of action for Veterans Act

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—The Office of the President and Vice President hosted a meeting for the five agency veteran commanders of the Navajo Nation today.

Chief of Staff Deswood Tome met with Edsel Pete, Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs manager, veteran service officers, and agency commanders from all five agencies. Division of Human Resources executive director Lorenzo Curley served an important role in the meeting, as he has worked with the veterans department for the last two weeks, providing direction.

The regular monthly meeting provided an opportunity for the Executive Branch to hear agency updates on the Navajo veterans housing project and discussions on formulating a plan of operation for implementation of the Navajo Nation Veterans Act. President Shelly was in Washington, D.C. meeting with federal officials, but took time out of his schedule to comment on Navajo veterans and said they must work together toward the common goal of implementing the Navajo Nation Veterans Act.

Before serving as president and vice president, President Shelly was a council delegate for 16 years and served as chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee. During his tenure, the Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund was established.

“I supported the Veterans Trust Fund and the set aside that was established to fund services,” President Shelly said. “We will continue working to implement the Veterans Act to provide services.

“Many of our kids are returning home from combat in need of health care, counseling and employment. It’s our turn to protect them,” the president said.

President Shelly said the need for Navajo veterans from the five agencies not only include housing, health care, retirement and employment, but other areas such as communication and common courtesy.

“We will complete the plan of operation and other new developments, like the veterans apartment complex we want to construct in Window Rock,” he said.

On Jan. 27, 2014, President Shelly approved more than $1.9 million to begin construction of 300 veterans homes in four years. The initiative was for construction of 15 homes per agency, which equals 75 homes annually.

For 2014, the agencies averaged 12-13 homes completed. Many agency commanders are anticipating completion of their initial 15 homes by the end of March. The agencies are preparing for construction of the next 15 homes in 2015.

There is a need for veterans in need of housing who qualify for the program at the agency level. As the agencies prepare to begin construction of the next 75 homes for 2015, Navajo veterans must step forward for assistance.

The two biggest challenges for many veterans to overcome in order to participate in the housing initiative are having a home site lease and supporting chapter resolution.
WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Today, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly appointed Deswood Tome as chief of staff for his administration. Tome previously served as special advisor to the president.

Arbin Mitchell, Tome’s predecessor as chief of staff for President Shelly, resigned on Feb. 20. Mitchell began his new appointment for the Office of the Speaker today as their new chief of staff.

“I have every confidence in Deswood Tome as our new chief of staff,” President Shelly said. “His dedication and unswerving commitment to the Navajo people will continue through his new appointment.

“Our office also thanks Arbin Mitchell for serving the Navajo people and our administration these past few years,” he added.

Tome said he will resume the daily government operation up to the oath of office of the incoming administration, upon which time he will step down with the president and vice president.

-30-
Good morning Governor Herbert, Mr. Speaker, legislators, tribal leaders and other invited guests.

Thank you for the opportunity to join you today to strengthen our relationship between the Navajo Nation and the state of Utah.

We have worked with the Utah State Legislature for decades to address the needs of the Navajo people living in the state. We appreciate your commitment to the Navajo Nation and we look forward to growing this relationship to meet the needs of our ever-changing world.

$3.5 MILLION CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDING
In November 2014, the Navajo Nation received a letter that stated grants amounting to $3.5 million for projects on the Navajo Nation were approved by the State of Utah. These funds were from the Navajo Nation Revitalization Fund and the Navajo Royalties Holding Fund.

Leveraging these funds for capital outlay projects has been greatly beneficial to the Navajo Nation. We will continue contributing matching funds to stretch our dollar and meet the needs of our tribal members residing in Utah.

The $3.5 million from the State of Utah are for 21 capital outlay projects ranging from power lines, multipurpose buildings, roads, solid...
waste disposal, waterlines, bathroom and kitchen additions, and senior citizen centers.

We appreciate this partnership and the Navajo Nation looks forward to growing this relationship to meet the needs of the estimated 33,000 Navajos living in the State of Utah. These residents are members of six Navajo chapters located in the state.

Our Utah tribal members have identified seven areas of focus: Transportation, Education, Health, Public Safety, General Services, Community Development, and Economic Development. Our projects for capital outlay funding are for these priority areas.

**TRANSPORTATION**
Transportation is a major priority. Roads are what connect our Navajo chapters to the rest of the state. Our Tribal Transportation Improvement Project listing includes the road reconstruction of Highway 162.

Highway 162 is a Utah Department of Transportation road that is vital to the Aneth Chapter. This project is for eight miles of roadway reconstruction at a cost of $38 million. The project is currently not on the State Transportation Improvement Plan.

Instead, UDOT has recommended that work on the road be completed in two-mile increments over several years. We are requesting that this project be included in the state priority listing for immediate road construction.

The Navajo Nation is willing to cost share with the state at 10 percent of the cost of construction. These funds will come from the Navajo Nation TTIP and we are hoping the state will assist us with road design, preliminary engineering and construction costs.

The state roads connecting our Navajo chapters are narrow, winding roads designed in the 1960s. We are concerned with the safety of travelers in this region of the state.

The Oljato Chapter has requested UDOT to construct right-of-way fencing along State Road 163 to prevent livestock collisions. Keeping travelers safe is our primary concern.

**SENATE BILL 90**
The Navajo Nation is strongly urging the 2015 Utah State Legislature to enact Senate Bill 90. This bill is to reactivate the Utah Navajo Trust Fund for reinstating services and benefits to Navajo citizens in San Juan County, Utah.

In 2008, the State of Utah resigned as the federally appointed trustee for the Utah Navajo Trust Fund. The Utah Navajo Royalties Holding Fund was created the same year to serve as a receivership for trust royalties while Congress searched for a new trustee.

Because of this, there has been a freeze on new expenditures, including funding for capital projects and housing. Congress has not had any success in appointing a new trustee. Our Navajo chapters unanimously support the State of Utah to resume management of the Utah Navajo Trust Fund.

We ask for the support of Governor Herbert and the Utah Legislature to enact SB 90.

**HOUSE BILL 33**
House Bill 33 is in response to the alarming achievement gap that exists for Navajo schools in the San Juan School District. When the Utah State Office of Education released the results of a new statewide testing program, four Navajo schools in the district received failing grades.

These schools include Montezuma Creek Elementary School, Whitehorse High School, Tse’bii’nidzisgai Elementary School and Monument Valley High School.

We acknowledge Representative Jack Draxler and the Native American Legislative Liaison Committee for sponsoring HB 33.

HB 33 includes creation of a tribal public education liaison position and creation of a tribal native education commission.

Additionally, adoption of a state plan addressing educational achievement is included, along with reporting to the Native American Legislative Liaison Committee for meaningful reform to improve the delivery of education to Navajo students.

**CONCURRENT RESOLUTION FOR NAVAJO WATER RIGHTS SETTLEMENT**
Senator David Hinkins is the chief sponsor of SCR 2. This resolution supports the negotiated settlement of federal reserved water rights between the Navajo Nation and the State of Utah.

In 2007, the Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission and the state reached an agreement in principal regarding the quantification of
the San Juan River.

Former Representative Christine Watkins sponsored HB 127 in the 2012 Utah State Legislature to establish the Navajo Water Rights Settlement Fund. The purpose was to have the state contribute annually to the settlement fund until a certain amount was reached.

However, because of the lengthy timeframe for Congress to ratify the water settlement, the state has decided not to deposit any more funds until the agreement is reached. SCR 2 reaffirms the state’s commitment for the Utah Navajo Water Settlement Agreement and earmarks the state’s settlement funds.

PUBLIC LANDS INITIATIVE
Utah Navajos established the Dine’ Bikeyah organization to advocate for tribal interests, cultural beliefs and environmental stewardship. The organization worked with Navajo people to develop a 1.9 million acre conservation and wilderness area.

The Navajo Utah Commission requests the support of Governor Herbert and the Utah State Legislature in recognizing the interest, connection and sacredness of Utah’s public lands for Native Americans.

GOVERNOR’S VISIT AND TOUR
The Navajo Nation and the State of Utah share a government-to-government relationship. During the annual Legislative Caucus, Governor Herbert makes one hour available during the Native American Summit to meet with tribal leaders to discuss the issues.

While this is an opportunity to address the tribal needs, it is not nearly enough to discuss issues in detail to find proper solutions. The Navajo Utah Commission attempted to have a meeting with Governor Herbert twice since 2013, but was unsuccessful.

We request that Governor Herbert travel to San Juan County to see the conditions of the reservation firsthand and the many challenges Navajo citizens face. We would also like for the governor to meet with the 23rd Navajo Nation Council this spring or summer to find meaningful solutions to the problems facing Navajo residents in Utah.

CONCLUSION
Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. We remain hopeful about the future relationship between the Navajo Nation and the State of Utah. We’ve worked together for decades and our relationship has only been strengthened over time.

Thank you for supporting the Navajo residents in your great State of Utah. Let us continue working together for the benefit of the generations to come. Ahe’hee.
President Shelly reports before joint session of N.M. Senate

SANTA FE—On Feb. 11, President Shelly spent the day at the Roundhouse to speak on behalf of the Navajo Nation on a number of issues.

During the Indian Day festivities on Feb. 6, President Shelly and a number of other tribal leaders from N.M. did not get to speak to the legislature. Instead, Gov. Susana Martinez spoke and provided an update from the state.

Sen. Michael Sanchez invited President Shelly and other tribal leaders to attend the Senate’s session on Feb. 11 to speak on issues from their respective nations. Members from the House were also invited to join, so they could also hear the concerns from the tribes.

The invitation was a chance to makeup for the faux pas from the previous week.

The president began his report with an update on the Navajo Beef initiative. The project allows Navajo ranchers an opportunity to sell their cattle at market value or better, which is then served as steaks at Navajo casinos.

He said the beef is of premium grade and can be made available for pueblo casinos as well. Such a partnership would strengthen tribal relations and foster unity, he added.

“It was some of the finest steak I’ve ever had,” President Shelly said. “And I asked our gaming people to maybe invite some of our senators and representatives to taste some of that beef.”

Other economic development initiatives were mentioned. President Shelly encouraged the legislature to support the Thoreau rail spur along Highway 371 via a two-line rail system for the transport of goods and services from the Four Corners to the transcontinental rail line.

He thanked the state for funding the feasibility study on the rail spur and said its completion would be another successful exercise in economic development.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe has committed $8 million for two rail loops that will accommodate 100 rail cars for each loop. Not only would the project increase gross revenue receipts for the tribe, state and county, but it would also temper the relationships between the respective governments.

“These are meaningful partnership ideas we need to continue with the growth we have created,” President Shelly said.

During his term of office, 2,440 new jobs were added and the president said the Thoreau rail port would be an opportunity to create more N.M. jobs.

The Tribal Infrastructure Fund and capital outlay funding was another area of concern shared by President Shelly. He said the importance of the funding cannot be stressed enough, especially since they’re often used to leverage other funding to complete projects.

He thanked the House and Senate for providing funding all these years for tribal infrastructure development and noted that conventional wisdom dictates that the state foster tribal efforts for self-determination.

To make such self-sufficiency possible, President Shelly encouraged the legislators to approve the Navajo Nation gaming compact with the state.

He said that Navajo gaming provides employment, taxes, revenue and other business opportunities with vendors that are crucial to Navajo self-determination.

“We need your support,” President Shelly said.

Gaming provides tribes the opportunity to generate funds independently, the president said, adding that the Navajo Nation supported early gaming compacts from pueblos operating casinos.

“It takes us working side-by-side. We all share this great state as neighbors,” President Shelly said. “On behalf of the Navajo Nation, I wish you success in this legislative session of 2015.”

Earlier the same day, the president also reported before the House Agriculture, Water and Wildlife Committee to voice his opposition to House Bill 291. Sponsored by Rep. Yvette Herrell, the bill is related to public lands for the creation of the N.M. Federal Land Management Commission.

The fact that tribes and pueblos of N.M. are not involved with the formation of the proposed commission, there are serious concerns from the Navajo Nation, the president said.

“We are alarmed because the State of New Mexico could easily sell such lands to private interests, even out-of-state interests,” President Shelly said.

The potential for the state to sell public lands held sacred by tribes is too great, he maintained, especially with the recent fight to get the traditional cultural property designation for Mount Taylor after private interests attempted to open the mountain up to uranium mining.

“Further, House Bill 291 does not address the government-to-government agreements in place that we have to manage federal lands, nor does it address federal laws and policies tribes utilize to relate to the federal government,” President Shelly said.
President Shelly praises Rep. Kirkpatrick for tribal advocacy on Capitol Hill

WINDBROOK, Ariz.—On the morning of Feb. 9, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly joined Speaker LoRenzo Bates, members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council and the general public for the special Navajo swearing-in ceremony for Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (D-Ariz.).

The Navajo Nation Council hosted the event.

Administering the oath of office was Judge Carol Perry.

The Twin Warriors Society of Ft. Defiance provided color guard duties and the students of Dine’ Bi’ Olta recited the Pledge of Allegiance in Navajo.

Council delegate Jonathan Nez served as master of ceremonies and provided the welcome address.

Nez thanked Rep. Kirkpatrick for working with the Navajo Nation and for being the people’s voice on Capitol Hill.

President Shelly said it’s rare for a congressional leader to go above and beyond the call of duty to meet the needs of Native Americans.

Rep. Kirkpatrick was raised on the White Mountain Apache Reservation, which she said shaped her understanding and appreciation of the issues facing tribes today.

“The Navajo Nation is thankful for all that you have done for us,” President Shelly said. “We showed our appreciation for you at the voting polls this past year.”

He noted that residents in the Western Agency of the Navajo Nation were particularly grateful, after 27 miles of dirt road on Navajo Route 20 was paved in 78 days, connecting the Navajo communities of Bodaway-Gap, Coppermine and LeChee.

The roadway on U.S. Route 89 collapsed on Feb. 20, 2013. N20 was eventually selected as the detour route to restore essential traffic and the decision was made to pave the road.

The Navajo Nation worked with Arizona Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to get the $35 million project completed.

“But it was Rep. Kirkpatrick that lobbied in Washington, D.C. and secured the funding to make the project a reality,” President Shelly said.

While the highway improved the quality of life for thousands of Navajos in one portion of the Western Agency, Rep. Kirkpatrick is also working to assist tribal members in another portion of the agency.

In Jan., Rep. Kirkpatrick traveled to Ariz. with a congressional delegation from the U.S. House of Representatives to discuss issues facing the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe with the Office of Navajo Hopi Indian Relocation in Flagstaff.

The members of the House Appropriations Committee and Subcommittee on the Interior and Environment traveled to the Navajo and Hopi Reservations to see conditions firsthand and meet with tribal leaders.

During their Window Rock visit, President Shelly advocated for residents raising livestock for their survival. Recent livestock seizures by the Hopi Tribe have reawakened a generations old divide between the two tribes, he said.

“For many Navajo families living on (NPL, HPL and Bennett Freeze), raising livestock is a way of life and the only means of survival in those remote locations,” he said.

However, the president said he was confident that Rep. Kirkpatrick would find an amicable resolution to the livestock seizures.

Such advocacy has garnered praise for the “Navajo Nation’s Congresswoman” throughout her term of office. The oath of office ceremony in the Navajo Nation Council Chamber was an opportunity to say thanks to a hardworking congresswoman.

“It’s very rare to have a politician in Washington, D.C. that cares about tribal issues. The Navajo Nation is fortunate to have one in Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick,” President Shelly said.

-30-
President Shelly praises Navajo Beef and hard work of Navajo ranchers

BERNALILLO, N.M.—Since 2011, the Navajo Beef initiative has been growing and offering unmatched culinary delights at casinos owned and operated by Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise.

On Feb. 10, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met with representatives of NNGE and Labatt Food Service at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort at Santa Ana Pueblo to discuss progress with the Navajo Beef program. The group dined on Navajo Beef prepared by the executive chef of the Corn Maiden Restaurant for a high class dining experience that was one part celebration and one part demonstration.

Joining in the dinner were representatives from NNGE, Labatt, Navajo ranchers participating in the program and board members from gaming.

The group dined on Navajo Beef prepared by the executive chef of the Corn Maiden Restaurant for a high class dining experience that was one part celebration and one part demonstration.

Joining in the dinner were representatives from NNGE, Labatt, Navajo ranchers participating in the program and board members from gaming.

The Labatt Premium Verified Native American Beef program partners select Navajo ranchers with Navajo casinos. The company has expanded their program to include other tribes and pueblos.

Navajo cattle is purchased, placed on to feed and ultimately processed into boxed beef items upon market readiness. The beef is then distributed to Navajo casinos to be enjoyed by the consumer.

Local Navajo ranchers ship their cattle to feedlots owned by Billy Hall, a cattle buyer who owns the number one certified Angus feedlot in the country. From there, cattle are shipped to a harvest facility and then to direct source meat processing facilities.

Finally, Labatt distributes the beef to casinos, schools, travel and health centers in the southwest. “Navajos supporting Navajos” is the overarching theme.

President Shelly said the Navajo Beef initiative is not only a source of pride, but also a tremendous opportunity for self-sufficiency.

“For generations, we have known that livestock is an important Navajo way of life that must be preserved,” President Shelly said. “By working with our partners at Navajo Gaming Enterprise and Labatt, we are enriching our tribal economy and traditional way of life.

“We look forward to growing this partnership for the generations to come,” he added.

Labatt is the eighth largest broad line food service distributor nationally, said Al Silva, chief operating officer of Labatt Food Service.

Silva said the idea to incorporate Navajo Beef into the menus of Navajo casinos was an important step to prove the quality of the meat. The decision by NNGE to become the first customer for Navajo Beef has opened the door to other opportunities like tribal schools and hospitals.

The partnership connects producers with consumers and Navajo cattle ranchers are able to market their cattle at a premium and increase their bottom line for economic stability.

In 2013, Navajo ranchers had a ranching economic impact of $439,768 through sales of their cattle. In 2014, that number increased by 15 percent to $745,940 for 236,000 pounds of usable meat harvested.

In 2014, there were 481 head of cattle in the Navajo Beef Program. For 2015, that number grew to 561 and estimates for future project continued growth.

Silva said, “You can see the product is superior to anybody else’s product. There’s no apology there.”

Proper vaccinations mean the cattle are less susceptible to diseases and illnesses. Healthy cattle equals weight increase and a superior product for the growing niche market of Navajo Beef.

President Shelly is proud of the Navajo Beef initiative and said the steak was the best he’s ever tasted.

“Where’s the beef? It’s on Navajo,” he said.

Navajo Beef won the People’s Choice Award at the Arizona Indian Gaming Association Expo Cook Off in 2014.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 2015

Navajo Nation Council confirms standing committees

WINDOW ROCK – During a special session held on Tuesday, the Navajo Nation Council confirmed membership to four standing committees including the Budget and Finance Committee, Law and Order Committee, Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, and the Resources and Development Committee.

The proposed standing committee memberships were confirmed through Legislation No. 0038-15, sponsored by Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland).

Speaker Bates introduced the legislation in accordance with 2 N.N.C. §181 which states that the Speaker is authorized to select committee membership, which is subject to confirmation by the Navajo Nation Council.

Following the adjournment of the special council session, each of the four standing committees convened in special meetings to confirm a chair and vice chair for each committee.

In accordance with 2 N.N.C. each delegate is appointed to no more than one standing committee for a term coinciding with their term of office as a delegate. Additionally, Title II also mandates each standing committee to have one member from each of the five Navajo agencies.

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For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, search for keywords: Navajo Nation Council
GALLUP, N.M.—Creating opportunities to end homelessness is the mission of Community Area Resources Enterprise, Inc. of Gallup.

The non-profit organization is also known as CARE 66 and is dedicated to providing affordable housing opportunities to homeless people. Their belief is that by providing opportunities for people to improve work and life skills, they will become self-sufficient.

On Feb. 9, President Shelly toured the $8.4 million Hooghan Hozho and Liberty Hotel development in Gallup. First Lady Martha Shelly and executive staff assistant Carl Smith joined the president, plus staff from CARE 66.

The mixed income family housing development is located at 201 East Coal Ave., near downtown Gallup and stands in stark contrast to other buildings in the area. The three-story building features bright colors and bold architectural design.

Phase one of the project is for the apartment complex and phase two will be for construction of the hotel.

Navajo Housing Authority provided $7.1 million for the project. A multitude of other funding sources contributed more than $1.3 million for the complex.

There will be a total of 44 units for rent at Hooghan Hozho for Navajo families in need of housing. Construction began in Aug. 2013 and the project will be completed in June 2015.

According to CARE 66 statistics, the median income for a household in McKinley County is $25,005 and the median income for a family is $26,806. The per capita income for the county is $9,872.

About 31.9 percent of families and 36.1 percent of the population are below the poverty line, including 42.3 percent of those under age 18 and 31.5 percent for those 65 and over. The county’s per capita income makes it one of the poorest counties in the U.S.

President Shelly said the building was “exceptional” and said the Navajo Nation would like to pursue a similar apartment complex in Window Rock for veterans.

“Our veterans are in dire need for housing and this development is an excellent model that we can follow,” President Shelly said. “Carl Smith worked for CARE 66 and he is our point person for our veterans housing initiative.”

Thomas Gifford Architect, LLC of Santa Fe provided the building design. Pavilion Construction provided the construction of the building.

The apartment complex will consist of 11 one-bedroom, one-bathroom units, 30 two-bedroom, one-bathroom units and three three-bedroom, two-bathroom units.

Hooghan Hozho also features a secured courtyard, resident facilities and offices for the property manager. The units feature innovative floor plans with balconies.

Residents will have access to an onsite laundry facility, community computer rooms, onsite parking, a central recreation area and onsite social services.

Sanjay Choudhrie, executive director of CARE 66 said future plans include construction of micro apartments for the homeless at 100 square feet per unit, similar to their current program at the Lexington Hotel.

“We have 21 people at the Lexington Hotel and 175 people on the waiting list. We’d like to build (a hotel) so we can get people off the streets,” he said.

Choudhrie said they only accept tenants who are sober and that CARE 66 is the only Native American model in the country that providing housing first to tenants, followed by social services and other forms of assistance to get the homeless on their feet.

Smith said the Navajo Nation has plans to construct a similar apartment complex in Window Rock for veterans in need of housing.

“We have over 10,000 veterans on the Navajo Nation and more than 400 are homeless,” Smith said. “We want to build a HUD rental unit with support services.”

Identifying funding sources for the project is the first step and Smith will approach NHA, the Navajo Nation Council and others for seed money to fund architecture and engineering.

“The rental units will provide transitional housing for our veterans for at least four to six years, until they are able to establish homeownership for themselves,” Smith said.

In the meantime, Hooghan Hozho will address the large population of working Navajo families in need of affordable housing in Gallup.

President Shelly said there’s been a lot of misinformation about NHA in the media recently and the fact that they invested $7.1 million for Hooghan Hozho should prove they are spending money for housing.

“They’re changing how they’re spending money and how they do business,” President Shelly said.

Choudhrie agreed and said, “Most of our projects have some level of NHA funding. We couldn’t have done any of the things we’ve done without NHA. They’ve been a great partner for the last seven years.”

-30-
President Shelly attends Indian at Santa Fe, shares issues facing Nation

SANTA FE, N.M.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly attended Indian Day at the N.M. Legislature on Feb. 6, 2015 and shared a number of issues facing the Nation.

President Shelly told state legislators that the Navajo Nation grew by 2,440 new jobs that were created during his term of office. He expressed his hopes to see that number increase with new jobs in the Land of Enchantment.

“We need your support for the rail spur in Thoreau. This includes a two-line rail system for transport from the Transcontinental to the Four Corners,” President Shelly said. “We extend our gratitude to the State of New Mexico for funding the study.”

He said the opportunities with transportation and rail have resulted in a commitment from Burlington Northern Santa Fe to invest $8 million for two loops that will accommodate 100 rail cars for each loop.

“From such projects, we can increase gross revenue receipts for the Navajo Nation, Four Corners, counties and state,” President Shelly said.

He also spoke about the capital outlay and tribal infrastructure funds provided by the state for projects across tribal lands in N.M.

The funding provided to Indian tribes across the state for infrastructure projects are a demonstration of government-to-government partnerships to leverage funding, he said.

It provides an opportunity for tribes, pueblos and the state to come together to address infrastructure needs, said the president.


President Shelly said their support would be crucial to passing the tribal gaming compact with the state.

“We need your support. Jobs, revenue, tax and business from the many vendors will come forth from this legislature as you pass our compact,” President Shelly said. “We will remain here in Santa Fe to work toward this accomplishment.”

By working together and negotiating with the pueblos and legislators, the Navajo Nation is looking forward to passing a gaming compact that is agreeable to all this legislative session.

He concluded by saying that the new rail system is an opportunity for growth in manufacturing and other future industries.

“The Navajo Nation is not a manufacturing nation. Although we produce natural resources and jobs in the energy market, we have no manufacturing workforce,” President Shelly said. “With your foresight and legislative fix, we can increase opportunity for a manufacturing base in northwest N.M., where there is an abundance of oil, natural gas, coal and agriculture.”
President Shelly says thank you

Four Years of Honorable Leadership

No lawsuits, administrative leave or investigations launched against the presidential administration during the four year term of office - President Ben Shelly and VP Rex Lee Jim will stand the test of time.

Before he entered office and became Navajo Nation President, Ben Shelly guided the general election of 2010 and made the comeback of ages to win the vote of the Navajo people for the highest office of Indian Country. President Shelly took over the reins to the tribal government and took the oath of office to become the first N.M. resident and sitting vice president to get elected as president. Conspicuously absent from the inauguration ceremony was Joe Shirley, former president. It was the first time the exiting president did not attend the inauguration ceremony for the transfer of power.

Vice President Rex Lee Jim, who previously served as council delegate for Rock Point Chapter, joined President Shelly. Jim, an accomplished writer and graduate of Princeton, was given the responsibility of managing the divisions of health and education. This too, was a progressive action, to have the vice president directly involved in shaping the vision of the administration. Vice President Jim was also a skilled Navajo linguist and a medicine man that advocated for cultural preservation.

The Navajo delegation raised sacred masks at the Drouot auction house in Paris, France. It is also important to note that item 77 in the catalog is not subject to the will of the Nation or auction house. Vice President Jim offered that item 77 in the catalog, otherwise known as the Paris delegation's sacred masks at the Drouot auction house on December 12th, 2014.

The power lies with the Navajo people, not the council, the president said.

In addition, he said that the Office of the Auditor General, Navajo Election Administration, Office of Hearings and Appeals, Ethics and Rules, and Government Development need to be repositioned to the Executive Branch.

“Those need to be separate and independent entities not subject to the will of the council. That is the only way the Navajo Nation will truly move forward,” President Shelly said. “I am hoping that the next generation of leadership will see the logic in this legislative fix.

“However, it is also important that we work together with our legislators to get the job done for the people,” he added.

The president maintained that it is the Navajo people that are the governing body.

President Shelly and Vice President Jim take oath of office to extend term

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—President Ben Shelly delivered the State of the Navajo Nation on Jan. 25, outlining significant accomplishments from the past quarter and providing a vision for the future.

Flanked by Vice President Rex Lee Jim and Chief of Staff Aribin Mitchell, the president delivered his address in Navajo and highlighted the partnership between the Executive and Legislative Branches that made the accomplishments possible.

He began with lauding the efforts between both branches to fund the remediation of Administration Building No. 1, which reopened in early January. Funding came from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance, indirect costs and carryover funding, which totaled more than $5.5 million for construction.

“Several tribal divisions and departments stepped up to the plate and housed our displaced employees until the building could be renovated,” President Shelly said.

He noted that the health and welfare of tribal employees was the primary concern and that renovations have already begun on Administrative Building No. 2, which was also shutdown due to funds.

Window Rock, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and Vice President Rex Lee Jim took the oath of office on Jan. 15 for continuity of government. They will meet with the 23rd Navajo Nation Council during the winter session to discuss plans moving forward to June and August presidential elections.

The terms of the agreement state that the Navajo Nation Council will extend term to the winter session to discuss the best interests of the Nation moving forward.

Until then, President Shelly and Vice President Jim will maintain continuity of government until a new president is elected.

Chief Justice Herb Yezizie administered the oath of office at the Office of the President and Vice President. The State Room was packed with cabinet members, OPPV staff and members of the media to witness the event.

Standing in front of the mangled Great Seal of the Navajo Nation, President Shelly placed his left hand on the Bible and raised his right hand to take his oath of office.

 sane masks belong to the Navajo Nation, and the right course of action was to return them. The vice president called the masks “living and breathing beings,” in Navajo, and as sacred to the people used for healing ceremonies during the winter. It was important that they were taken home.

The Ultimate Legislative Fix

PARIS—Navajo Nation Vice President Rex Lee Jim and Navajo Human Rights officials purchased seven confirmed Navajo sacred masks that were up for auction in Paris, France. Hands of items representing different Indigenous nations went on auction on Dec. 15, 2014.

The Navajo delegation arrived in Paris on Dec. 12 and accomplished one of its goals by gaining access to the sacred masks at the Drouot auction house on Dec. 13. Vice President Jim offered Navajo prayers to restore harmony from the masks being removed from the Four Sacred Mountains.

It is also important to note that the Navajo Nation President, Ben Shelly and Vice President Rex Lee Jim both took the oath of office to extend term at noon today and extended their presidency.

The decision to extend the term of office for President Shelly came on the heels of a late night negotiation meeting and subsequent letter of agreement between Executive and Legislative Branches of government.

The terms of the agreement state, “In the spirit of K’ee and Hózhó the Executive and Legislative leaders have come together to talk things out in resolving a controversy that would impact the stability of the Navajo Nation.”

The agreement further states that President Shelly will maintain all power and duties under the provisions of the Navajo Nation Code. The president will meet with Vice President. The State Room was packed with cabinet members, OPPV staff and members of the media to witness the event.

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Vice President Rex Lee Jim
President Shelly approves special runoff election, NBOES pardon

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—On the afternoon of Jan. 10, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly signed the special runoff election legislation passed on the last day of the year by the Navajo Nation Council into law.

The FTA awarded the Navajo Transit System the grant for the Chap Martinez allotment, $166,000.

"There's a lot of work to be done but we can't let the people need help," he said.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, OPPF staff and cabinet members convened with the president and Vice President at the Navajo Nation Museum to discuss plans moving forward.

In a short time in office, staff must give 110 percent in the message, in order to complete projects that are still in progress. President and Vice President need everybody that maintaining continuity of government was the order of the day.

All of his staff and cabinet members will continue working with the administration until a successor is elected into office.

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All of his staff and cabinet members will continue working with the administration until a successor is elected into office.
The Navajo Nation is determined to maintain the use of its money for the Navajo people.
Reasons why President Shelly and Vice President Jim should remain in office

I

The 2014 presidential election taught us anything, it undoubtedly taught us the importance of working at the Klagetoh Chapter House. If we don’t make sure our crops of working here was fun, I really enjoyed working here. I'm looking forward to next year and work again.

The endless litany of questions continues to pop up at the chapter House. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity for working here.

Sincerely yours,
Deleno Sliger
Dear President Shelly,
Thank you for giving me this job assignment at the Klagetoh Chapter House. Also thank you for the money you gave me. The money that is going to be given to me is going to help me buy new clothes and supplies. Again, thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Rallshanna Begay
To: Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly
On behalf of the Klagetoh community and the Navajo Nation, we are saying thank you for the opportunity to work and gain job experience in the process.

Kirk S. Wilson

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly

Greetings, I am a member of the Klagetoh community, a classroom teacher and have been here for a long time. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to work and gain job experience in the process.

You have given our chapter funds in order for students to be temporarily employed. We are thankful to work in a team and acknowledge each other. I would also like to thank you for the opportunities. We appreciate what you have done for us and our Klagetoh community members.

Sincerely,
Nichelle Ashley Klagetoh

Who are the modern Navajo?

Dear President Ben Shelly,
I am a seventh grader at Hasfield Middle School in Mehalo, North Carolina.

I am writing a report on the Navajo and I need some help with finding information on the modern day Navajo.

Some of the information I could use is the history of the Navajo, the places where they moved, and what did the Code Talkers do?

Were your people affected by the European explorers? In the traditional Navajo religion, was the beliefs and customs?

Any information would be helpful so thanks for the help.

Sincerely,
Kohe McGeorge
Melane, NC.

Line item veto

On Dec. 10, President Shelly executed his line-item veto authority on Legislation No. CN-58-14, which was for more than $1 million from the FY 2015 general funds budget. The Navajo Nation Department of Justice (NNDOJ) council resolution, $541,946 was for funding salaries of secretarial assistants and administrative support agents and $500,000 was for administrative service centers under the Office of the President and Vice President.

On Sept. 15, President Shelly vetoed $250,000 for the Navajo Nation Department of Justice’s (NNDOJ) comprehensive budget because the budget “could not be justified from the standpoint of the FBI’s ongoing investigation into the Secretary of the Interior’s past financial activities.”

Auditors have discovered that the budget request for the department was overfunded and lacked a budget or plan for the money. They also found that the department is operating on supplemental funds or indirect cost funding,” said “for the time being, must execute any line item veto authority.”
NSNDOT is charged for perfomance checks related to transportation road improvements, Mitchell Major, a environmentalist with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, local, state and federal agencies for five years of a tribal transportation priority listing.

The projects are mandated by 25 CFR Part 170, Subpart D under the Tribal Transportation Program.

Paulson Chaco, director of NSDOT, said the FY 2015 TTP now moves forward to the Federal Highway Administration for final approval. If approved, the project listing for the Nation will be submitted into the national transportation improvement program.

He said progress has been swift during this administration, but additional road improvement needs are due during monsoon flooding and the winter snow. "Projects in the five-year TTP include cultural and environmental impact studies, right-of-ways, centerline surveys and designs," Chaco said.

Other program funds include safety projects, planning, construction and maintenance. Additionally, two percent of the funding is used to provide technical assistance to chapters for transportation planning, mapping, roadway data collection and long range transportation plans.

The highway project receives $55,500 annually in funding from the FHWA for transportation planning. The project listing receives $10 million of that amount, after it entered into a direct funding agreement with the FHWA in 2013. The direct funding agreement changed the dynamics of transportation on the Navajo Nation, Chaco said. "The BIA is now partners with Navajo DOT. They are no longer 'the boss.' This has strengthened our tribal sovereignty." The continuation of the direct funding agreement was one of the directives made to Chaco by Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly when the administration took office in 2011. Early on in the administration, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly sent a letter to Yazzie (Church Rock, Ilaybito, Maricopa, Laveen, Pine, etc) and stressed the importance of the Navajo Nation's sovereign status by recognizing the Nation's authority to determine what is in the best interest of our people, our culture and our future, President Shelly said.

The legislation amends an outdated language of the Nation’s sovereignty by recognizing the Nation’s authority to determine what is in the best interest of our people, our culture and our future, President Shelly said. "One is our ability to regulate and monitor programs that support individual and community health efforts. The Department of Health to develop policies and plans to protect health and ensure safety.

President Shelly said, "Today, we have let go of the shopping center was added as an amendment. "I compromised and signed the legislation on the five-year Economic Development Plan," President Shelly said. Resolution No. CD-75-14 was also signed for approval of the issuance of $8,300,000 in general obligation bonds, Navajo Natural Gas Ltd. and demolished project. President Shelly approved the project, which was also listed on the five-year CIP. The project, however, is also listed on the five-year Economic Development Plan.

"I worked with the council to make it an effective project, but they needed to ensure their legislation is on the five-year Economic Development Plan for any future legislation," President Shelly said. Legislation No. CD-69-14 was also approved by the council. The Navajo Nation Economic Development Committee to receive $180,120 from the UUF for their farm boards, has earmarked Fuel Excise Tax funds on the Nation. The project is on the five-year CIP and is in compliance with the Appropriations Act.

Compliance with the Appropriations Act......
President Shelly honors Navajo veterans during festivities for 2014 Veterans Day in Window Rock

OPVP provides interns opportunity for government reform

Patricia Jewell joins President Shelly for historic $554 million settlement signing ceremony

Window Rock, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly signed a settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of the Interior, other federal officials, Navajo Council Delegates, and the Navajo Trust Litigation Task force joined President Shelly at the ceremony.

The president and the secretary acknowledged that the settlement demonstrated resolving differences and working together for Navajos. “This settlement reflects our continuing commitment to upholding the federal trust responsibility to Indian Country and to building strong, prosperous and resilient tribal communities,” said Secretary Jewell.

The president called on the Navajo people to be an active input at town hall meetings scheduled to begin Oct. 6 in Chinle, Ariz. The purpose of the town hall meetings is to gain guidance from the Navajo people on how to best utilize the $554 million settlement.

He also thanked the Trust Litigation Task Force for their guidance and leadership to resolving this issue.

“IT is important to note that a lot of work went into reaching this landmark agreement. The Navajo Nation worked for many years in long and tough negotiations to come to a resolution on this issue.”

President Shelly thanked President Obama and his administration for settling the case that has been outstanding for decades Native Nations have had an adversarial relationship with the U.S. Department of the Interior, said President Shelly.

Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, Samuel Hersch, acting attorney general for the U.S. Department of Justice, Environmental and Natural Resource Division, Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, other federal officials, Navajo Council Delegates, and the Navajo Trust Litigation Task force joined President Shelly at the ceremony.

One year from now, Franklin Lane Franklin, a student from Durango, Colo., participated in the project.

The president said the money from this settlement will provide the Navajo government with a wide range of choices on investment, but infrastructure and development will be a priority.

This means that we are taking one small step towards self-sufficiency and away from dependency,” the president added.

He also underscored the need for the Navajo Nation to stand on its own and rely less on the federal government to provide for the people.

“He also thanked the Trust Litigation Task Force for their guidance and leadership to resolving this issue.

“The next step following today’s signing ceremony is to hear from the Navajo people on how the settlement can be used. We urge the Navajo people to provide their input on this important issue that will effect generations to come,” said the president.

VETERANS DAY LEAD. Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly unveiled the 11 new names that were added to the KIA Wall at Veterans Memorial Park in Window Rock. Center, the Twin Warriors Society Color Guard opened the event and walked from the last known Navajo who died in battle in Korea. The day-long Veterans Day activity included launch provided by the Navajo Department of Veterans Affairs. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

GOVERNMENT REFORM President Shelly hired 14 student interns to work and research government reform for the tribe. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

I want to give these young Navajo students an opportunity to see the operation of the tribal government.”

Benally said. “Effective leadership and communications causes problems. The president called on the Navajo people to be an active input at town hall meetings scheduled to begin Oct. 6 in Chinle, Ariz. The purpose of the town hall meetings is to gain guidance from the Navajo people on how to best utilize the $554 million settlement.”

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President Shelly enacts Healthy Dine’ Nation’ Act of 2014

President Shelly enacts criminal code amendments

$1 billion settlement funding drawdown begins

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When you add these two buildings, it probably runs close to $10 million. "It was a team effort. That's the only way that things get going," said Virgil Brown, director for the Division of General Services, who also encouraged employees to quickly process the requests for the people. "We worked very hard on this building. I would like to thank the staff," said President Jim. "Some of these projects were not in compliance with the Appropriations Act, but we worked around the projects because of their importance to their respective tribes," he said. "We have a responsibility to do the right thing."

President Shelly said that the building's completion was the product of cooperation between the Executive and Legislative Branches of tribal government. "Whoever is taking office next, I hope you took notes because this building was made by working together, not against each other," President Shelly said.

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President Shelly meets with Land Buy-Back Program for Indian Nations

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Officials from the U.S. Department of Interior met with President Ben Shelly this morning to discuss benefits of the Navajo Nation’s participation in the Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations.

Established by Interior Department, the Buy-Back Program is for tribal nations to implement the land consolidation provisions of the Cobell settlement agreement.

The settlement provided $1.9 billion for the Trust Land Consolidation Fund to consolidate fractional land interests across Indian Country. Approximately 150 tribal nations are participating in the program.

Representatives from the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Land Department, Navajo Department of Justice, Bureau of Indian Affairs and Interior Department met at tribal headquarters for the two-hour presentation.

President Shelly said public outreach with Navajo allottees was necessary to provide education and answer frequently asked questions.

The headquarters for the Buy-Back Program is in Crownpoint, with satellite offices in Farmington, Gallup and Winslow, Ariz. Approximately 150 tribal reservations with fractional interests are participating in the program.

President Shelly said, “The cooperative agreement is a product of significant planning and coordination with the Navajo Nation since 2013.”

Beyond the need for public outreach to allottees, President Shelly said other considerations looming in the horizon must be monitored.

“I opposed legislation during the recent New Mexico State Legislative Session where private interests attempted to form a group to study federal land,” he said.

The Navajo Nation, Apache Nations and Pueblos stood united against House Bill 291, which was related to public lands for the creation of the N.M. Federal Land Management Commission.

“When you think about it, what land was the commission going to study? Probably a lot of (allotted tribal lands),” President Shelly said. “A lot of states right now want to eliminate federal lands.

“Arizona tried it. New Mexico tried it. Utah is thinking about it. They said federal land is costing too much. They want to turn it into private land for tax purposes,” he added.

According to the program website, “The Buy-Back Program allows interested individual owners to receive payments for voluntarily selling their land. All interests sold are restored to tribes, which helps to keep Indian lands in trust for tribal communities.”

Santee Lewis, senior advisor on tribal relations for the Land Buy-Back Program, said land fractionation is serious problem for Indian Country.

“Our program was created as a result of the Cobell settlement. We have a $1.9 billion fund to purchase lands in 146 locations in Indian Country,” Lewis said.

She said the program must follow five parameters for land purchases: the land must be from fractionated interests, held in trust or restricted land status, purchased at fair market value, and must be purchased from willing sellers within a 10-year period.

“We only purchase lands from willing sellers. Participation in our program is purely voluntary,” Lewis said.

The Navajo Nation’s participation in the program is outlined in the cooperative agreement.

“Land is something that I will always support. Purchase it whenever you can,” President Shelly said. “It’ll always be there. We’ll be gone, but the land will be there.”

The Buy-Back Program will be in operation for the next seven years working toward the goal of consolidating fractionated tribal lands.
President Shelly pays respect to fallen officer Alex K. Yazzie

FARMINGTON, N.M.—
Thousands of people gathered. The funeral services for fallen Navajo Police officer Alex K. Yazzie was emotional. Police officers, fire fighters, emergency medical personnel and other first responders answered the call to pay final respect to one of their comrades.

They came from different states, different counties and different tribes. But the common thread was that they all worked to serve the public and the greater good.

Members from the U.S. Armed Forces were also in attendance, with many wearing the dress uniforms in honor of the departed.

A large American flag draped between two cranes fully extended marked the entrance to the Pinon Hill Community Church, which was filled to capacity. Police officers stood along the walls of church interior in a protective circle.

For those unable to be seated, they stood in the back and watched the proceedings, while hundreds of other stood outside the church and waited.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly provided remarks.

He said the Nation is grieving and saddened by the loss of a tribal officer that gave his life to protect others.

“I would like to thank all the law enforcement officers that are here from the different agencies. Thank you for being with us and with the family,” President Shelly said.

Police officers face many challenges: stress and emotional toll, he said, adding that interaction with the public is usually met with a sharp eye and equally cutting words.

“The people you stop, they never have a nice word to say to (officers.) They chew on you, they give you a hard time,” President Shelly said.

“Domestic violence calls are the most dangerous.”

In spite of this, brave men and women don the uniform and protect their communities, he noted, with the understanding that they have only three to six seconds to react in dangerous situations.

Beyond those daily challenges, Navajo Police have to work with less. Whether it’s funding to purchase equipment, pay salaries or simple manpower, there’s not enough to cover the tremendous land base of the Navajo Nation, he added.

The times are changing. “When I was growing up, I remember a non-Navajo, hungry or thirsty, another Navajo would pick him up, feed him and give him water,” President Shelly said. “What’s today’s world? Right now, if you’re in that situation, you get beat up or you get killed.

“These are Navajos I’m talking about. Society is changing,” he added.

With the increase population and changing social values, President Shelly said more funding is needed from the federal, state and tribal governments to properly equip officers for changing times.

“We are shorthanded. Believe it or not, the Navajo Police officers that are here, one officer has to cover 1,282 persons. Farmington has more officers as whole, than the Navajo Police as a force,” President Shelly said.

Upon concluding his address, President Shelly presented the family of Alex K. Yazzie the Navajo Nation Flag and saluted his brave service and tragic sacrifice.

Officer Alex K. Yazzie was buried at Memory Garden Cemetery.

-30-
President Shelly approves $1.1 million for legislative district assistants program

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Third time’s the charm.

On the afternoon of March 24, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly signed Resolution No. CMA-8-15 and approved FY 2015 general funds in the amount of $1,151,811 for the legislative district assistants program.

Legislative district assistants are assigned to the 24 council delegates to provide “a wide range of legislative work of considerable difficulty in providing general support to council delegates and specifically addressing inquiries from, and serving as a liaison to, constituents.”

“In the spirit of cooperation with the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, I have signed and approved more than $1.1 million for the legislative district assistants program,” President Shelly said. “These funds will provide the council with assistance in constituency services.”

The president vetoed two other legislative resolutions requesting for more than $3.5 million to fund the LDA positions.

During the FY 2015 comprehensive budget, the 22nd Navajo Nation Council took issue with politically appointed positions and said the funding for salaries would best be utilized to provide direct services to the Navajo people.

President Shelly agreed and subsequently vetoed Legislation No. CS-46-14 on Sept. 15, 2014. The legislation earmarked almost $2 million for the LDA program, more than $1.3 million of which was identified to fund travel expenses.

A few months passed before a second bill surfaced to fund the district assistant positions.


President Shelly’s decision to approve the LDA program budget the third time around came after months of negotiations and discussions with members of the tribal council.

-30-
MEMORANDUM

TO: All Departmental Personnel
Navajo Police Department

FROM: Ivan G. Tsosie, Police Captain
Delegated Chief of Police
Navajo Police Department

DATE: March 24, 2015

SUBJECT: Loss of an Officer
Re: Senior Police Officer Alex Yazzie, Shiprock Police District

As you may know through various media, Shiprock Police District lost an Officer on Thursday night, March 19, 2015, in a gun battle on the east side foothills of the Chuska Mountains, Red Valley, Arizona. Officer Yazzie was fatally wounded at the location. Senior Police Officers James Hale and Herbert Frazier III were also injured by suspect’s fire. Officer Hale and Frazier are recuperating from their injuries and are with their families. Shiprock Police District continues to mourn the loss of one of our finest. Although, we may hear negativity from people who were not there we will continue to be vigilant in providing police services to the people – who are our only care. Those negative people are only bringing their personal issues to light at this time because they see an opportunity. So, I humbly ask that you join us as we help lay Senior Police Officer Alex Yazzie to rest. He was very proud to be a Navajo Police Officer and a United States Marine. The funeral will begin at 1000 hours, with the rest of the events falling-in thereafter. The funeral, burial and reception will be at the following locations:

Funeral Services:
Pinion Hills Community Church,
5101 North Dustin Avenue
Farmington, New Mexico, 87401

Burial Services:
Memory Garden Cemetery
6917 East Main
Farmington, New Mexico, 87402, and the

Reception:
National Guard Armory,
1101 West Navajo Street,
Farmington, New Mexico, 87401

*Funeral services are on Friday, 03/27/2015

Navajo Police Personnel maybe excused to attend, subject to the approval of their immediate supervisor and Commanders. Officers wanting to participate in the motorcade and escort from the Desert View Funeral Home, Shiprock, New Mexico, into Farmington, New Mexico, should contact their immediate supervisor; in addition, the District Commanders will contact Police Sergeant Rory Alcity with names and units of personnel who may attend. All police units shall be clean. Sergeant Alcity may be contacted at (505) 368-1354. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact this office. Thank you, and may the holy people protect you and your families.

CONCURRENCE:

John H. Billison, Executive Director
Navajo Division of Public Safety

c: All NDPS Programs
WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly signed the tribal gaming compact today during an impromptu signing ceremony at the Office of the President and Vice President.

Flanked by Speaker LoRenzo Bates and council delegates Nelson Begaye, Jonathan Hale and Leonard Tsosie, President Shelly signed the gaming compact for tribal approval. The compact now advances to Gov. Susana Martinez and the U.S. Department of Interior.

“The Navajo Nation extends thanks to the tribes and pueblos that stood with us to get this compact passed,” President Shelly said. “I would also like to express appreciation for our counterparts at the Navajo Nation Council, Navajo Department of Justice and Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise.

“By working together, we passed a historic gaming compact that will continue to impact our tribal economies for the next 22 years,” he added.

Karis Begaye, an attorney with Navajo DOJ, said this week, the five tribes will have their gaming compacts signed by their respective tribal leaders before submission to the governor’s office for approval and signature.

Another formal signing ceremony is expected to take place in Santa Fe, when Gov. Martinez signs the compact and sends it forward to DOI, she said.

The goal is to submit the compact to the federal government next week for the start of the 45-day review period.

-30-
SHIPROCK, N.M.—It’s for the kids.

This morning, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly attended the grand opening of the Shiprock Youth Center and snipped the ribbon to officially open the spacious facility to the general public.

On March 6, 2013, President Shelly broke ground for the new youth center. The grand opening comes almost two years to the day.

“Our Navajo kids need opportunities to do something constructive with their time. This new facility will give them the opportunity to play sports and have a safe and sanitary place to meet,” President Shelly said.

The $6.6 million facility was funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Measuring 22,000 square feet, the center features rooms for art, games, learning, technology, media and the open ceiling gym.

The new facility is a welcome distraction for Navajo kids seeking recreational activities that don’t involve drug or alcohol abuse.

President Shelly said the war against drugs and alcohol on the Navajo Nation is a daily challenge.

“We need to teach our children about the dangers of these addictive lifestyles,” he said.

The new multipurpose building goes a long way toward addressing those dangers, in addition to replacing the dilapidated old facility, which is more than 50 years old.

Our kids are the future leaders of tomorrow, the president said, adding that more youth centers like the one in Shiprock need to be constructed at chapters across the Navajo Nation.

“First Lady and I have dedicated our lives to protecting Navajo children,” President Shelly said. “It started at our home with our kids and grandkids.

“Our homes are the first learning centers for our kids,” he added.

Thanking the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development, Navajo Housing Authority, Division of Dine’ Education and the Office of Dine Youth, President Shelly said it was a collaborative effort that made the project a reality.

Design and Engineering Services worked with Dyron Murphy for the architecture and design. Oakland-Arviso provided the construction.

President Shelly said the 2014 presidential election taught the Navajo people the most important lesson of all – the preservation of self-identity.

“(The election) taught us the importance of preserving our Navajo language and culture. I have great hope that this new facility will help us preserve those elements in our lives,” he said.

-30-
President Shelly provides welcome address at Navajo Land Summit

TWIN ARROWS, Ariz.—Pay attention. Listen. Take notes.
Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly’s advice to the more than 800 registered attendees of the 2nd Annual Navajo Nation Land Summit was straightforward.

“Please be sure you attend the sessions and take good notes to take back with you to your offices,” President Shelly said. “There’s a lot of good information that will be shared with you over the next few days.
For a second year, the Navajo Land Department provided information on the rigors of tribal land management and the numerous layers of data that will be available to Navajos and non-Navajos alike. Once again, the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort played host.
The Navajo Nation Land Title Data System, a new database with exceptional firewall protection and countless tiers of information providing real time data on everything from roads, infrastructure, forested areas, water wells and right-of-way areas, is the crown jewel of the Land Department.
President Shelly said, “This new database will automate services for chapter members, tribal officials, and the general public. People no longer have to travel to Window Rock to find information.”
Data is literally at the fingertips of the general public, as the NLTDS will be accessible on desktops, iPads and even smart phones. The database works in tandem with the Navajo Nation General Leasing Act of 2013, which was enacted by the U.S. Department of the Interior in the summer of 2014.
“The Navajo Nation now has authority over all leases on the Navajo Nation, with the exception of minerals and right-of-ways. Those two are still under the jurisdiction of the BIA,” President Shelly said.
The Navajo Nation is vastly different from the tribal government of 15 years past, he said, noting that technology savvy chapters are finding self-determination and transparency through online tools like the Woven Integrated Navajo Data System.
“Chapter officials attending the land summit will learn about creating the most effective Community Land Based Plans that serve as blueprints to their communities,” President Shelly said.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 24, 2015

President Shelly said the Navajo Nation has grown by leaps and bounds with the Navajo Nation Land Title Data System, which provides layers and layers of data ranging from infrastructure, grazing lands, home site leases, business site leases, water wells, roads, forests and other important data. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
said. “Gone are the days of building anywhere on the land. “Everything is now recorded, monitored and protected to ensure we are getting the most of our tribal lands,” he added.

Paradigm Shift

“The Beginning of a Paradigm Shift that Promotes Independence” was the theme of the summit. Attendees included chapter officials, council delegates, tribal enterprises, community land use planning committees, grazing officials and land boards.

Moroni Benally, executive director of the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, provided the welcome address and encouraged the audience to realize that “land is life.”

“This is an incredibly important summit, not just for what’s happening now, but for the future of the Navajo Nation,” Benally said. “The information you leave with becomes power.”

He said it’s the power to change existing laws and policies, the power to change the way communities are organized, the power to change the way people use land.

Dissecting the theme of the summit, Benally explained that a paradigm is a set of rules or guidelines, whether it’s federal or tribal policies, school board directives or the Red Book that governs the Eastern Land Board.

Presently, a paradigm shift is occurring at DNR, he said, ever since he took over the reins to the division earlier this year.

“I began reviewing programmatic agreements with the federal government and realized that a lot of times, the Navajo Nation is in the back seat,” Benally said.

Updating outdated policies can be done with a little hard work and persistence, he said, because federal regulations are not carved in stone.

“There’s always creative ways around existing law. That’s what I kept telling the federal officials and now, we are changing the criteria for selecting contractors that are working on the Navajo Nation,” Benally said. “This did not require Navajo Nation Council or Congressional approval.”

Benally challenged the attendees to take control of the land so cities, towns, schools, factories and hospitals could be created, all which create a tax base to draw money from for services to the people.

“Listen carefully. This is the beginning. It all starts with land,” he said.

Navajo Nation Strategic Plan

Arbin Mitchell, chief of staff for the Office of the Speaker, said the land is our Mother.

“As Navajo people, we have a simple idea, a simple plan,” Mitchell said. “There are four items in our strategic plan: Nitsáhákees, Nahat’á, Iiná, and Sihasin.

“(The plan) goes around and around. You plant it out, you think it out,” he said.

The four concepts of thinking, planning, life and hope are the foundation for the Navajo Nation.

Mitchell said his decades of experience serving at the highest levels of the Navajo Nation Executive Branch has taught him that progress begins at the local level.

Citing Title 26 of the Navajo Nation Code, the Local Governance Act, he said certified chapters have an opportunity to issue their own business site or home site leases.

“Any plan that starts in Window Rock is hard to finish. If it starts from the community, it’s not that hard to complete. Local empowerment is about doing for yourself,” Mitchell said.

Legislative Branch chief of staff Arbin Mitchell said traditionally, Navajos are taught to respect the land because she is our Mother. He said the simple Navajo plan of thinking, planning, life and hope hold the answer. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

Mike Halona, department manager for the Navajo Land Department, provided an interactive history of land on the Navajo Nation. His presentation included land impacts, land use planning and chapter boundaries. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
President Shelly meets with Democratic House leader Nancy Pelosi

President Shelly shares a moment with Wisconsin Congresswoman Gwen Moore at the conclusion of the meeting between congressional members and tribal leaders last Friday. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

SANTA FE—The minority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and other congressional members met with Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and other tribal leaders in a private meeting in Santa Fe last Friday.

President Shelly met with Congresswoman Pelosi on March 20 at Buffalo Thunder Casino and shared issues from the Navajo Nation. He focused on energy development and stimulating the tribal economy.

“Today, the Navajo Nation has more than its fair share of poverty,” President Shelly said.

He said the tribe has an unemployment rate bordering on 60 percent and the average Navajo earns only $7,200 annually. Forty percent of Navajo families lack running water and electricity, basic infrastructure most Americans take for granted.

“Dollars earned by Navajos are immediately spent in the border towns circling the Navajo Nation. We have to break this cycle,” President Shelly said. “This means developing industries on the Nation that will attract business development.

“Bureaucratic red tape, delays in approvals, lack of basic business competence and a paternalistic view have created federal imposed poverty on the Navajo people,” he said.

Sponsored by the Tribal Engagement and Active Members Program (TEAM), the private event brought together tribal leaders and congressional members.

Congressman Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.), chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, facilitated the meeting discussions.

Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick (D-Ariz.), Congresswoman Xavier Becerra (D-Calif.), Congressman Derek Kilmer (D-Wash.) and Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Wis.) also attended the meeting to iron out issues facing tribes across Indian Country.

President Shelly explained that tribes were mired in a complex regulatory framework for the U.S., and often bogged down by the trust responsibilities of the federal government.

Nearly all the approvals to start a project on tribal lands require the approval of the U.S. Secretary of Interior, he said, adding that the U.S. EPA is another roadblock preventing tribes from executing projects.

“The delays imposed by these approvals can last for years and cost millions of dollars,” President Shelly said.

The time required to obtain federal regulatory approval discourages investors from spending their money on the Navajo Nation to fund projects and employment opportunities.

“Why in a time of increasing federal budgets would the federal government want to limit the Navajo Nation’s ability to support itself?” President Shelly questioned.

The Navajo Nation economy is built upon coal, oil and natural gas.

With renewable energy the new battle cry on Capitol Hill, the Navajo Nation is left in a lurch because the tribe’s fossil fuel dependent economy must now move in the opposite direction.

He said this comes after the government pushed the Navajo Nation into a fossil fuel dependent economy in the early twentieth century to secure ridiculously low royalty rates for outside energy companies.

“So where does this leave us? We are even more dependent on the federal government than we were yesterday. That is unacceptable,” President Shelly said.

The answer is energy generation.

Implementing new alternatives such as clean coal technology: Coal-to-gas, coal-to-liquid and government incentives to promote carbon capture and sequestration.

President Shelly said the federal government must give tribes the authority to approve leases, agreements and right-of-ways for the purpose of developing mineral resources and refining energy resources.

The ability for tribes to have true self-determination over their economic future is well worth the investment, he encouraged.

“For every energy job created, there are five to seven secondary jobs created to support that position,” President Shelly said. “Think about how many Navajos we can put to work, how many lives we can change.

“That is the beginning of creating a sustainable economy,” he concluded.

-30-
President Shelly orders flags at half-staff to honor officer Alex Yazzie

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—The flags across the Navajo Nation will be at half-staff to commemorate the service of a Navajo Police officer killed on duty.

On March 20, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly issued a proclamation in honor of the late Alex Yazzie, a 14-year veteran of the Navajo Police and former U.S. Marine Corps veteran.

“The Navajo Nation mourns the loss of Alex Yazzie, a dedicated Navajo Police officer that gave his life in the line of duty to protect the lives of others,” President Shelly said. “We are deeply saddened over his sudden departure.”

Navajo Police mourn the loss of one of their own. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

Navajo Police will be at half-staff from March 20 through 23, 2015.

On March 19, at 2:15 p.m., Jordon Fowler called the Shiprock Police District and reported his brother Justin Fowler for domestic violence.

Justin Fowler was pistol-whipping his wife Rayana Ramone and his mother Cecelia Begay.

The police dispatcher heard shots fired while on the phone with Jordon Fowler.

With his brother on the phone with the police, Justin Fowler subsequently fled the scene of the crime and Navajo Police officer Anderson Dez responded to the call.

About 200 yards south of the Littlewater store, Dez was directed toward U.S. Route 491, where the suspect, Justin Fowler, was parked. Justin Fowler began firing an AR-15 semiautomatic rifle at Dez.

Officer Dez took cover behind his police unit, which received damage from the gunplay. Justin Fowler then fled the scene.

The suspect returned to Littlewater at 8:20 p.m., near the location of the mobile police command center. He reportedly made a U-turn in an apparent taunt to police officers and led police on a car chase.

Navajo Police followed in pursuit, including Lieutenant Phillip Joe. While traveling on Navajo Route 13, five miles south of the Red Valley Trading Post, the suspect began firing upon approaching police vehicles.

Lt. Joe’s unit was hit and was disabled.

From that point, the suspect fled toward Lukachukai, Ariz. Approximately 11 miles south of Red Valley Trading Post, the responding officers cam upon the suspect parked alongside the roadway.

He began shooting at the officers and they returned fire and subsequently killed the shooter, identified as Justin Fowler.

During the gunfight, officer Herbert Frazier was shot in the shin. Officer James Hale was shot in the right leg. They were both transported to nearby medical facilities. Hale was eventually airlifted to University of New Mexico Hospital in Albuquerque.

Officer Alex Yazzie, a member of the Shiprock Police District, was shot and killed by the suspect.

Four Navajo Police vehicles were damaged, two of them are non-operational.

More than 30 Navajo police officers responded from the time of the initial call.

They were from the districts of Shiprock, Crownpoint, Window Rock, Chinle, and Kayenta. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is conducting the investigation with the Navajo Department of Criminal Investigation.

-30-
WHEREAS, The Navajo Nation is greatly saddened by the loss of the late Alex Yazzie, who served as a Navajo Police officer; and

WHEREAS, The late Alex Yazzie was a Navajo Police officer who served the Navajo Nation, and Shiprock Police District with courage, honor, and distinction from 2012 to 2015, when he reached the End of Watch; and

WHEREAS, The late Alex Yazzie served as a Navajo Police officer and joined his fellow Navajo Police officers with dedication to serving and protecting the Navajo people, in partnership with tribal communities, to enhance the quality of life within the Navajo Nation; and

WHEREAS, The late Alex Yazzie was a Navajo Police officer and a beloved member of the Navajo Division of Public Safety, continually striving to be professional, respectful, and responsive to the changing needs of the Navajo culture, people, and communities; and

WHEREAS, The Navajo Nation unites and offers prayers for his family and friends during this time of grief.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BEN SHELLY, President of the Navajo Nation, do hereby proclaim that all Navajo Nation flags shall be flown at half-staff in honor of the late Alex Yazzie, from sunrise on March 20 to sunset on March 23, 2015.

ORDERED THIS 20th DAY OF MARCH 2015

Ben Shelly, President
THE NAVAJO NATION
March 20, 2015

Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety - Latest news update on the shootings.

On Thursday, March 19, 2015, at 2:15p.m., Jordon Fowler called the Shiprock police district and reported his brother Justin Fowler, who was beating his wife Rayana Ramone with a pistol. Suspect Fowler was also beating his mother Cecelia Begay with a pistol. The police communications operator heard shots fired while on the phone with Jordon Fowler.

Navajo police officer Anderson Dez responded after the suspect left the scene. Upon arrival, 200 yards south of Littlewater store, reporting party Jordon Fowler pointed to Officer Dez in the direction of U.S. Highway 491 where the suspect was parked. Officer Dez sees the suspect at his vehicle. The suspect then discharges his weapon, an AR-15 semi automatic rifle at Officer Dez, who took cover at his police vehicle causing damage, but Officer Dez was unharmed. The suspect flees in his vehicle.

At 8:20pm, the suspect returns to Littlewater to the location of the mobile police command center making a u-turn in an apparent taunt fleeing the scene with Navajo police lieutenant Phillip Joe in pursuit with several police officers.

On Navajo Route 13, five miles south of Red Valley trading post, the suspect discharges his weapon toward approaching police vehicles, disabling the police vehicle operated by Lieutenant Joe. The suspect entered his vehicle, fled scene two toward Lukachukai, Arizona. At approximately 11 miles south of Red Valley trading post, responding officers came upon the suspect vehicle, parked along roadway, scene three, when the suspect discharged his weapon at officers. The officers devised and executed a plan, engaged the suspect vehicle, as the suspect discharged his weapon from behind. The suspect was subsequently shot and killed by police.

Officer Herbert Frazier was shot in the shin, Officer James Hale was shot in the right leg. Both were transported to nearby medical facilities. Officer Hale was then airlifted to the University of New Mexico Hospital in Albuquerque, NM. Officer Alex Yazzie was fatally shot by the suspect.

Four police vehicles were damaged, two of them are non-operational.

More than 30 Navajo police officers responded from the first reported time at 2:15pm from five police districts, Shiprock, Crownpoint, Window Rock, Chinle, and Kayenta. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is conducting the investigation with the Navajo Department of Criminal Investigation.

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President Shelly sends condolences to family of fallen Navajo Police officer

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Earlier tonight, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly received word that a Navajo Police officer was killed in the line of duty.

“We send our condolences to the family of the Navajo Police officer who gave his life in the line of duty tonight,” President Shelly said. “The family will be in our prayers.”

Reports of a shooting first came into President Shelly via phone, as he attended the N.M. House of Representatives session for the passage of Senate Joint Resolution 19.

John Billison, director of Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, provided only basic details and said the case is under investigation.

The following details are limited.

Around 4 p.m., Navajo Police received reports of an armed man holding his family hostage with an AR-15 assault rifle. An officer responded to the domestic violence call and was fired upon by the suspect, who then fled the scene.

Other police officers responded to the manhunt from the Window Rock and Crownpoint police districts.

Around 10:30 p.m. tonight, we received word that the suspect was shot to death in Red Valley, Ariz.

The suspect shot two Navajo Police officers and one officer died at the scene. The other officer is at Shiprock Medical Center.

No names or further details available at this time.

-30-
President Shelly thanks N.M. Legislature for passing gaming compact

SANTA FE—It came down to the wire.

With the 2015 N.M. Legislative Session expiring on March 21, Senate Joint Resolution 19 passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 61-5 earlier this evening.

The gaming compact now advances to Gov. Susana Martinez for approval before getting sent to the U.S. Department of Interior for final authorization.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly expressed appreciation for state lawmakers for approving the compact and not only saving thousands of jobs, but encouraging tribal economic independence.

“I want to say thank you to members of both the House and Senate for approval of this compact,” President Shelly said. “Gaming is independence and revenue for the tribes.

“Thanks are in order for the governor’s office as well, they worked hard on this compact alongside us,” he added.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T’iistoh Sikaad, Tse’ Daa’ Kaan, Upper Fruitland) and council delegates Amber Crotty (Beclabito, Gadiiahi-To’Koi, Red Valley, Sheep Springs, Toadlena-Two Grey Hills, Tse’alnaozt’i’) and Tuchoney Slim, Jr. (Bodaway-Gap, Coppermine, Ka’ibi’to, LeChee, Tse’alnaozt’i’) joined President Shelly in the rostrum.

Rep. Sharon Clahchischilliage (R-San Juan) introduced SJR 19 to the House floor.

She described the joint resolution as a good bill and said five tribes united over the past three years to craft the compact with Gov. Martinez’s office.

“The tribe’s casinos have created thousands of jobs for New Mexicans and brings in millions of dollars every year in revenue sharing to the state of New Mexico,” Clahchischilliage said.

Time was of the essence, she said, because current compacts expire on June 30 and non-approval of SJR 19 would cause severe economic setbacks for the tribes.

She reviewed the main provisions of the compact: increased revenue sharing, limits on the number of gaming facilities for tribes, the extended 22-year expiration date, new provisions for comps and participation in the state self-exclusion program.

Many members of the House rose and stood in support of the bill, including Speaker. Ken Martinez (D-Bernalillo, Cibola, McKinley).

He said the negotiations were a long and difficult process, especially after last year’s session that saw the Navajo compact stall in the Senate. The difference with the new compact is that the tribes worked together to create a compact in the interests of all.

“It affects everybody,” Martinez said. “I rise in strong support of this gaming compact.”

Rep. Debbie Rodella also rose in support of the compact on behalf of the Jicarilla Apache Nation.

She said in north central N.M., jobs are hard to come by.

“This compact will keep more than 200 people employed,” Rodella said. “It provides stability for the next 22 years.”

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CROWNPOINT, N.M.—It’s all for the children.

Earlier this morning, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met with representatives from the Navajo Nation Council, Navajo Head Start, Division of Social Services and the Child Care Development Fund to discuss a new initiative aimed at boosting enrollment.

“These young kids will be our leaders some day. We must provide them with every advantage to succeed,” President Shelly said.

He thanked the staff from Navajo Head Start and Child Care Development Fund for providing the educational foundation necessary for Navajo kids to succeed. Combining the programs together will only benefit the future generations, he added.

“The CCDF classrooms will be used for Navajo Head Start students. By partnering together, Navajo Head Start will have enough classroom space for the student recruitment drive,” President Shelly said. “The Navajo Nation is on a mission.”

That mission is to enroll more than 700 pre-school students into Navajo Head Start classrooms across the Navajo Nation before March 31, 2015.

Navajo Head Start passed a federal review on June 4, 2014 and secured a $125 million five-year grant award from the Administration for Children and Families. Although the program was in compliance with federal mandates, many of their classrooms across the Navajo Nation were in severe need.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 16, 2015

President Shelly issues Navajo Nation Prayer Day Proclamation

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. —
The changing of the seasons is a holy time of year.

On March 20, the spring equinox will once again appear and signal the time of change ahead, as our weather warms and crops are planted for the coming harvest season.

In observance of this, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly has issued a proclamation in observance of Il Hodiyin Bijį, or Navajo Nation Prayer Day.

President Shelly signed the proclamation on the morning of March 16 at the Office of the President and Vice President.

“We have hosted Prayer Day and Spirituality Day events throughout our administration, in conjunction with the changing of the seasons,” President Shelly said. “The public is invited to join us for a day of prayer and reverence, as we welcome spring.”

President Shelly explained that Navajo Nation Prayer Day is a time to spend with family and loved ones, to renew bonds and strengthen family ties.

Having a solid foundation of love and respect at the family level will only strengthen the Navajo Nation as a whole, he added, because those values set the tone for Navajo society.

“We must renew our traditional values and incorporate that into the lives of our children, grandchildren and future generations, or else we run the risk of losing those sacred teachings forever,” President Shelly said.

The proclamation speaks to Dine’ Bi Beenahaz’aani, Navajo Fundamental Law, and its importance in providing spiritual guidance to the Navajo Nation. It also states that the incorporation of Navajo teachings such as Siihasin, K’é, and Sodizin will help the Navajo Nation overcome substance abuse and other social ills creating disharmony.

Navajo Nation Prayer Day activities will take place at the powwow grounds in Window Rock on March 19, beginning at 8 a.m. for the opening ceremony.

The Tsehootsooi Twin Warriors Society will provide color guard duties. Jesse Kaulaity and Leroy Becenti will sing a Flag Song in honor of the flags. Tom White, Sr. will provide the invocation.

The remainder of the day will be arrangement of the ceremonial grounds, as teepees are erected and prepared for the evening ceremonies.

Members of the Diné American Church and Azee’ Bee Nahagha will be in attendance for the peyote meetings that will be conducted in six teepees.

Conducting the peyote meetings will be Native American Church leaders Leroy Becenti, Kirk Arviso, Dale Gonnin, Thomas Walker Jr., and Gerald King.

At 6 p.m., Navajo Nation Vice President Rex Lee Jim will provide the welcome address and explain the importance and meaning behind the change of season. At 7 p.m., the Native American Church peyote meetings will begin.

On March 20, the event will conclude with a continental breakfast, keynote address by President Shelly and free lunch.

Navajo Nation Prayer Day is a drug and alcohol free event. Participants are asked to respect others during the event and no recording of prayer songs is allowed.

For more information, contact Cyndy Taylor, executive staff assistant at OPVP at 928-871-7914 or email etaylor@navajo-nsn.gov.

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of repair and replacement in some instances.

By temporarily partnering with the CCDF to secure safe and sanitary classrooms for students, Navajo Head Start is recruiting students to meet enrollment numbers set by the federal Head Start Program.

“If we do not enroll more than 700 kids into Navajo Head Start in the next few weeks, some of that grant award will be returned to the federal treasury,” President Shelly said.

He said passing the federal review to secure the five-year grant award would not have been possible without the collaboration of the Navajo Nation Council Health, Education and Human Services Committee, Navajo Board of Election and the Navajo Head Start Parent Policy Council.

“None of this would have happened without the support of President Shelly,” said Sharon Singer, director of Navajo Head Start. “He continues to support our children and education.

“He also is committed before his term ends, to ensure that we're able as a nation, to provide the best services for our children, she added.

Singer explained that benefits of the revamped Navajo Head Start ranged from having a highly qualified staff to a nutrition program promoting health. Working with the CCDF is building capacity for the Navajo Nation, she said.

The national effort for early education services is not new to Navajo.

Sharon Begay-McCabe, director of the Navajo Nation Division of Social Services, said the CCDF building in Crownpoint where the meeting was held, housed four classrooms and 30 students enrolled in the program.

“The policy of the CCDF states that we are to increase the availability and quality of child care services for income eligible parents,” McCabe said.

Parents who are working, attending job training, or going to school qualify for CCDF services. Additionally, children with special needs or children in protective custody would also qualify.

“The bottom line is we want to have children (here) and help their parents (with child care services),” McCabe said.

Also in attendance at the meeting was Capt. Robert Bialas, regional program manager for Region XI of the Administration for Children and Families.

After living on the Navajo Nation for more than 23 years, 20 of which was spent serving with Indian Health Services, Bialas said he’s supportive of the Navajo people.

“It’s a desire across the Administration for Children and Families for the Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care to begin collaborating together,” Bialas said.

“We want to work with you to ensure this collaboration, this transition, will be successful,” he said.
IŁ HODIYIN BIJÍ (PRAYER DAY)

Proclamation

In Observance of the Change of the Seasons
March 20, 2015

WHEREAS, Hodeeyáádéé Diné have used the laws of the Diyin Dine’é’ (Holy Deities) and the Natural laws of the universe to guide our survival and prosperity; and

WHEREAS, the Navajo Nation enacted the Dine’ Bi Beenahaz’aani (1 N.N.C. § 201-206) which uses the laws of Diyin Dine’é’ as the Foundation of Diné Law, which incorporates the continued use of Spiritual guidance to ensure the health and richness of the Navajo Nation; and

WHEREAS, the Navajo Nation is an empathetic and compassionate nation. We understand the travails of all people including other nations, the United States, and the universe. We, the Diné, recognize and endure issues and problems created by Bilá’ Ashdla’ii (Five Fingered People), and natural catastrophic events which we have no control over but are forced to address; and

WHEREAS, the Navajo nation has been plagued by numerous problems associated with various social ills, including substance abuse, which have been particularly damaging to our children, relatives, and communities, and which are contributing factors to the three leading causes of death: accidents, homicides and suicides; and

WHEREAS, there is Siihasin (Hope) in overcoming these social ills and bringing back prosperity to the Diné. The strength of Diné is rooted in K’é and Spirituality; hence we offer this proclamation to encourage all citizens of the Navajo Nation to offer Sodizin (prayers) for the health and well-being of all Diné, while addressing these issues through Prevention, Intervention, Treatment and Aftercare activities; and

WHEREAS, the Navajo Nation encourages all residents of all Faiths of the Navajo Nation to participate in Il Hodiyin Bijí (Prayer Day) on the first day of each season of Daan (Spring), Shí (Summer), Aak’ee (Fall), and Hai (Winter). Furthermore, we encourage each of you to continue to pray on a daily basis.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that the Navajo Nation, Office of the President and Vice President, Office of the Speaker, and the Office of the Chief Justice hereby designate the first day of Daan (Spring), Shí (Summer), Aak’ee (Fall), and Hai (Winter) as Il Hodiyin Bijí, and encourage all residents of the Navajo Nation to offer Sodizin (prayers) for a better Quality of Life for all Diné.

Attest:
SIGNED AT THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE THIS 20TH DAY OF MARCH 2015
Witness My Hand & Great Seal of the Navajo Nation

Ben Shelly, President
THE NAVAJO NATION
President Shelly approves $317,891 from UUFB to fund referendum

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—The decision whether or not to amend Navajo fluency requirements for the presidency of the Navajo Nation will go before the Navajo people through a referendum.

On standby to report before the N.M. House of Representatives on the gaming compact with the state, President Shelly’s first order of business at the Office of the President and Vice President this morning was to address the legislation passed by the 23rd Navajo Nation Council to fund more than $300,000 for the presidential election.

With a stroke of his pen, President Shelly approved funding to hold a referendum vote on Navajo fluency requirements for the presidency.

“There is no easy fix to the on-going election issue than a referendum to the Navajo people,” President Shelly said. “An issue as important and decisive as this, it is indeed in the best interest of the Navajo people for a referendum to begin the healing process.

“I urge the Navajo Nation Council and the Navajo Election Administration to promptly hold a discussion regarding election events to establish a new timeline,” he added.

During a special session on March 13, the Navajo Nation Council passed Resolution No. CMA-06-15, for approving supplemental funding from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance in the amount of $317,891 for the Navajo Nation Election Administration business unit no. 101021 to fund the continuing 2014 Navajo Nation elections.

The legislation came across the street to the Executive Branch for approval the same evening.

Sponsored by delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill), the bill was amended by delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake), who proposed the funds be used for a referendum before the election.

The council voted to approve the amended legislation by a vote of 12-8.

President Shelly maintained that the decision to amend the Navajo language fluency requirements for the election code lies in the hands of the people, as it should.

“I maintain that the Navajo people are the governing authority,” President Shelly said.
MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable LoRenzo Bates, Speaker  
The 23rd Navajo Nation Council

FROM: Ben Shelly, President  
THE NAVAJO NATION

DATE: March 16, 2015

SUBJECT: Legislation CMA-06-15: Relating to Budget and Finance, Naabik'iyáti', and the Navajo Nation Council; Approving supplemental funding from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance in the amount of $317,891 for the Navajo Nation Election Administration, Business Unit #101021, to fund the continuing 2014 Navajo Nation elections

As I have stated in my October and December veto message that addressed a similar issue, there is no easy fix to the on-going election issue than a referendum to the Navajo People. An issue as important and decisive as this, it is indeed in the best interest of the Navajo People for a referendum to begin the healing process.

I urge the Navajo Nation Council and the Navajo Election Administration to promptly hold a discussion regarding election events to establish a new timeline, which needs to include the referendum. It is very important that notification of significant election dates is provided to the Navajo People as soon as possible.
RESOLUTION OF THE
NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL -- First Year, 2015

AN ACTION

RELATING TO BUDGET AND FINANCE, NAABIK’ÍYÁTI’ AND THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL; APPROVING SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING FROM THE UNRESERVED, UNDESIGNATED FUND BALANCE IN THE AMOUNT OF $317,891 FOR THE NAVAJO NATION ELECTION ADMINISTRATION, BUSINESS UNIT #101021, TO FUND THE CONTINUING 2014 NAVAJO NATION ELECTIONS

I. FINDINGS

A. The Navajo Nation Council is the governing body of the Navajo Nation. 2 N.N.C. §102 (A); and

B. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 701 (A)(5), the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee is the oversight committee for the Navajo Election Administration; and

C. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 301 (B)(2), the Budget and Finance Committee is authorized to recommend adoption of resolutions related to the expenditure of the Nation’s financial resources; and

D. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 164 (A)(9), a proposed resolution that requires final action by the Navajo Nation Council shall be assigned to the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee before it is heard by the Navajo Nation Council; and

E. The Navajo Nation has an unmet need for continuing to conduct the postponed 2014 Navajo Nation Election; and

F. The Supplemental Funding will be deposited with the Navajo Nation Election Administration; the Program Budget Summary is attached as Exhibit “A”; and

G. There being so many Navajo voters who are claiming the disenfranchisement of their votes as a result of Navajo Nation Supreme Court decision and the President requesting that the question of “fluency of Navajo language” requirement be resolved by the Navajo people, it is
important to have the Navajo people decide whether to amend 11 N.N.C. § 8 (A)(4) or not; and

H. The Navajo Nation hereby finds it is in the best interest of the Navajo People to approve this supplemental funding request.

II. APPROVING SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING FROM THE UNRESERVED, UNDESIGNATED, FUND BALANCE IN THE AMOUNT OF $317,891 FOR THE NAVAJO NATION ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

A. The Navajo Nation, having received certification by the Office of the Controller of the balance in the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance, attached as Exhibit “B”.

B. This supplemental appropriation of $317,891 shall be to the Navajo Election Administration, Business Unit # 101021 and from that amount of funds that exceeds the minimum fund balance of the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance as determined by the Office of the Controller, pursuant to 12 N.N.C. § 820(L). This appropriation shall be first used to have the Navajo voters vote on the referendum question to modify 11 N.N.C. § 8 (A)(4.) as follows:

“§8. Qualifications for office
A. Qualifications for President and Vice-President are:

4. Must fluently speak and understand Navajo and read and write English; Must be able to speak and understand the Navajo and English language; and this ability shall be determined by the Navajo voter when he/she casts a ballot.”

C. After the certification of the referendum vote by Navajo Election Administration, the Speaker shall call a special session to address the election for Navajo Nation Office of the President.

D. Notwithstanding provisions of the Election Code, the Navajo Nation Council authorizes the Navajo Election Administration, with the advice and assistance of the Office of Legislative Counsel and the Navajo Department of Justice, to prepare and finalize the appropriate ballot language for purposes of this referendum.
E. The Navajo Nation hereby approves supplemental funding from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance in the amount of $317,091 for the Navajo Election Administration, Business Unit #101021, to fund the postponed 2014 Navajo Nation Election.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Navajo Nation Council at a duly called meeting in Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona) at which a quorum was present and that the same was passed by a vote of _19_ in favor and _1_ opposed, this 13th day of March 2015.

[Signature]
LoRenzO Bates, Speaker
Navajo Nation Council

_3/13/15_
Date

Motion: Honorable Otto Tso
Second: Honorable Tom Chee

ACTION BY THE NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT:

1. I hereby sign into law the foregoing legislation, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §1005 (C)(10), on this ______ day of ______________ 2015.

[Signature]
Ben Shelly, President
Navajo Nation
2. I hereby veto the foregoing legislation, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §1005 (C) (11), this _____ day of ___________ 2015 for the reason(s) expressed in the attached letter to the Speaker.

______________________________
Ben Shelly, President
Navajo Nation

3. I hereby line-item veto the foregoing legislation, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §1005 (C) (10) and 2 N.N.C. §164 (A) (17), on this _____ day of __________, 2015. The justification of my line-item veto is set forth by memorandum.

______________________________
Ben Shelly, President
Navajo Nation
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  March 16, 2015

Navajo Land Department Hosting Land Summit to Promote Independence

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – Independence.
That’s a goal for the Navajo Nation Land Department.
And with approval on May 16, 2014 from the U.S. Department of Interior to approval all surface leases on the Navajo Nation, it’s achievable.

Accordingly, the Navajo Nation Land Department will host a Second Annual Land Summit on March 24-26th at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort to address milestones within the Department, new policies and regulations that pertain to housing, business and community planning.

Navajo Nation Land Department Manager Mike Halona, stated, “The Navajo Nation is at a pivotal point in time where we are faced with many challenges to survive as a nation. This is also a historic time because we have an opportunity to demonstrate to the U.S. government that the Navajo Nation has the capacity and capability to administer our sacred land within the interest of Navajo people and their future in mind.”

Halona said the Department is working diligently with Navajo Nation chapters to help them develop comprehensive community land use plans that will help provide economic development opportunities for their communities.

Moreover, Halona stated there are more Navajo people wanting to move back to the Navajo Nation to live and to work, which is why it is important to develop a comprehensive land use plan that will benefit not only the individual land use owner, but communities as a whole.

Individuals are encourage to register early. The Navajo Nation Land Summit is free. For more information, you can log onto the Navajo Land Department website at www.dinehbiikeyah.org or call them at (928) 871-6401.
President Shelly approves $3 million for Administrative Service Centers

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—This week, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly approved a $3 million appropriation for the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development decentralization project.

In 2013, the 22nd Navajo Nation Council Budget and Finance Committee issued a directive to NNDCD to begin decentralizing the Local Governance Support Centers at the agency level. The idea was to deliver services at the local through 16 Administrative Support Centers spread across the Nation at a district level.

“The Local Governance Support Centers did a remarkable job bringing transparency and accountability to the Navajo chapters,” President Shelly said. “The Five Management System was a means of bringing accountability to the local level.

“Before that, some chapters were in a state of disarray,” he added.

The $3 million appropriation was carried over from the FY 2014 budget to FY 2015 for execution. Originally, the Local Governance Act, Title 26 of the Navajo Nation Code, mandated that LGSCs deliver technical services and training to the 110 chapters at the agency level.

The primary means of tracking chapter finances and related spending was the Five Management System, which provided management for the areas of personnel, fiscal accounting, procurement, records and property.

The FMS helped chapters become financially sound and ensured the chapter’s funds were accounted for and properly budgeted. FMS certification meant chapters qualified for LGA certification and more autonomy for their respective chapter government.

The FMS also raised awareness at the chapters for deficiencies in their accounting systems. Some chapters were audited and faced subsequent sanctions, but the LGSCs worked with them to improve their performance and implementation of the FMS through corrective action plans.

Recently, the Resources and Development Committee of the Navajo Nation Council approved the plan of operation for the Administrative Service Centers. The budget approved by President Shelly will fund 26 full time employees. The positions range from attorneys, accountants and planners.

The mission of the Administrative Service Centers is to provide technical assistance to chapters in the areas of project management, post-LGA certification, implementation of the FMS and capacity building.

NNDCD carried over the LGSC budget of $1.2 million for FY 2014 into FY 2015. Combined with the $3 million budget President Shelly approved, the remaining vacant positions for the Administrative Service Centers will be filled. The attorneys hired will work under the supervision of the Navajo Nation Department of Justice.

“Staffing the Administrative Service Centers within chapter houses was a safety concern. We must ensure our employees are working in a safe and viable workspace,” President Shelly said.

Repairs and other improvements to the Administrative Service Center sites will be funded by the $3 million budget. The funds will also be used to purchase office equipment, tribal vehicles and training for new staff.

“Our chapters need assistance with planning, whether it’s for the land use plans, feasibility studies or long range plans. These new service centers will cut out the bureaucracy of having to travel to Window Rock for planning assistance,” President Shelly said.

NNDCD wrapped up a two-day Navajo Nation Planning Workshop for all 110 chapters on March 10 through 12 at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort.

-30-
Navajo President to tour Head Start Center, transfer CCDF facilities to Navajo Head Start

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly will tour the Head Start Center in Crownpoint, N.M., at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, March 18, to place an emphasis of high importance on early education. The president will be accompanied by the Navajo Division of Social Services, and the event is hosted by Navajo Head Start and the Navajo Department of Diné Education.

A press conference will follow where Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly will announce the transfer of facility ownership of several unutilized Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program facilities to Navajo Head Start.

The CCDF grant and services will also be transferred under the administration of Navajo Head Start. The transfer of buildings to Navajo Head Start will help address a dire need for facilities across the 27,000-square-mile Navajo Nation that sprawls across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah.

Head Start centers are worn and outdated, and many are more than 30 years old. Despite the aging facilities, Navajo Head Start is forced to utilize such dilapidated buildings to provide early childhood development services to Navajo families.

WHAT: Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly will tour the Head Start Center in Crownpoint, N.M., and conduct a press conference where he will announce the transfer of CCDF facilities to Navajo Head Start.

WHEN: 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 18, 2015

WHERE: Navajo Head Start Center, Crownpoint, N.M.

For more information, contact Rick Abasta at 928-871-7884 or Adrian Dotson at 928-226-7275.

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Navajo Head Start is the largest federally-funded grant program in the country. Head Start and Early Head Start services are provided within the geographical area of the Navajo Nation, an area approximately the size of West Virginia that spans more than 27,000-square-miles across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Central Administration offices are located in Window Rock, AZ, capital of the Navajo Nation.
President Shelly lauds N.M. Senate for passing gaming compact

SANTA FE—What a difference a year makes.

On the evening of March 11, Senate Joint Resolution 19 passed the N.M. Senate by a vote of 35-7.

For more than a month, Navajo leaders have lobbied state legislators for support of the gaming compact. On Feb. 28, the Committee on Compacts passed the compact by a vote of 15-1.

Passing the Senate was the second hurdle for the compact and three more remain: the House of Representatives, Gov. Susana Martinez and the U.S. Department of Interior.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly praised the state legislators, along with Gov. Martinez and the tribes for working together to get the gaming compact passed in the Senate.

“Tribal gaming currently generates about $70 million a year in direct payments to the state. That figure does not include the spinoff economic activity generated by increased employment and tourism,” Sanchez said.

Revenue to the state will grow to $77 million in 2019. Additionally, beginning July 1, 2015, the Navajo Nation, Acoma and Mescalero will begin paying a higher revenue sharing rate than what is currently being paid.

New Provisions

While there are several key differences between the new compact and the 2001 and 2007 agreements, many provisions in the earlier agreements will remain the same. The same liability insurance coverage, maintenance and protections as the 2007 compact will remain in effect. The prohibition of alcohol on the gaming floor also stands.

New provisions include state operated horse track casinos that will affect the revenue sharing agreement between the tribes and the state.

Sanchez said if tribes agreed to allow state horse track casinos to expand beyond six, or increase the number of gaming machines and the hours of operation, the tribes would no longer have to make revenue sharing payments to the state.

Other provisions in the agreement mandate that the state can better enforce the arbitration provisions of the compact. Tribes also agreed to participate in the state self-exclusion program and report information on how money is spent for problem gambling programs.

A new development in the compact allows tribal casinos to remain open 24 hours a day, an effort designed to attract wealthy, out-of-state gamblers. Tribes will also have more flexibility in providing complementary rooms and food.

High roller gamblers that qualify and meet income guidelines and cash balances in their bank accounts will also be able to utilize a marker system for gambling.
The compact provides that the Navajo Nation could ultimately open a fourth casino in N.M., but only after six years from the passage of the agreement with the state.

Jicarilla and Acoma could open three casinos, but they must open their new facility before June 30, 2015. Mescalero will continue operating the three casinos it has open currently.

The so-called “Legacy Facilities” or third casino most tribes are allowed will be limited to 130 gambling machines and an opportunity to move their facility once, only if it is moved no more than 17 miles away and not located within 50 miles of another tribe’s casino.

Sanchez said there are 26 casinos in N.M. and that number could increase to 31, but not for several years.

Rise and Stand in Support
Sen. Carlos Cisneros (D-Santa Fe) rose and stood in support of SJR 19.
He noted that negotiations and concessions from the tribes entering into the compact swayed his decision to support the resolution.
“Certainly, the art of good negotiation is the ability to make concessions,” Cisneros said. “In real life, when you negotiate a contract, there is going to be some give and take.”

Another senator that supported the compact last year proudly stood in support of SJR 19 during the current legislative session.
Sen. John Pinto (D-Gallup) rose in support and began by asking the body to recognize Navajo leaders President Shelly, Speaker LoRenzo Bates and council delegate Leonard Tsosie.
He described the compact as fair and reasonable and highlighted the economic incentives of passing the agreement.

Sen. Pinto said, “All nine casinos of the 2001 compact have created thousands of jobs for our people and revenue for the Navajo Nation, Pueblos and Apaches in the state of New Mexico.”
“We are facing loss of revenue and negative financial impact if this compact is not approved. I don’t think any of us want to see that happen,” he said.

Legal Relief
Of the seven senators that rose in opposition to the compact, one concern was the liability issues arising from casino patrons over-served with alcohol and subsequently resulting in an accident outside the reservation.

Karis Begaye, an attorney with the Navajo Nation Department of Justice, said the Navajo Nation has insurance and a competent court system that address those issues.
As a responsible, sovereign entity, mechanisms are in place to ensure those injured have effective remedies, she said.

Eleven district courts are located on the Navajo Nation, four of which are in N.M. Serving as an appellate court is the Navajo Nation Supreme Court. Claims can be filed in courts where the action occurred.
“The Navajo Nation currently carries a $50 million insurance policy for any personal injury and/or property damage claims filed against the Navajo Nation’s casinos,” Begaye said. “With these remedies, the injured party has relief.”

The language in Section 8, Protection of Visitors, in the gaming compact is the same as the existing compacts approved in 2001 and 2007. The 2001 and 2007 compacts currently govern all 14 gaming tribes.

The House will discuss the gaming compact when it is introduced to the floor early next week.
Singer announces 34th Annual Native American and Family Conference

Conference hosted by Southwest Consortium of Indian Head Start Programs Inc.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Assistant Superintendent Sharon H. Singer is pleased to announce the 34th Annual Native American and Family Conference scheduled March 15-19 in Albuquerque, N.M. The conference is a four-day professional development and enrichment training for tribal early childhood development programs.

Singer serves as the chairperson of the board of directors for the Southwest Consortium of Indian Head Start Programs Inc., host of the conference.

The focus and goal of the conference is to help strengthen and improve quality programming with tribally-operated Head Start programs across the country. The conference provides the perfect platform for Head Start programs to discuss mutual concerns, establish and maintain contact with one another, encourage a network of regional tribal Head Start programs and serve as a resource to Head Start directors.

Singer explained the tribal consultation portion of the conference will be especially beneficial for those who attend because many of these programs face similar issues.

“The conference will attract attendees from throughout the country,” said Singer. “We are able to discuss challenges, program development, curriculum, program improvements and ideas in a tribal consultation format. It’s a great venue.”

The agenda for the conferences entails a plethora of events and workshops aimed at improving the quality of the various head start and early head start programs that attend the conference.

The entire conference is centered on three main objectives.

The first objective is to provide workshops to build the knowledge and skills of head start and early head start staff. The second objective is to increase the knowledge of head start and early head start management. And the third objective is to foster an environment for learning where head start leaders can also gain information and knowledge from other head start programs.
All of the workshops and strategies used at the conference are devised to help those who work within head start improve services to children.

Workshops range from information on child mental health, different strategies in dealing with difficult children and even workshops dedicated to basket weaving.

Navajo Head Start (NHS) will be in full attendance at this year’s conference. This will be a very important learning experience for NHS as they are currently on an upswing and will only improve from the knowledge gained at this event.

“This is the perfect opportunity for Navajo Head Start to learn how to provide better services to the children and families we serve, and to gain information from other head starts to help improve our own program,” Singer said.

To learn more about the Native American and Family Conference, visit www.southwestconsortium.org.

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Navajo Head Start is the largest federally-funded grant program in the country. Head Start and Early Head Start services are provided within the geographical area of the Navajo Nation, an area approximately the size of West Virginia that spans more than 27,000-square-miles across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Central Administration offices are located in Window Rock, AZ, capital of the Navajo Nation.
Navajo Head Start now enrolling children from all income levels

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Head Start is now enrolling children from all income levels due to the program meeting its low-income quota. Parents and guardians can visit any one of the four regional offices for enrollment applications.

Navajo Head Start (NHS) will need the child's birth certificate, verification of income for parents or guardians, and the child's immunization records.

Early Head Start provides services to children from birth to 36 months and Head Start provides services to children 36 months to 5-years-old. The program offers early childhood education, child development, parental involvement and many more services with emphasis on Navajo language and culture.

Regional offices are located in Shiprock, N.M., Fort Defiance, Ariz., Chinle, Ariz., and Tuba City, Ariz.

For more information, contact the Central Administration Office at 928-871-6902 or access the website at www.navajohs.org.

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Navajo Head Start thanks Obama for federal budget increase

“An increase in funding will allow for NHS to not only serve more families, but also continue to make much needed improvements.” —Sharon H. Singer, Assistant Superintendent

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Head Start thanks U.S. President Barack Obama for supporting the youngest of our population by increasing the Fiscal Year 2016 budget by $1.5 billion for the national Head Start programs across the country. This brings the total annual funding amount to $10.1 billion a year for all its programs.

Sharon H. Singer, assistant superintendent of Navajo Head Start, the largest Head Start Program in the nation, is excited about the increase in the federal government’s budget and said it was exciting news.

“The increase in the federal government’s budget for Head Start programs is exciting news,” said Singer. “Navajo Head Start will be able to continue to expand services to current families enrolled in the program and begin serving new families.”

Singer explained $1.1 billion of this increase is to allow children to get the much-needed educational services they need.

“The program will be able to extend to a full school year,” she said. “This provides learning opportunities throughout the year.”

Experts say students lose about one month of learning during a three month summer vacation. Programs that have bigger gaps lead to more than one month of information being forgotten by children. These fund increases ensure children will be helped with the expanded school year.

According to the Administration for Children and Families’ (ACF) blog, only one-third of Head Start programs across the nation are running for a full school day the entire school year. The minimum requirement for Head Start programs is 448 hours of programming over an entire year. Students who go to school 180 days a year for six and a half hours a day receive 1,170 hours of instruction annually. By expanding the school day and school year, children will gain more knowledge and will lose less of what they learned over breaks.

The budget for Early Head Start is also increased by $150 million for the next fiscal year for all programs across the country. The total amount will be $650 million dollars, which will help provide the program to more families.

-More-
The ACF states that there were more qualified children than the program could support last year. With this increase, more children can be accepted into the program and so they receive the education they need to be prepared for school. These funds will also help to improve the quality of infant and child care, and obtain more Head Start-Child Care partnerships so children have a better opportunity to learn.

As part of the $1.5 billion increase, there is $284 million allotted for cost-of-living adjustments. This part of the budget will help offset inflation costs, retain high quality teachers and continue providing different services to families. Due to rising operating costs, this additional income will help to ensure money is not taken from programs to keep up with the cost of living increases.

Singer said there is a lot of potential with the increased funds.

“There is a lot of potential to come from this growth in the federal government’s financial plan,” said Singer. “Through President Obama’s support of Head Start programs, NHS will be able to serve and expand service for more families in need of quality early childhood development services.”

Singer said she has extensive plans and goals for the Navajo Head Start program including developing educational programs to prepare our Nation’s youngest children for the K-12 system.

“An increase in funding will allow for NHS to not only serve more families, but also continue making much needed improvements,” she added. “Navajo Head Start would like to recruit more highly-qualified staff and begin construction development plans for a new Head Start facility in the future.”

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SANTA FE—For the past week, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly has been on standby to meet with state legislators at the Roundhouse on the renewal of the Navajo Nation gaming compact with the state of N.M.

The president and members of the tribal council met with legislators on March 5 and attended the session for the N.M. Senate to advocate for passing the gaming compact. The next day, President Shelly and other tribal leaders met again to discuss provisions in the compact and the need for tribes to reach an agreement with the state.

“The importance of passing this gaming compact cannot be stressed enough,” President Shelly said. “This has been a long and tedious negotiations process with the state. “Thousands of jobs are at stake for the Nation and we implore our state legislators to get this compact passed for the benefit of all New Mexicans,” he added.

The Navajo Nation stepped into the Indian gaming arena in 2003 with the state of N.M. Five years later, Fire Rock Casino opened in Gallup. A year later, Flowing Water Casino opened for business, as the Navajo Nation’s only Class II gaming facility. Three years later, Northern Edge Casino opened in Upper Fruitland.

The term of the tribe’s initial contract with the state ends on June 30, 2015.

It has been more than seven years for the Navajo Nation to get to this level of approval. In 2009, negotiations began with former Gov. Bill Richardson, but talks ended after his term of office concluded. In 2012, talks began with Gov. Susana Martinez.

The Navajo Nation has approximately 115,472 enrolled tribal members residing concurrently on the Navajo Nation and in the state of N.M., and more than 2 million acres of land within the state. With an unemployment rate above 50 percent, gaming has been crucial to providing jobs to Navajos.

There were 950 jobs created through gaming, 90 percent of which are Navajo employees. When the per capita income of the Navajo Nation hovers around $8,000 per year, these jobs in the gaming industry make a difference for Navajo families struggling to survive.

Fifty-seven of the 110 chapters of the Navajo Nation are located within N.M. Gaming revenues in excess of $75 million have been generated by the casinos in N.M.

Fire Rock makes $35 million annually in revenue and Northern Edge generates $40 million in revenue.

President Shelly said, “The Navajo Nation has negotiated in good faith a gaming compact that would serve the needs of the Navajo Nation and the state.”

He said gaming jobs not only provide income and revenue from taxes, but an opportunity for tribal members to grow into an industry providing professional white collar careers in addition to the service industry positions associated with gaming.

“The revenue from our Navajo casinos funnel back into the tribal government to provide direct services to Navajo people. This was the intent of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act: Self-determination,” President Shelly said.

President Shelly and other tribal leaders are expected to report before the N.M. Legislature this week for consideration of the gaming compact. In addition to the Navajo Nation, the compact includes other “2001 Tribes” such as Acoma, Jicarilla, Mescalero and Pojoaque Pueblos.
President Shelly signs emergency declaration to address snowstorms

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly signed CEM-15-03-04 early this evening and declared a disaster for the Nation from recent heavy winter storms.

“We take this action to bring relief to rural areas where storms have caused severe mud conditions left by melting snow that have caused hardship to many,” President Shelly said. “Our Department of Emergency Management is working overtime to ensure everything is documented properly.

“The Navajo Nation Emergency Operations Center is open and is providing assistance,” he added.

Resolution No. CE-15-03-04 passed by a vote of 3-0 by the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management earlier today.

The commission declared a state of emergency after heavy snow, high winds, excessive rains, flooding, power outages and muddy conditions were reported to have severely impacted tribal members living in remote locations.

The declaration stated, “The emergencies of the Navajo Nation are to be addressed in a manner to provide the necessary resources required to the declared State of Emergency. This includes, but not limited to, resources of personnel, equipment, supplies, other funding and other resources as may be required to protect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the Navajo Nation.”

Ten chapters got the ball rolling.

Chilchinbeto, Coalmine Canyon, Cove, Crystal, Hard Rock, LeChee, Ojato, Pinon, Sanostee, Sheep Springs, declared emergencies and passed resolutions for their respective communities.

Emergency declarations begin at the chapter level, as members pass a resolution to declare an emergency. The resolutions are forwarded to the NNCEM, which will take action on whether or not to declare an emergency. Finally, President Shelly signs the emergency declaration into action.

The NNCEM convened on March 4, but could not declare an emergency because confirmation from Speaker LoRenzo Bates and the 23rd Navajo Nation Council was needed for the commission to continue its function and responsibilities.

The function of NNCEM membership can be found under Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code, under Article 4, Section 882 (B).

The section states, “All members of the Commission shall be appointed by the Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council and confirmed by the Intergovernmental Relations Committee of the Navajo Nation Council and shall serve a term concurrent to that of the President of the Navajo Nation, or until replaced, whichever is longer.”

Because of the prolonged election season, NNCEM Chairman Herman Shorty said confirmation from the Council was necessary to ensure the commission was still a recognized entity.

Beyond the procedural considerations, one tribal department continued to answer calls and provide assistance.

NNDEM has received incident reports from 42 chapters that were affected by the storm. Many cited excessive mud and snow as issues that needed to be addressed. Others cited the need for food, water, firewood and accessibility through muddy roads for diabetic patients requiring dialysis treatment.

“The Emergency Operations Center is operational at the Navajo Transportation Complex,” said Rose Whitehair, director of NNDEM.

She thanked the Office of the President and Vice President, Behavioral Health Services, Department of Health, Division of Public Safety, Division of Transportation and Special Diabetes Program for stepping forward and providing assistance.

Sanostee Chapter is providing shelter for those displaced by the weather. They are the only overnight shelter. Other resources can be accessed at Cove Chapter and Red Valley Chapter. NNDEM is coordinating with the Red Cross to provide supplies.

She said her team has been tracking events ranging from excessive mud, freezing conditions, power outages and safety checks on diabetic patients unable to navigate impassable roads.

Tribal members requesting mud removal for residential roads are encouraged to wait for the weather to dry up the muddy conditions. It is unsafe for heavy equipment to clear the roads, as they will only get stuck in the mud.

The weather is expected to clear and warm up for the next 10 days.

Information: 505-371-8415 or 8416. Forms can be downloaded at www.nndcd.org.
RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSION ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

DECLARING A STATE OF EMERGENCY FOR THE NAVAJO NATION; SEVERE INCLEMENT WINTER WEATHER CONDITIONS OF HEAVY SNOW, HIGH WINDS, EXCESSIVE RAIN, FLOODING, POWER OUTAGE AND SUBSEQUENT MUD CONDITIONS HAVE IMPACTED RESIDENTS LIVING IN ISOLATED AND REMOTE LOCATIONS OF THE NAVAJO NATION.

WHEREAS:

1. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 881, the Navajo Nation Council established the Commission on Emergency Management authorizing it to assess, verify, recommend and declare state of emergencies with the concurrence of the President of the Navajo Nation; and

2. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 883 (A) and (C), in conjunction with the Department of Emergency Management the Commission is empowered to coordinate immediate emergency and disaster relief services with Navajo Nation and non-tribal entities, to recommend and deploy appropriate resources regarding natural and man-made emergencies; and

3. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 884 (B), (2), the Commission on Emergency Management may seek assistance from federal, state, other tribal governments, and local and private agencies to address emergency and disaster related situations; and

4. The communities within the Navajo Nation are experiencing the impact from severe inclement winter weather conditions, including but not limited to heavy snow, high winds, excessive rain, flooding, power outage and subsequent mud conditions, impacting residents living in isolated and remote locations of the Navajo Nation.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management hereby declares a State of Emergency for the Navajo Nation due to severe inclement winter weather conditions, including but not limited to heavy snow, high winds, excessive rain, flooding, power outage and subsequent mud conditions, impacting residents living in isolated and remote locations of the Navajo Nation

2. The emergencies of the Navajo Nation are to be addressed in a manner to provide the necessary resources required to address the declared State of Emergency. This includes, but not limited to, resources of personnel, equipment, supplies, other funding, and other resources as may be required to protect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the Navajo Nation.
CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management at a duly called meeting in Window Rock, Navajo Nation, Arizona, at which a quorum was present and that the same passed by a vote of 3 approved, 0 opposed and 0 abstained this 5th day of March 2015.

Herman Shorty, Chair
Commission on Emergency Management

Motion by: Ben Bennett
Second by: Dicky Bain

CONCURRENCE:

Honorable President, Ben Shelly
THE NAVAJO NATION
IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 2, 2015

Navajo Nation files petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights against the U.S. Federal Government for violations of Navajo Human Rights

St. Michaels, Navajo Nation— With no legal remedies under United States law for the protection of Doko’o’osliid, also known as the San Francisco Peaks, north of Flagstaff, Arizona, the Navajo Nation has filed a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights against the United States government for violating the Navajo people’s human rights. The Commission is the principal organ of the Organization of American States (“OAS”) whose mission is to promote and protect human rights in the American hemisphere. The United States has been a member of the OAS since 1948, and has agreed to abide by the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, a central human rights instrument of the OAS.

The petition addresses the violation of the Navajo people’s rights to religion, culture and judicial protection by the use of reclaimed wastewater for snowmaking for a commercial ski operation on the San Francisco Peaks, a site sacred to the Navajo. Anthony Lee, President of the Diné Hataałji Medicine Men’s Association states; “The sacred sites are continually being threatened and also desecrated and exploitation is taking place.” Lee further notes the delivery of treated sewage effluent or “reclaimed wastewater” is “all being done for the owners of the ski resort and they have a direct interest.”

The San Francisco Peaks are sacred to the Navajo people and 13 other southwest tribes. Navajo medicine people believe the use of the reclaimed wastewater destroys the spiritual purity of the vegetation that grows on Doko’o’osliid and the herbs they gather for ceremonies. Lee further describes the ritual properties of Doko’o’osliid; “it’s included in the medicine bundles and that is core of our concern. It’s inherent and it’s omnipresent in the medicine bundles.”

The Navajo Nation learned that the City of Flagstaff terminated the 5-year reclaimed wastewater renewal agreement with Snowbowl and replaced it with a new 20-year agreement from news accounts. The City of Flagstaff did not give any notice of the new agreement to the Navajo Nation, nor did it allow an opportunity for consultation or public comment.
Henry Barber, President, Diné Medicine Men’s Association, states “We want the United States to respect our spiritual beliefs and business entities should also have respect for us (Navajo people) to continue our spiritual beliefs.” Barber has very strong concerns about the effects of United States laws on Native American sacred sites and religion, noting, “With the federal laws we want them to respect our spiritual beliefs in our perspective and to have freedom to practice, to continue our beliefs.” Barber further stated that the Navajo people’s human rights are not protected and respected by “the federal government which is very much being denied by commercialization and polices” This is why, he says, the Diné Medicine Men Association believes filing the petition with the Inter-American Commission is appropriate and absolutely necessary.

The petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights gives the Navajo Nation and its people a voice in the international realm to express their serious concerns respecting the lack of interest by the federal government to hear the Navajo Nation when it comes to sacred sites. “We have the obligation to take care of what was given to us by Diyin Diné.” said Steven Benally, President of Azee Bee Nahagha of Diné Nation. Benally further states “there is a saying our grandfathers and grandmothers tell us that we ‘should not lose hope’ and there’s always an opportunity to do something for ourselves and we have that chance.” Benally noted Navajo are resilient and have the hope that the outcome of the petition will allow for redress from the United States respecting the human rights violations.

The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission has also engaged with UN treaty monitoring bodies and the UN Human Rights Council in hopes of further strengthening protection of Navajo human rights in the United States of America.

“The US needs to take full responsibility by committing to protect Navajo human rights in accordance with its obligations under the OAS Charter,” said Leonard Gorman, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission.

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President Shelly praises federal EB-5 immigrant investor designation

“We need to find new pathways like this EB-5 initiative to grow business on the Nation,” he added.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services operate the program.

According to the USCIS, EB-5 investors must invest in a new commercial enterprise in the U.S., including Indian reservations. Investors participating in the program must also create or preserve 10 full-time jobs. In return, investors are granted conditional permanent residency status.

The Navajo Nation stands poised to become the first tribe to exercise the EB-5 initiative.

The Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development, headed by director Albert Damon, is taking the lead role in the EB-5 program on the Nation.

Damon said EB-5 promotes business and job creation, while foreign investors are afforded a green card issued by the federal government for U.S. citizenship.

Foreign investors have the option of starting a new business enterprise or rescuing a business that is in trouble by investing capital resulting in a 40 percent increase in the net worth of the business or number of employees.

President Shelly said the EB-5 opportunity has the potential to stimulate economic development at the most basic level, capital.

“It’s always capital that is the stumbling block for the success of small businesses on the reservation. The EB-5 program gives us the opportunity to receive capital and the business acumen from foreign investors. This is a great program to be a part of,” he said.

The minimum investment for foreign investors looking participate is $1 million or $500,000 if they invest in targeting employment areas. Such areas include rural areas and high unemployment areas of the country.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly is inviting foreign investors to create new jobs on the Navajo Nation through foreign investments passed through the U.S. Treasury Department.

The Navajo Nation is eligible to participate in the Immigrant Investor Program, also known as EB-5. Created by Congress in 1990, the program was initiated to stimulate the U.S. economy through job creation and capital investment from foreign investors.

“It is time we use the EB-5 designation to create jobs and accelerate our tribal economy from outside investors,” President Shelly said. “This administration supports private businesses and job growth on the Navajo Nation.
Vice President Jim hosts Navajo Nation Golden Rule day, encourages peace

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

The premise of the Golden Rule is simple: treat others as you would like to be treated. This basic teaching has been around since biblical times and maybe even longer.

It’s human nature to disagree with others, but finding the proper way to resolve such conflicts in a positive manner was the premise of Navajo Nation Golden Rule Day, which was celebrated on April 4 at the Navajo Nation Museum for the second year.

On July 3, 2013, the Golden Rule International selected Navajo Nation Vice President Rex Lee Jim Golden Rule Ambassador for the Navajo Nation. The GRI and Committee of the Interfaith Peace Building Initiative selected him as ambassador.

“We want to treat others the way that we want to be treated. You have to listen to them, talk to them, observe them,” Vice President Jim said. “To understand someone, you must walk in their shoes for a mile or two, or three.

“The whole idea is to promote peace,” he added.

Golden Rule Day is observed globally on April 5, with 120 nations across the globe participating. Ambassadorship is awarded to leaders internationally who have exemplified the Golden Rule in their everyday lives.

For the 2015 Navajo Nation Golden Rule Day, festivities began with a fun run and walk hosted by the Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Program. The fresh air and exercise prepared participants for a day of guest speakers and information.

Council delegate Amber Crotty provided the welcome address as a member of the Health, Education and Human Services Committee. Vice President Jim provided the keynote address.

Milissa Tatum, research professor of law at the University of Arizona, also spoke and provided an hour-long presentation on “Culture Clash: Turning Confrontation into Cooperation.”

With lunch provided by the Casey Foundation, participants spent the day at the museum to learn about conflict resolution, negotiations and difficult conversations from a faith-based perspective.

Ama Doo Alchini Bighan, Inc. also presented information on domestic violence and the need to protect Navajo children from unhealthy home environments.

Vice President Jim encouraged all to make the extra effort to treat others with respect and positivity, regardless of the situation. The Golden Rule is alive and well and living on the Navajo Nation.

-30-
Navajo Police apprehend armed individual without incident at NTU

CROWNPOINT, N.M.—Navajo Police arrested a male suspect in possession of a firearm at Navajo Technical University this evening.

Around 5 p.m., students at Navajo Technical University were on lockdown after an armed individual was reported near the student housing on campus.

Navajo Police and the tribal Strategic Response Team responded to the call, according to John Billison, director of the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly encouraged all students, staff and visitors to the university to stay safe and remain vigilant.

“Thankfully, the Navajo Police apprehended the suspect without incident,” President Shelly said. “Please remain cautious and report any suspicious activity to the police.”

The campus is secured and students are returning to their dorms.
Navajo Police Gang and Drug Unit arrest Navajo male on narcotics charges

FT. DEFIANCE, Ariz.—A Navajo male suspect is under arrest on narcotics and weapons possession charges in Window Rock this evening.

Around noon today, reports of gunfire at the Rio Puerco and Black Rock Acres housing area of Ft. Defiance was called into the Window Rock Police Department.

Navajo Police from the Window Rock and Crownpoint Districts responded and were supported by the Arizona Department of Public Safety, Gallup Police Department, Apache County Sheriff’s Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigations.

The housing area was on lockdown, as authorities ordered residents to remain indoors. Police officers cleared the houses one at a time in their search for the suspect.

Around 5 p.m., the male suspect was arrested by the Navajo Police Drug and Gang Unit on narcotics charges and was transported to the Window Rock Jail. A female suspect in the house was also detained and questioned.

John Billison, director of the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, said the neighborhood is secured and began allowing residents back into their homes.

“I can’t comment on the shooting because that’s under investigation. However, there are no federal charges and the Navajo Police Drug and Gang Unit are taking the lead on the narcotics investigation,” Billison said.

Several firearms, mostly rifles, were also recovered.

Billison thanked all the agencies that supported the Navajo Nation, especially for the immediate response.

“It was a good response, we could not hope for a better outcome. All the agency came together and supported one another,” Billison said. “We had troops on the ground, reinforced by air.

“The neighborhood is secured,” he added.
Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly was in Alamo, N.M. for the Justice Day celebration when the reports of gunfire in Ft. Defiance first came in. He applauded the work of the responding agencies and said thanks for their work in securing the neighborhood.

“We are serious about the safety of the public and our law enforcement officers,” President Shelly said. “We will respond in full force, as several agencies responded.”
Navajo Police arrest Navajo male on narcotics and weapons charges

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-30-
SANTA FE—The tribal gaming compact with the state of N.M. has officially cleared the office of Gov. Susana Martinez. The compact will be sent to the U.S. Department of Interior next for final approval.

This afternoon, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met with Gov. Martinez and tribal leaders from the Acoma Pueblo, Jemez Pueblo, Jicarilla Apache and Mescalero Apache to officially sign the compact and advance to the final stage of the approval process.

Today’s signing ceremony comes three weeks after President Shelly and Speaker LoRenzo Bates hosted a signing ceremony for the Navajo Nation’s approval of the compact.

“This is a historic day for the Navajo Nation. Gov. Martinez’s approval of the tribal gaming compact with the state of New Mexico brings us one step closer toward securing our economic future for the next 22 years,” President Shelly said. “We thank the Governor’s Office and the N.M. State Legislature for supporting tribal sovereignty.

“And of course, this approval would not have been possible without the negotiations and support of our neighboring tribes in the compact. Thank you,” he added.

He encouraged federal officials at the Interior Department to approve the compact for the self-determination of the tribes.

“We ask that the Department of Interior approve and sign the gaming compact for the economic independence of our respective tribes,” President Shelly said.

The signing ceremony took place at the Roundhouse, inside the cabinet room. The private event was closed to the public.

The Interior Department will have 45 days to review the gaming compact for approval.

-30-
MEDIA ADVISORY

WHAT : Signing Ceremony
       Land Buy-Back Cooperative Agreement

WHO : President Ben Shelly
      THE NAVAJO NATION

      Speaker LoRenzo Bates
      23rd Navajo Nation Council

      Bureau of Indian Affairs

      U.S. Department of Interior

WHERE : Office of the President and Vice President
        State Room
        Window Rock, Ariz.

WHEN : Tuesday, April 14, 2015
        9:00 a.m.

CONTACT : Rick Abasta, Communications Director
          Office of the President and Vice President
          THE NAVAJO NATION
          Phone: 928-871-7884
          Fax: 928-871-4025
          Email: rickyabasta@navajo-nsn.gov

          Jared Touchin, Communications Director
          Office of the Speaker
          23rd Navajo Nation Council
          Phone: 928-871-7160
          Mobile: 928-221-9253
          Email: nnlb.communications@gmail.com
President Shelly approves cooperative agreement, meets BIA, ENLC

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—On April 14, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly executed final approval of the cooperative agreement for the Land Buy-Back Program for Indian Nations during a signing ceremony at the Office of the President and Vice President.

Joining him were Sharon Pinto, director of the Navajo Region of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Larry Rogers, chairman of the Eastern Navajo Land Commission.

“We are here for final approval of the cooperative agreement with the federal government for the Land Buy-Back Program for the Navajo Nation,” he added.

The headquarters for the Navajo Nation Land Buy-Back Program is in Crownpoint and satellite offices are located in Farmington, Gallup and Winslow, Ariz.

“Today’s signing ceremony is the result of planning and coordination with the Navajo Nation and Department of Interior since 2013,” President Shelly said.

He said swift action to implement the program was necessary because state and private interests are attempting to allow federal land studies. Those studies would undoubtedly focus on allotted lands for privatization to create taxes and other purposes, he said.

During the recent legislative session, state legislators entertained the creation of the N.M. Federal Land Management Commission to study state lands.

“Theyir interests are to privatize (allotment) lands for taxes and other purposes. We cannot let this happen. By signing this agreement into law today, I am ensuring we address these allotment lands before private interests do,” President Shelly said.

Pinto said the BIA and Interior Department are excited the Navajo Nation has taken a strong interest in the program.

“Appraisals will be issued sometime in November 2015 for the various tracts of various areas. Thank you, Mr. President,” Pinto said.

Rogers said the ENLC has worked cooperatively with the Navajo Nation over the past year to prepare plans for the new program.

“We need to educate the landowners. They need to be well informed on the options they have. In the very end, it’s up to them,” Rogers said.

He said one of the main tasks of the ENLC is to regain lands in the eastern agency to minimize the checkerboard effect by transforming more lands to tribal trust for Navajo communities to use.

“In the end, land consolidation is very important. We appreciate your help,” Rogers said.

-30-
COPE partners with Navajo Nation to host inaugural Cancer Survivorship Conference

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – In partnership with Navajo Nation, Community Outreach and Patient Empowerment (COPE) is hosting the inaugural “Cancer Survivorship Conference: Connecting Patients, Families, Caregivers and Providers.”

Focusing on the voices of Navajo women and men whose lives have been affected by cancer and the experience of their dedicated providers, the goals of the conference are to elevate the experience of cancer patients and their family members, increase awareness of treatment and palliative care services, identify collective community goals for improved cancer care, support communication, exchange best practices and enhance collaboration between community and clinic providers.

“The Navajo Nation welcomes this opportunity to address this very important issue to our citizens,” said Navajo Nation Vice President Jim. Vice President Jim will be in attendance as well as partners from across the nation, including officials from the Navajo Nation Community Health Representative Program, Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention Program, Health Education Program and Epidemiology Center.

American Indian and Alaskan Natives (AI/AN) have the worst five-year cancer survival rates of any racial group in the United States. In the Navajo Nation, multiple cancers are diagnosed at later stages leading to increased morbidity and mortality.

Officials from the Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Partners In Health based in Boston, Mass., and the American Cancer Society will join in support of this important conversation. The conference will take place at the Navajo Nation Museum.

Sponsored by COPE, the conference is the result of the COPE Cancer Coalition (CCC) founded in 2012 to improve access to culturally relevant, patient-centered care for Navajo patients. The CCC is composed of patient and family representatives, a wide range of local providers, and a broad range of local, regional, and national partners. The CCC aims to build on the strength and resiliency in the Navajo cancer community, and the dedication of providers, to improve cancer morbidity and mortality among Navajo.

The Cancer Survivorship Conference is an important step toward addressing cancer disparities on the reservation – it will help the coalition to mobilize community members, confront stigma, strengthen referral systems and develop coordinated outreach activities that meet the communities’ needs. It will also commemorate National Minority Cancer Awareness Week.
Founded in 2009, COPE is a formal collaboration among Partners In Health, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, the Navajo Nation Community Health Representative Program, and Navajo Area Indian Health Service.

COPE is committed to eliminating health disparities in AI/AN populations in the . It works at the invitation of tribal leadership and partners with health care providers and community advocates to develop programs that address structural barriers to good health, respond to burden of disease, and fill gaps in the health care delivery system identified by patients, families, and providers. Additionally, COPE provides technical assistance to local partners to build more effective health care delivery systems and to increase access to food in Navajo communities.

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President Shelly praises PNM-NN Workforce Training Program

FARMINGTON, N.M.—Fourteen students from San Juan College are graduating after studying various fields of the energy industry.

An informal crowd gathered at the Henderson Performing Arts Center at San Juan College on the evening of April 16 to celebrate student success.

For the second year, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly joined PNM representatives at San Juan College to honor student recipients of scholarships from the PNM-Navajo Nation Workforce Training Program.

The program was created as a response to the shutdown of two units at San Juan Generating Station in 2017. PNM invested $1 million for scholarships over a five-year period for students seeking a career in energy and attending college at Navajo Technical University and San Juan College.

Students participating in the program are seeking careers in energy, construction, manufacturing and technology. The program began in 2014 to ensure the Four Corners has a trained workforce for existing and emerging jobs, especially Navajos.

“Two years ago, PNM approached the Navajo Nation with a great idea to partner with regional colleges, San Juan College and Navajo Technical University, to prepare students for exciting career in the energy industry,” President Shelly said.

The scholarships, he said, were a response to federal visibility standards that will result in the closure of two of the four units at San Juan Generating Station in 2017.

“The closure means that we must find new ways to produce energy and cleaner methods to transform coal into energy. Our young Navajo students will help us in this area,” President Shelly said.

The sale of coal by the Navajo Nation to energy generating stations in the Four Corners and Page is a large part of the Navajo economy, funding direct services in the tribal government.

This industry provides high paying jobs that stimulate the tribal economy from taxes, leases and the purchase of goods and services from local businesses by these workers. For every job created in the energy sector, there are five other jobs created to support that position.

“These students studying for careers in the energy sector are the shining hope of the future,” President Shelly said. “We must invest in their success and encourage them in their future careers.

“Thank you to the students here for deciding on a career in energy. You hold the key to our success for the years to come,” he added.

President Shelly thanked PNM for their vision and investment, which he said spoke volumes for the company because they chose to stand by the Navajo Nation and ensure they were prepared for the changes to come.

Ron Darnell, senior vice president of public policy at PNM, said the celebration of student achievement was the most fun and rewarding part of his job.

“An educated and trained workforce in the Four Corners area builds a strong economic base that empowers our communities to shape careers and be productive, whether here in Farmington or on the Navajo Nation,” Darnell said.

He explained the premise behind the training program was to ensure a trained workforce for the changes to the energy industry in the Four Corners. The journey began more than four years ago, he said, when PNM was debating state and federal proposals to meet federal visibility standards.

Before deciding on executing a proposal, PNM said the plans must be environmentally responsible, minimize the cost impact to customers and cushion the economic impact to the Four Corners region.

The retirement of two of the four units a San Juan Generating Station will reduce water use and seven different emissions by 50 percent. The N.M. Environment Improvement Board and Environmental Protection Agency approved the plan. It is now before the N.M. Public Regulation Commission for approval.

“Throughout this process, President Shelly consistently emphasized his concerns about job losses and the potential adverse impacts to the Four Corners and Navajo economy,” Darnell said. “Today’s workforce training program is the result of strong collaboration.”

In 2014, 77 students at San Juan College received scholarships from the program and nine students graduated. This year, 46 students participated and 14 students will graduate.

Gayle Dean, executive director of the San Juan College Foundation, said the program enriches the lives of students and their families.

“This partnership aligns with San Juan College’s strategic directions of student success, community partnerships, economic development and valuing people,” Dean said.

She said students have the opportunity to achieve career goals for licensure in civil drafting, commercial drivers licensing, engineering or geology.

“Today more than 120 San Juan College students have directly benefitted from this program and we are excited about the next three years,” Dean said.

-30-
Design Work Session Held for the Navajo Public Safety Training Academy Facility

Flagstaff, Arizona—Arrington Watkins Architects facilitated the initial work session for the Navajo Division of Public Safety on April 9 and 10, 2015. Over 40 key Navajo public safety representatives gathered to represent all departments within the Division of Public Safety. Over this two-day meeting, valuable insights were shared that helped initiate the formation of the design foundation and that will shape the final master plan for this important future facility.

Division Director John Billison developed this initiative and has requested roughly $40 million from the Judicial/Public Safety Fund for facility construction. Current project funding includes $1.7 million identified for planning and design of this state-of-the-art facility. Currently, 80 of the 120 acres of land needed for the project have been withdrawn.

Located in Chinle, Arizona, this facility will serve as the professional training academy for all public safety departments. The overall plan includes educational and technical support for all public safety by providing academies for police, emergency medical services, emergency management, fire and rescue; as well as tactical
villages, indoor and outdoor shooting ranges, helicopter landing pads and a dive tank for dive teams.

In addition to training public safety personnel, this facility will eventually house other critical capabilities such as:

- Serving as the primary 911 Public Safety Answering Point.
- Providing a Data Fusion Center that serves as the focal point within the Navajo Nation and local environment for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat-related information.
- Providing, when required, the technology and capabilities to deliver a certified Emergency Operations Center including the interoperability nerve center for large-scale disasters.

The division is seeking an additional $48 million from various sources including federal agencies for the overall project that will bolster the local economy through job creation, a major focus of the Shelly-Jim Administration since taking office in 2011.

Director Billison has also contacted the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency seeking additional funding to be applied to the overall construction costs. This would provide the Emergency Management Institute, which is the training body of FEMA, a west coast presence at the training academy. In addition, the BIA has expressed interest in using this facility as a Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC).
President Shelly delivers State of the Navajo Nation to open spring session

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly shared a message of thanks and appreciation for the Navajo people to start the 2015 spring session.

The support and faith of the Navajo people motivated the Shelly-Jim administration to move the Navajo Nation into a positive direction, he said.

“In the last four years, I am proud to say my administration has won some battles, made historic progress and delivered on our campaign platform. When we stand together as Diné, we are a strong and undefeatable Nation,” President Shelly said.

The presidency of the Navajo Nation was extended by four months in the spirit of Ke’ and Hozho, he said, to provide continuity of services in light of the election process. However, stability was always a priority throughout the administration.

“Every day, the vice president and I have worked hard and in the best interests of our people to carry on until our last day in office,” President Shelly said. “

The new administration should move our infrastructure and business projects until they are finished.

“A good leader will do that,” he added.

The fact that 2,400 jobs were created during the new administration illustrates that the administration’s primary goal of employment was achieved. This 300 percent job increase averages 600 jobs per year.

“Last week, New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez and I signed a tribal gaming compact that will benefit our economic future for the next 22 years, which means more jobs and support for infrastructure,” President Shelly said.

Another national leader listened to the needs of the Navajo Nation. President Shelly met with Rep. Nancy Pelosi, minority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, in March. He shared the Nation’s interest in energy development and stimulating the Navajo economy.

The big concern for many Navajo people this week is the presidential election.

President Shelly said the referendum on the Navajo fluency requirements for the presidency should advance as planned by the Navajo Nation Council, rather than being decided by the Navajo Nation Supreme Court.

“I signed this legislation and approved the funds because as I’ve stated several times before, the Navajo people must decide on amending the fluency requirements for the presidential elections,” President Shelly said.

Beyond the election, other concerns facing the nation are budgetary.

For FY 2015, the Navajo Nation is facing an $18 million revenue shortfall because of the declining price of oil. The following fiscal year will be an $24 million shortfall.

The Sihasin Fund for the trust settlement needs to be reviewed thoroughly, the president said, especially the $100 million that was taken off the top for set-asides.

Proper use of the settlement funds must be used for infrastructure development in form of roads, fiber optics, sewer lines and waterlines.

All the while, reinforcing relations with federal, state, county and tribal entities must continue for the benefit of the Navajo Nation. Such collaboration resulted in the paving of 27-miles of road on Navajo Route 20, after a landslide damaged U.S. Highway 89 in Feb. 2012.

U.S. Highway 89 was reopened last month and an official opening celebration is forthcoming.

President Shelly said the Navajo Beef initiative was another showcase of collaboration for the Nation, this time between a national food service company and the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise.

Since 2011, Navajo ranchers and cattlemen have sold their beef to Labatt Food Service, which in turn, serves the beef at Navajo casinos. Not only does the program reinforce traditional ranching practices, but it also guarantees cattlemen top dollar for their beef.

Before concluding his address, President Shelly spoke of the new Shiprock Youth Center, a $6.6 million facility funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The new facility will enrich the lives of Navajo children and provide them with healthy alternatives to drug and alcohol abuse, he said.

The loss of attorneys Sam Buffone and Elouise Chicharello were devastating to the Navajo Nation, President Shelly said.

Buffone worked on the litigation strategy against the federal government for the trust settlement and Chicharello worked at Navajo Department of Justice for many years.

“Vice President Rex Lee Jim and I want to thank the Navajo people for allowing us to humbly serve you and the Navajo Nation. We must put the election behind us and move forward united, as a people, to face the challenges of the future,” President Shelly said. “Ahe’hee and hagone’.”

-30-

President Shelly delivered the State of the Navajo Nation on Monday for the start of the spring session. He was joined by chief of staff Deswood Tome and executive staff assistant Pete Nez. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
President Shelly signs MOA between DODE-GMCS District

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—In an action designed to preserve Navajo language and culture, President Shelly signed a memorandum of agreement between Gallup McKinley County Schools and the Department of Dine’ Education on April 20.

The stateroom was packed on Mon. morning, as school board members, tribal officials and representatives from GMCS met for the signing at the Office of the President and Vice President.

President Shelly said Title 10 of the Navajo Nation Code mandates that a model be created for how Navajo kids will be taught tradition language and culture. He noted that Vice President Rex Lee Jim has been working on this with DODE during the administration.

“This is a special day for our Navajo children. Dine’ bizaad is an essential element of life, culture and identity,” President Shelly said.

He expressed deep appreciation for the effort, especially since Thoreau went through challenging times when seven kids in the community committed suicide a few years ago.

“All these experts came in. The conclusion was that the kids didn’t know who they were. They didn’t know who their family and relatives were,” President Shelly said.

The lack of self-identity, combined with alcoholism in the home and poverty, resulted in the spate of suicides that shocked the community.

“Navajos, for centuries, have survived on the clan system. Our language is powerful. I commend all who speak the language and I encourage those who are learning to continue,” President Shelly said.

The MOA recognizes and preserves the Navajo language and the five Dine’ standards of language, culture, history, government and character building.

Frank Chiapetti, superintendent of GMCS, said he is a fifth generation Gallupian and has spent 49 years in the Gallup. During that time, he made a lot of friends with natives and became passionate about education and the Navajo language.

“We need to develop the language and culture for our young kids, even at the preschool level,” Chiapetti said. “This MOA is a good start.”

He said several schools in the district are currently in different phases of construction, including Katherine Miller, Jefferson Elementary, Ramah Elementary, Del Norte and Lincoln-Thoreau Elementary.

N.M. Rep. Wanda Johnson said she speaks Navajo fluently.

“I wouldn’t be where I am today without my language and culture. I took my language and culture to the Roundhouse. I look forward to working with the school district on this MOA,” Johnson said.

Dr. Tommy Lewis, superintendent for DODE, said he participated in amendments to the MOA that identified how the Navajo language would be incorporated in the curriculum daily.

“Children deserve a chance to learn their language and culture. At this time, the schools are the only outlet where we can expose the language to children,” Lewis said.

He noted that conventional wisdom dictates that the Navajo language be learned at home. However, many parents do not speak the language and not enough grandparents are encouraging use of the language daily.

“Through the Navajo Governance in Education Act, we are making a strong stance that language and culture must be implemented,” Lewis said. “Gallup McKinley County School District is doing this.

“This MOA will be a model,” he added.

-30-
President Shelly expresses discontent with Native stereotypes in Sandler film

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Native American stereotypes in film must end.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly was appalled to hear about the negative portrayal of Native Americans in the Adam Sandler film, The Ridiculous Six, currently in production.

Several Navajo actors walked out on the production earlier this week after gross misrepresentation of the Apache culture and derogatory dialogue against native women.

They were also disgusted with female character names like Beaver’s Breath and No Bra.

Regardless of the comedic nature of the film, President Shelly said such disrespect against Native Americans is uncalled for in this day and age.

“Our Native American culture and tradition is no joking matter. I applaud these Navajo actors for their courage and conviction to walk off the set in protest,” President Shelly said. “Native people have dealt with negative stereotypes on film for too long.

“Enough is enough,” he added.

The Navajo Nation Office of Broadcast Services ensures cultural accuracy in scripts for films and commercials produced on the Nation. Such stereotypes and racially discriminatory characterizations are not filmed on Navajo land.

Kee Long, program manager for NNOBS, said his staff review proposed scripts that are sent to the office for film licenses.

“We had a script not too long ago, from a French company that was doing a film on alcoholism,” Long said. The script was a portrayal of the Sioux Nation. Long asked the production company why they did not film on Sioux tribal lands. He was not provided an answer and the production did not take place.

For Navajo subject matter, the NNOBS staff verify proper portrayal. They coordinate with the respective tribal departments to verify accuracy.

“Two independent filmmakers submitted a script for filming recently on the tribal dog population. We coordinated with the Navajo Fish and Wildlife Department and Animal Control for review of the script,” Kee said.

The Navajo Nation does not allow racially discriminatory scripts to be filmed on Navajo land.

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 23, 2015

President Shelly expresses discontent with Native stereotypes in Sandler film
MEDIA ADVISORY

WHO : President Ben Shelly
      THE NAVAJO NATION
      Virgil Brown, Division Director
      Division of General Services

WHAT : Media Rollout: New Rural Electric Bus

WHERE : Navajo Transit System Office
        Ft. Defiance, Ariz.

WHEN : April 24, 2015 at 9:00 a.m.

CONTACT : Rick Abasta, Communications Director
          Office of the President and Vice President
          THE NAVAJO NATION
          Phone: 928-871-7884
          Fax: 928-871-4025
          Email: rickyabasta@navajo-nsn.gov
President Shelly met with president-elect Russell Begaye and vice president-elect Jonathan Nez earlier today. They discussed the upcoming transition and the subsequent transfer of power on May 12 at noon. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—The transition has begun.

Today, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met with newly elected president Russell Begaye and vice president Jonathan Nez.

President Shelly congratulated them on their victory and began making plans for the transition and subsequent transfer of power to the Begaye-Nez administration.

“Congratulations to the Begaye-Nez team for a decisive win. We are working together and are thankful for the patience of the Navajo people,” President Shelly said. “Never forget that it is the Navajo people who are the governing body of this great nation.”

The transition team will work together on tribal government divisions, budgets, economic development projects and updates on county, state and federal agencies. Initiatives from the White House and United Nations will also be included.

The Shelly-Jim administration will end its term of office at noon on May 12.

-30-
President Shelly unveils Navajo Transit System $2 million electric bus

FT. DEFIANCE, Ariz.—Soon, there will be a new bus on the Navajo Transit System bus route between Gallup, N.M. and Ft. Defiance.

President Shelly unveiled the NTS Mass Electric Transit Bus this morning in Ft. Defiance. Virgil Brown, director of the Division of General Services and Harrison Smith, department manager for NTS, joined the president for the presentation.

In 2010, Federal Transit Administration awarded NTS a $2 million contract to build the bus for the travelers on the Navajo Nation.


constructed by Electricore in Valencia, Calif., the electric bus comfortably seats 42 passengers. The bus will require eight hours of charging time for the batteries, which allows a day’s worth of traveling for the bus.

President Shelly said the electric bus accommodates travelers from Gallup to Ft. Defiance, which is the most traveled bus route for NTS. Established in 1980, NTS provides transportation services to 41 of the 110 chapters.

There are currently 18 bus routes operated by NTS, which serves areas as far away as Aneth, Utah. Two new routes are anticipated to begin soon: one providing service to Forest Lake, Pinon and Chilie; the other providing services to Ramah, Gallup and Ft. Defiance.

The new bus was parked outside the bus bay gleaming in the spring sunlight. NTS showcased the batteries underneath the bus and the portable charging station that connects to the electronic engine in the rear of the bus.

Originally funded on Oct. 1, 2010, the FTA grant award of $2 million was executed by the Shelly-Jim administration upon taking office.

“We picked up the project and finished it. During the course of our work, the Navajo Nation was also selected to receive $5 million in federal funds for the hybrid bus project for FY 2011,” President Shelly said.

The $5 million grant requires $1.25 million in matching funds from the Navajo Nation to execute the project.

“We have hopes that the incoming administration will pickup this project and complete it as we did with the electric bus,” President Shelly said.

Ten buses will be produced with the $5 million grant, which will be delivered in the fall of 2016.

President Shelly said he traveled to Calif. to see the construction of the electric bus firsthand. His excitement to see the sleek finished product was evident.

Technicians from Electricore will be traveling to the Navajo Nation next month to program the bus for operation. The final two payments to the company were processed earlier this week by NTS.

“Although this is a small part, the new electric bus is environmentally friendly. We have a new bus on the road, an electric bus. Thank you,” President Shelly said.

-30-
President Shelly pushes for cleanup of Church Rock uranium mine site

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly praised the April 23 announcement from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission on the license amendment for the United Nuclear Corporation.

The UNC is responsible for cleanup of the Church Rock, N.M. facility in McKinley County.

“President Shelly worked throughout his term to address the uranium mining cleanup issues facing the Navajo Nation throughout his administration. The recent finding of no significant impact issued by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission was good news, he said. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
President Shelly breaks ground for Chinle Denny’s, lauds Navajo-owned business

CHINLE, Ariz.—This morning, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and First Lady Martha Shelly broke ground for a new Denny’s restaurant in Chinle.

The site of the restaurant is located adjacent to the Program for Self Reliance office. The celebration began with a traditional Navajo blessing. Participants blessed themselves with Tádídíín (corn pollen) and the site of the restaurant.

Navajo businessman Romero Brown joined President Shelly for groundbreaking ceremony. Also participating in the shovel ceremony were President-Elect Russell Begaye and Vice President-Elect Jonathan Nez. Chapter president Andy Ayze and chapter vice president Myron McLaughlin participated, along with tribal officials from Division of Economic Development and the Navajo Nation Council.

The group took photos at the site of the Denny’s restaurant before convening at the Chinle Chapter House for the festivities.

President Shelly said, “I would like to thank Romero Brown for having the courage to step forward and start a new business here in Chinle. I want to also thank Albert Damon and the hardworking staff at the Division of Economic Development.”

Denny’s will undoubtedly be a success, the president said, because Navajos love to eat. He said the Shelly-Jim administration pushed for innovative ideas for businesses during their term of office.

Projects like the Thoreau Rail Port, Narbona Growth Fund and federal EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program provided “out of the box” thinking to address the challenges of starting a business on the Navajo Nation, he said.

“We must work with our small businesses for the benefit of the Navajo Nation. These businesses create new jobs and stimulate the economy,” President Shelly said. “It gives me great pleasure to break ground for a new Navajo-owned business. Ahe’hee.”

Romero Brown said work on the Denny’s project began in 2008. He noted that President Shelly’s involvement made the project a reality.

“We probably gave up three or four times. Native American Bank wanted to build this back in 2009, but after the economic crash they pulled back,” Brown said. “It sure is hard to build a business on the Navajo Nation.”

“Romero Brown said work on the Denny’s project began in 2008. He noted that President Shelly’s involvement made the project a reality.

The Division of Economic Development and Regional Business Development Office stepped forward to help the Navajo entrepreneur. The Navajo Nation provided $341,000 for the project. Native American Bank provided $2,150,000.

“When we build this Denny’s, it’s going to have 100 permanent employees. There will be 230 temporary construction jobs. We’re going to pay about $1 million per year in payroll. Then we’re going to pay the Navajo Tax Commission about $150,000 per year,” Brown said.

Construction will take six months and the anticipated completion date is Oct. 17.

“In October, we’ll have some Grand Slams,” Brown said.

-30-
President Shelly praises PNM-Navajo Nation Workforce Training Program at NTU

CROWNPOINT, N.M.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and First Lady Martha Shelly honored students at Navajo Technical University. The students were recipients of scholarships from the PNM-Navajo Nation Workforce Training Program for careers in the energy industry.

Officials from PNM and the Navajo Nation, students and their families gathered inside the NTU Wellness Center to celebrate academic achievement on April 30. It was the second year President Shelly and PNM representatives honored students at NTU for the new training program.

The program was created as a response to the shutdown of two units at San Juan Generating Station in 2017. PNM invested $1 million for scholarships over a five-year period for students seeking a career in energy and attending college at Navajo Technical University and San Juan College.

Students participating in the program are seeking careers in energy, construction, manufacturing and technology. The program began in 2014 to ensure the Four Corners has a trained workforce for existing and emerging jobs, especially Navajos.

“Congratulations to the students, especially for those graduating. For the rest of you, congratulations are also in order because you have completed another year of school,” President Shelly said.

The leaders of PNM and NTU also deserve acknowledgement, he said, not only for the scholarships provided, but also for preparing students for jobs in the energy sector. Education is an important component for Navajo sovereignty and self-determination, he noted.

“We celebrated Navajo Nation Sovereignty Day earlier this week,” President Shelly said. “I shared a radio message that this tribal holiday is much more than just eight hours off from work.”

On April 16, 1985, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Navajo Tribe’s right to impose taxes in the court case *Kerr-McGee Corporation v. Navajo Tribe*. From that monumental decision, Navajo Nation Sovereignty Day was enacted and the tribe began taxing companies doing business with the tribe.

“Today, the Navajo Nation owns a coalmine and we have a seat at the table with energy companies operating on the Nation. What a long way we have traveled since 1985,” President Shelly said.

Such actions have propelled the Navajo Nation to be a leader for Indian Country, he said. The unique partnership with PNM to prepare Navajo people for the future changes in the energy industry is another advancement for the self-determination of the Nation, he added.

“The PNM-Navajo Nation Workforce Training Program is an investment in the continued success of the Navajo people,” President Shelly said. “It is our hope that you return home to help your people, your nation.”

One student graduating with a bachelor’s degree in information technology plans on pursuing a post-graduate degree before returning home to help the Navajo Nation.

Sherietta Martinez-Brown said, “Thank you PNM for making all this possible. I also want to thank NTU and President Shelly.”

Brown began attending classes at NTU in 2010, focusing on the law advocate program. Personal challenges in her life created roadblocks, but she finished the program. In 2012, she returned to NTU to pursue a bachelor’s degree.

“It was hard for me. To this day, it’s still hard. I make myself go to class every day. I make myself read more if I don’t understand,” Brown said. “I’m so thankful for my friends because they see me struggle and they’ll help me.

“Stay focused on your dreams. Never give up,” she added.

Such success stories are why PNM invested in the scholarship program, said Ron Darnell, senior vice president of public policy at PNM.

“We’re here to celebrate the success of students. We want to empower communities to be productive,” Darnell said.

Last year, 47 students at NTU took advantage of the scholarship program, he said, with 12 students graduating.

“This year, there are 38 students at NTU receiving scholarships and 11 students will become 2015 graduates. Again, congratulations,” Darnell said.

-30-
WHEREAS, The travel and tourism industry is the source of countless benefits for Navajo Nation and our guests from local and foreign lands; and

WHEREAS, Diné Bikéyah (Navajoland) is a myriad of spectacular scenery and enchanting getaways reflecting the uniqueness and beauty of the Diné Bikéyah to its people and resources; and

WHEREAS, Friendship, knowledge, and appreciation of intercultural differences and similarity enhance international understanding, cooperation and goodwill; and

WHEREAS, The Navajo Nation recognizes the Proclamation 5920, National Tourism Week, signed January 6, 1989 by the President of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, Every year, millions of Americans and foreign visitors travel throughout the country discovering the beauty of natural wonders, wilderness, cast land, hospitality of the people, and the outstanding recreational, educational and significant cultural activities; and

WHEREAS, The Navajo Nation is the largest American Indian tribe in North America, encompassing more than 27,000 square miles, extends into southwestern Utah, northeast New Mexico and northern Arizona. The Navajo Nation receives over $112.8 million of direct spending by out-of-region visitors, contributing to a total economic impact of $153.7 million annually to the Navajo Nation; furthermore, this economic activity supported some 1,788 fulltime equivalent full-time jobs; and

WHEREAS, With the millions of visitors traveling throughout Diné Bikéyah find the “World’s Best Kept Secret” embodied with rich and vibrant people and scenic whispering canyon walls, mystifying ancient architecture, picturesque mountains, relaxing lakes and rivers; the earthly scent of cedar and sage, fiery sunsets, and refreshing blue skies; the intrinsic quality of the sustained traditional Diné philosophy and culture, surrounded by the Four Sacred Mountain; and

WHEREAS, The Navajo Nation is truly a great destination to reminisce history as the Diné teachings and values remain strong. We are open to share our culture with the world.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED:

I, Ben Shelly, President of the Navajo Nation, by the authority vest in, hereby proclaim the week of May 4, 2015 through May 2015 as Diné Bikéyah Tourist Appreciation Week.

Ben Shelly, President
THE NAVAJO NATION
President Shelly lauds $13.2 million for cleanup of 16 abandoned uranium mines

President Shelly praised the announcement of $13.2 million for the cleanup evaluation of 16 abandoned uranium mines across the Navajo Nation. However, he said there are still hundreds more that must be addressed for the health and safety of the Navajo people. He noted that it is the federal government's responsibility to clean up this environmental hazard. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—The U.S. Department of Justice announced a settlement agreement with the Navajo Nation to provide $13.2 million for the cleanup evaluation of 16 abandoned uranium mines located across the Navajo Nation.

The first phase settlement agreement for the abandoned uranium mines will establish an environmental response trust to pay for the evaluations. The inspection of the 16 sites will initiate solutions for the final cleanup.

“The Navajo Nation is working with the U.S. EPA for cleanup of uranium contamination that was abandoned upon tribal lands after the Cold War,” President Shelly said. “Countless Navajos have suffered from the health and environmental impacts from this contamination.

“It is our hope the U.S. will finally accept responsibility for the cleanup of this uranium contamination,” he added.

The U.S. DOJ is increasing their focus on environmental and health concerns across Indian Country. The commitment by the Obama administration to resolve these grievances from American Indian tribes is commendable, President Shelly said.

John Cruden, assistant attorney general for Justice Department Environmental and Natural Resources Division said the site evaluations are focused on mines that pose the most significant hazards.

“In partnership with our sister federal agencies, we will also continue our work to address the legacy of uranium mining on Navajo lands, including ongoing discussions with the Navajo Nation,” Cruden said.

Jared Blumenfeld, regional administrator for the U.S. EPA Pacific Southwest, said the EPA is proud to implement the historic settlement.

“It dovetails with our ongoing activities as we work together to make real progress on the environmental legacy of uranium mining on the Navajo Nation,” Blumenfeld said.

From 1944 to 1986, approximately four million tons of uranium ore was extracted from Navajo Nation lands. The U.S. DOJ said the federal government, through the Atomic Energy Commission, was the sole purchaser of uranium until 1966, when commercial sales of uranium began.

The AEC continued to purchase ore until 1970. The last uranium mine on the Navajo Nation shut down in 1986.

Harrison Tsosie, attorney general for the Navajo Nation, said the environmental response trust is officially named the “Navajo Nation Abandoned Uranium Mine Environmental Response Trust – First Phase.”

He said Sadie Hoskie was selected to serve as trustee for the Nation. Hoskie was the first executive director of Navajo EPA. Most recently, she has served at the U.S. EPA Region 8 in Denver.

“She brings a unique combination of upper level administrative experience, technical environmental knowledge and a command of Navajo culture to this program,” Tsosie said.

A panel from the Navajo Nation made the selection of Hoskie. The panel consisted of representatives from the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo EPA and the Dine’ Medicine Men’s Association.

Navajo DOJ demonstrated there were well qualified Navajos to fill these important positions, Tsosie said, adding that their goal of showcasing competency was achieved. He said the Navajo Nation was optimistic about receiving a comprehensive settlement to restore tribal lands and the environment back into harmony.

President Shelly said, “I welcome this preliminary settlement agreement that will address 16 abandoned uranium mine sites. We have always said the U.S. is responsible for the cleanup of uranium legacy sites.”

The 16 sites are orphaned mines because the companies that operated the sites are no longer in existence.

Stephen Etsitty, executive director of Navajo EPA, said there are hundreds more that must be addressed.

“Sixteen abandoned uranium mines is a small number of the entire 521 sites on the current inventory,” Etsitty said. “However these 16 sites are high priority mines the Navajo Nation needs cleaned.

“They do not have a responsible party or viable company to provide the cleanup,” he added.

The Navajo Nation will continue to work with U.S. DOJ and the U.S. Department of Energy to provide cleanup of all abandoned uranium mines left on tribal lands.

-30-
President Shelly attends Zoo Fest, announces funding for new aviary

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Parents and children came out in droves.

On May 2, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly attended the 8th annual Navajo Nation Zoo Fest. Guest speakers, entertainment, a play area for kids and animals were featured at the free event.

The tribal zoo features more than 50 different species of animals indigenous to the Navajo Nation. It is also the only zoo in the country owned and operated by a Native American tribe.

“A small but dedicated staff takes care of the animals in our zoo. If you see them, please take a moment to thank them for their service,” President Shelly said. “From the black bears to the golden eagles, these animals can be found across the Navajo Nation.”

He noted that the zoo operates on donations from the general public and tribal departments and entities that adopt animals. Entities adopting an animal provide funding for food, repairs for their enclosures and other needs.

Upon taking office in 2011, President Shelly and First Lady Martha Shelly adopted a golden eagle that could not fly because it was missing a wing. Shellie the golden eagle is one of the many animals on display at the zoo.

In 2011, President Shelly also made the commitment to fund an eagle aviary exhibit at the zoo. The project will give the birds more room to fly and provide the public with an exhibit dedicated to conservation of the birds of prey.

“This week, I will sign off and approve legislation to fund more than $400,000 for the construction of the eagle aviary. I have been very passionate about this project,” President Shelly said.

President Shelly will approve $401,514 in supplemental funding to cover the remaining construction costs for the project.

In 2011, the Navajo Nation became the fourth Native American tribe in the U.S. to be permitted for an eagle aviary. The aviary measures 4,133 square feet and will be located in the center of the zoo.

Drinking ponds, storage, examination rooms, office space, an observation area and gallery are included in the conceptual design of the aviary. The eagle aviary area will have 2,533 square feet and will house up to 30 injured, non-releasable golden eagles.

President Shelly said, “The new aviary will provide live eagle feathers to the Navajo people through a program established by the Navajo Nation Zoo and Navajo Fish and Wildlife Department.”

David Mikesic, curator of the Navajo Nation Zoo, said naturally shed feathers from the golden eagles are going to be distributed in a legal manner pursuant to federal regulations for traditional purposes.

Not only will this expedite the process for eagle feathers, but it will also reduce illegal actions on eagles in the wild, he said.

The aviary will also have a security system to monitor the eagles.

A federal grant from the U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service provided $200,000 for initial design and engineering of the aviary in 2014. The total project cost is estimated at $757,935.

President Shelly said the new aviary is a chance to teach Navajo people about eagle conservation, especially young children.

“The Navajo Nation will become known as an aviary tribe and we will continue to push for the protection of these magnificent birds. It is our hope that the new aviary will attract more visitors and hopefully, more funding.

“This is your zoo, take pride in it. We need your donations and support,” he added.
President Shelly announces opening of new Huerfano bridge

HUERFANO, N.M.—The new bridge is open.

In the eastern portion of the Navajo Nation, residents of the remote chapter of Huerfano have waited for more than two decades for the replacement of a bridge that carries residents across County Road 5150.

The bridge is located about five miles west of U.S. Highway 550, south of Bloomfield.

“The most dangerous bridge is San Juan County has been replaced,” President Shelly said. “This was the first major construction project funded by Navajo Division of Transportation since we entered into a direct funding agreement with the Federal Highway Administration in February of 2013.

Now, school buses can safety transport children to school,” he added.

In 2013, the FHWA executed a direct funding agreement with NDOT, providing $10 million to the tribal division annually.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is the other partner in the agreement. The BIA receives $44 million annually from FHWA to service Navajo Nation roads.

Paulson Chaco, director of NDOT, said the new bridge is a major accomplishment for the Navajo Nation, proving the tribe has the capacity to complete major road projects to meet the needs of Navajo communities.

“This is the first time NDOT took over the reins from the BIA to complete a project of this magnitude from start to finish. We are now partners with the BIA and the direct funding agreement with the FHWA is making a significant difference,” Chaco said.

He said the bridge replacement was an important project the Shelly-Jim administration focused on completing before leaving office.

The bridge opened to receive traffic on April 28. Previously, residents had to travel through a makeshift route down the Gallegos Wash to cross the roadway.

Bridge 8105 was completed at a cost of $2.3 million. NDOT provided $1.5 million to replace the bridge and the difference was paid by San Juan County and the N.M. gross receipts tax.

Of the 18 bridges in the county inventory, it was placed on top of the priority listing for replacement.

Chaco said NDOT and San Juan County are going to announce the official ribbon cutting ceremony for the new bridge soon.

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MEDIA ADVISORY

WHO : President Ben Shelly
      THE NAVajo NATION

      Vice President Rex Lee Jim
      THE NAVajo NATION

      Albert Damon, Division Director
      Division of Economic Development

WHAT : Groundbreaking Ceremony:
       Thompson’s Convenience Store and Gas Station

WHERE : Junction of Highways 118 and 566
         Church Rock, N.M.

WHEN : May 8, 2015 at 9 a.m.

CONTACT : Rick Abasta, Communications Director
          Office of the President and Vice President
          THE NAVajo NATION
          Phone: 928-871-7884
          Fax: 928-871-4025
          Email: rickyabasta@navajo-nsn.gov
President Shelly executes line item veto, cites need to maintain UUFB

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly has executed his line item veto authority on Legislation No. 0089-15, which was requesting more than $19.7 million in supplemental funding from the Undesignated, Unreserved Fund Balance.

The legislation had many projects listed, from power line extensions, chapter house construction, capital improvement projects, summer youth employment, public employment program, zoo aviary, water line extension, veterans and Navajo Transitional Energy Company.

President Shelly said, “When my administration first took office, the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance was in a deficit of more than $22 million.”

He said the administration worked diligently to replenish the UUFB and maintained the tribal policy of keeping the balance above the 10 percent threshold.

“Therefore, my administration will not leave office with a deficit in the UUFB,” President Shelly said. “After careful consideration, I will exercise my line item veto authority.”

The Teesto Chapter request for $2,922,425 to rebuild their chapter house has been vetoed. The $1,500,000 request for summer youth employment has been vetoed. The $1,500,000 for the public employment program has been vetoed. The request for $1,000,000 for veterans has been vetoed.

The president noted that the Teesto Chapter has an existing claim pending with Navajo Risk Management and said they need to proceed with the claim to resolve their funding needs.

“On behalf of Vice President Jim and I, we would like to express our appreciation to the Navajo Nation Council,” President Shelly said. “As we end our duties, the fact that our administration was fiscally responsible leaves us with great pride.”

A total of $12,859,429.21 of projects were approved and funded by President Shelly.
NDPS Director Responds to Vote of No-Confidence and Budget Inquires

The Nation's public safety and health needs remain critically underfunded which keeps NDPS from achieving the state-of-the-art level of first responder services the people of the Nation deserve. As Director, I have made it my mission to transform this dangerous situation. Significant change is required to protect the Navajo Nation.

When I became Director of Public Safety in 2011, it was obvious that this Division was poorly equipped, underfunded, not functioning properly, and could not adequately protect the citizens of the Navajo Nation (i.e., a critical example is the inadequate status of our 911 system). Communication with federal agencies was contentious, and the existing faulty business infrastructure did not allow NDPS to successfully capture essential funding creating a dangerous operational environment for NDPS and more importantly for our first responders and the public.

It is and always has been my goal to provide the highest caliber of public safety services. I have not shied away from making the tough and often unpopular decisions that true change dictates. I have not and will not compromise quality service to appease those few who fear and resist change. Change is never easy and it is often unpopular and uncomfortable. However the majority of NDPS staff have embraced change and are working their hardest to fulfill NDPS’s mission.

We need to continue to address the tough financial, infrastructure, equipment, and staffing issues that plague the Division, and the Law and Order Committee needs to be a supportive partner in this modernization process – not a detractor. We cannot continue to fight and be at odds with each other. It is time for everyone to focus on how we can move forward together. I know I have the courage to continue to implement these changes and look forward to completing them with the support of the Council.

As NDPS Director I have leveraged all available funds to make key investments in specific projects aimed at improving the Nation's public safety and health capabilities and services. We as a Division have made great strides. Our most notable global improvements include:

Completed a professional Division-wide assessment of policies and procedures and
initiated optimization of those practices that are outdated, inefficient, and non-productive. Job requirements have been upgraded for existing employees, and new hires have been held to these enhanced standards.

Developed and implemented strategies to identify and create new revenue streams for NDPS programs (Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise Agreement).

Initiated the design and implementation of a Next Generation 911 Navajo Nation public safety system. This state-of-the-art upgrade will create a faster, more flexible, resilient, and scalable system that allows 911 to support current and future communication technology used by the Navajo public.

Built external strategic partnerships and enlisted support from NDPS program staff and state and federal agencies (e.g., BIA).

Completed the first phase of implementing an Enterprise Architecture Pilot Program (EAPP) program for NDPS. The EAPP’s mission is to integrate and align business functions and processes across the division to establish a uniform, efficient, and effective NDPS operating model.

Completed a Fleet Management Business Case Analysis (BCA) that identified significant opportunities for NDPS fleet cost savings and operational optimization paths.

Completed construction of 132 bed adult correctional facility in Tuba City, Arizona. The facility is equipped with programming space to allow for intervention and educational services for individuals detained in these facilities.

Completed construction of a 48 bed adult correctional facility in Crownpoint, New Mexico. The facility is equipped with programming space to allow for intervention and educational services for individuals detained in these facilities.

Acquired new emergency and first responder equipment including new
ambulances and airboat for river rescues.

Focused efforts on staff training, which resulted in a significant increase in the percentage of commissioned officers reaching all of their training goals.

We cannot dwell on our success, as much still needs to be done. The only path forward is to work together. If we are to fulfill our duty of serving the people we must plan, fund, and implement all of the following near and long-term objectives:

Conduct a comprehensive legal analysis of and prepare a mitigation plan responsive to regulatory compliance requirements at the federal, state, and municipal levels.

Create a holistic legal based strategy essential to capturing 100% of the dollars required to carry out all mandated public safety activities within the Navajo Nation’s boundaries.

Legislate fiscal year-end payout of accrued annual and vacation leave for all NDPS staff.

Conduct an Organizational Management Study to develop a baseline of the true cost of doing business for each of the departments and NDPS as a whole.

Conduct Phase 2 of the EAPP to enhance NDPS’ performance by re-engineering the division based on the Plan of Operation that was developed in Phase 1 of the EAPP.

Complete a comprehensive overhaul of NDPS’s aged fleet using BCA recommendations.

Establish a Fire Department in each of the seven Economic Growth Areas.

Continue to increase hiring qualifications, training, and standards for performance
on the job.

Address pay disparity of personnel who are essential to the division and yet are paid less than personnel performing comparable work at other federal or state agencies.

Modernize the Department's information technology to include a fully operational case management system, and enhance current financial, human resource, and grant tracking IT systems.

Increase overall staffing levels in all departments to meet the demand.

Enhance, renovate, and reorganize NDPS infrastructure.

Although I am disappointed by the actions of the Law and order Committee I believe it is time for everyone to put aside their personal grievances and work together to increase police presence, improve infrastructure, provide cutting-edge emergency equipment, training and certification, lower response time, and take steps to enhance the safety of those in the field. To do this we must fully fund NDPS's mandates – nothing is more important to myself and to the brave individuals who make up NDPS.

I want to thank every person in NDPS who put their own personal safety secondary to that of the Navajo people. Their unwavering commitment to ensuring that those in need can trust there will be someone there to help should be the focus. I should not.

Organizational change is always uncomfortable and controversial; however, change is critical for ensuring a better future for the Navajo Nation. I expected employees within the Division to be directly challenged and concerned by this process, however this change will significantly benefit all. I remain humbled by the commitment of all those who are dedicated to fulfilling NDPS's mission.
President Shelly celebrates Thompson’s Store groundbreaking

CHURCH ROCK, N.M.—The junction of N.M. Highway 118 and Highway 566 was a hotbed of activity on the morning of May 9.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly celebrated the groundbreaking ceremony for Thompson’s convenience store and gas station in Church Rock.

Navajo businessman Alvin Thompson, council delegate Edmund Yazzie, Division of Economic Development director Albert Damon, chapter president Johnny Henry, representatives from the city of Gallup and state of N.M were also on hand to break ground for the new business.

“Today we are here to break ground and celebrate the construction of a new $4 million convenience store,” President Shelly said. “The Navajo Nation, through the Business Improvement Development Fund, contributed $1.5 million for this project.

“The new business will create 20-plus new jobs for the community,” he added.

Financial partners in the project include the DED, Navajo Division of Transportation, Great Western Bank and personal funds from Thompson.

The new store is a response to the community needs for food, gas and other supplies. Thompson has operated a store in the heart of Church Rock for many years.

In business since 1964, Thompson made the move for a better location to stimulate his business. The perfect location for the proposed gas station will undoubtedly generate traffic, as his business is directly across from “Campaign Hill.”

Thanking the staff of DED, Business Improvement Development Fund and the Eastern Regional Business Development Office, President Shelly noted that breaking ground for a new business on the Nation is always cause for celebration.

“Thank you Mr. Thompson for not giving up on his dream of opening a new business. He said the Navajo Nation, through the BIDF, contributed $1.5 million toward the $4 million project located across from “Campaign Hill.” (Photo by Rick Abasta)

Once the business is off the ground and fully operational, the Navajo Nation will receive revenue from leasing, rental space and taxes.

Because of the fee land status, the new business will also pay county and state taxes, which will assist regional Navajos in the areas, according to Damon.

The celebration concluded with a luncheon at Red Rock State Park.

-30-
Navajo Head Start creates job opportunities

Window Rock, Ariz. — With the recent surge in funding and a fresh start, Navajo Head Start (NHS) is in a position to be more successful than ever before. This success will benefit the organization and impact the local communities by not only providing and expanding much needed early childhood development services, but also creating many new jobs within the Navajo Nation.

In 2014, NHS was awarded a five-year, noncompetitive grant worth $125 million. Grant money will continue to be used to hire highly-qualified staff and make improvements to head start facilities across the Navajo Nation.

NHS is currently looking to fill multiple positions in its four regions of operation—teacher, bus driver and paraprofessional vacancies are a few positions needed to continue operations in the growing head start program.

With more than 20 openings and an ongoing hiring process, NHS is not only creating jobs for individuals, but also boosting the local economy as a whole through a giving organizational platform.

NHS takes pride in hiring the best candidates to foster a high-quality educational environment for all of the children and families that are a part of NHS. This entails strict requirements in the hiring process.

All hired positions in NHS require a Navajo Nation Tribal and Federal background investigation, other types of background checks are not accepted.

Teachers must have a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education or an equivalent to that, as well as at least one year of classroom experience teaching pre-school or toddler-aged children. These requirements also include an early childhood endorsement and a valid drivers license.

NHS paraprofessionals are required to have a high school diploma or an equivalent, such as a GED, and a minimum 45 college credit hours. Requirements also include six months of teaching experience and a commercial drivers license.

Bus Drivers must also have a high school diploma or GED equivalent and the position also requires 12 hours of college credit in child development, a valid CDL license and ability to pass a physical exam.

-More-
Navajo Head Start creates job opportunities

NHS also has job openings within human resources and maintenance areas in select regions.

NHS mandates these requirements to create the safest environment as possible for the children and families at NHS. This also allows for the highest quality of education, as all of the teachers are not only required to have a bachelor’s degree, but also experience teaching.

Currently, the unemployment rate of the Navajo Nation is 52 percent. With NHS continually creating new jobs it is aiding the Navajo Nation and boosting the economy as a whole.

Applications for any of the aforementioned job openings can be found at NHS's website [www.navajohs.org/employment](http://www.navajohs.org/employment).

Applications must be faxed, hand-delivered or mailed to Navajo Head Start’s Human Resources Section, P.O. Box 3479, Window Rock, AZ, 86515.

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Navajo Head Start is the largest federally-funded grant program in the country. Head Start and Early Head Start services are provided within the geographical area of the Navajo Nation, an area approximately the size of West Virginia that spans more than 27,000-square-miles across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Central Administration offices are located in Window Rock, AZ, capital of the Navajo Nation.
Singer Elected to National Indian Head Start Directors Association

Singer making national impact

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Sharon H. Singer, the assistant superintendent of the Navajo Division of Diné Education, was elected to the National Indian Head Start Directors Association (NIHSDA) where she will play a pivotal role in preserving the identity of American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) children and families.

Singer, who runs Navajo Head Start (NHS), was elected as the alternate for Region 6, which is the Arizona region, and serves as the primary substitute for Region 6 representative Bill Rosenberg.

The association serves as the nation’s leading voice for AIAN programs. Founded in 1979, the association has made strides in providing quality services to all AIAN children and their families.

NIHSDA is predominantly motivated to provide advocacy, leadership, development and professional growth opportunities to AIAN children and families, while preserving and respecting tribal identity.

Along with joining the NIHSDA, Singer leads fundamental roles in both head start and early head start programs. Singer also serves on the national work group for child advocacy. Singer will use her past experience from NHS to help make improvements and be a key contributor during her time with NIHSDA.

The election of Singer to the NIHSDA is well deserved.

In her time with NHS, Singer played a very important role in rehabilitating the Head Start program and helping it get to where it currently is. Much of the recent success of NHS is due to the hard work of Singer, who fought hard to keep the head start program for the Navajo Nation in strict compliance to the mandates of a 2014 federal review and to regain funding to make further improvements.

Through involvement with other organizations dedicated to improving the lives of children, Singer gained the experience needed to make real changes for programs providing services to families.

-More-
She plans to meet with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of North Colorado to do studies to improve early childhood services in Indian Country. This will help Singer bring more improvements to NHS to benefit the children that learn from the programs offered by head start.

Singer's involvement in multiple organizations devoted to the early development of children shows her determination and dedication to help children who are in the most need of the various services provided by these organizations.

NIHSDA has recently revised their mission and values, as well as created a strategic plan to move forward into the next 24 months of operation. Singer’s involvement with the NIHSDA benefits NHS, the two organizations share similar goals and values.

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Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly has been married to First Lady Martha Shelly for 50 years. He said she was an important part of the administration and traveled with him throughout his term of service to meet with Navajo people and assist elders and children. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Today is a time of family and unity.

The pillars of Navajo society, our mothers, are celebrated on this day for their tireless and unwavering dedication to family.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly encourages the Navajo people to spend time with family this Mother’s Day and to honor those who brought us into this world.

“Happy Mother’s Day,” President Shelly proclaimed.

Please spend time to honor our mothers on this day, he said, adding that families need to join together to celebrate the matriarchs that brought life into the world.

“Do something special for your mothers today. Whether it’s breakfast in bed, a cookout, or spending time at the movies, take care and honor our mothers on this day,” President Shelly said. “I want to thank First Lady Martha Shelly for keeping our family strengthened.

“She has been an important part of my presidency and I could not have done it without her love and support,” he added.

The Shelly-Jim administration honors all mothers across the Navajo Nation on this day. They are the foundation for our tribe and we thank them for their unending love and dedication to the children of this great Nation.

Ahe’hee!

-30-
President Shelly breaks ground for Phase I of Thoreau Industrial Park Railhead

THOREAU, N.M.—Phase I of the Thoreau Industrial Park Railhead is officially underway.

On the afternoon of May 8, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly broke ground in Thoreau for the proposed rail port that will import goods to the Four Corners and export agriculture, coal and oil throughout the country via the Intercontinental Railway.

The grand design of the three-phase project is to have a rail spur connecting Thoreau to Farmington. Thoreau’s 380-acre industrial park will accommodate up to 20 companies through a transcontinental loading center.

“We have talked to New Mexico DOT and they really like this idea,” President Shelly said. “The New Mexico House and Senate are also supportive”

He said the storage area of one railcar is equivalent to four semi trailers.

Phase II of the project will involve construction of a four-lane highway on Highway 371. The middle of the roadway will be reserved for the railway, which will connect Farmington with Thoreau and then on to the Transcontinental Railway.

“The right of way will have to widened from the 160-feet width it currently is today. The feasibility study has been done and we have an investor for the $14 million cost on Phase I,” President Shelly said.

New businesses will follow, he added, for the benefit of Thoreau residents.

Elroy Drake of Blue Horse Energy, LLC, said it’s been a long journey to get to the groundbreaking ceremony for the project. Blue Horse Energy was selected to develop, operate, finance and manage the operation of the railhead.

“Sovereignty. Indian tribes are sovereign. It’s important to understand that,” Drake said.

Sovereign authorities, such as taxation, played a significant role in providing the Navajo Nation self-determination for their future economic efforts, he said.

In 1985, the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to uphold the Navajo Nation’s right to tax companies doing business on the Nation paved the way for the Permanent Trust Fund and the Narbona Growth Fund, he added.

“I wrote the concept paper for the Permanent Trust Fund,” Drake said. “It was capital resource creation through compounded rate of return. Now we have $2.6 billion.”

In 2013, the Navajo Nation established the Narbona Growth Fund, a for-profit company under Section 17 of the Indian Reorganization Act, to execute business with states and foreign countries.

“The Narbona Growth Fund will be a holding company, so we can have subsidiaries under it. If a company wants to joint venture with us, it can be done,” Drake said.

He noted that the Nation would not be subject to federal, state or corporate taxes.

“The Farmington power plants are closing units. Oil prices are dropping. The Navajo Nation must look into other opportunities like partnering with BNSF,” Drake said.

Pete Deswood, senior economic specialist with DED, said the Narbona Growth Fund is structured to allow the Navajo Nation to work with entities like BNSF.

“We have an investor waiting in the wings to help us with a bridge loan,” Deswood said.

The Thoreau Industrial Park Railhead will not only establish the Navajo Nation’s master lease agreement, but it will also be a business multiplier and create new shops for repairs, mechanics and other businesses associated with the industry.

The transcontinental loading center will reduce shipping costs, spur investment opportunities in new and existing markets and reduce the carbon footprint left behind by the trucking industry.

“That’s what this is all about. The opportunity is there,” Deswood said.
SHIPROCK, N.M.—A high-speed chase from Cortez, Colo. and ending in Shiprock, N.M. ended with two suspects dead.

San Juan County Sheriff’s Department, Navajo Police, N.M. State Police and other agencies were involved in a high-speed pursuit from Cortez, Colo. to Shiprock.

The incident occurred before noon. Police officers from San Juan County Sheriff’s Department tried to pull over the suspects’ vehicle, a black Nissan Pathfinder, when they were fired upon.

The chase eventually ended in Shiprock, when the suspects traveled down a dead street. A male and female suspect were found dead in the vehicle and a third passenger, a male, fled the scene but was arrested before 1 p.m.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly commended the swift response by officers and said he was relieved no innocent people were hurt in the incident.

It is unclear whether police shot and killed the suspects or if they took their own lives in a murder-suicide.

The case is under investigation and the FBI is taking the lead.
President Shelly announces return of $1.2 million in FET funding

More than 60 of the projects have been completed since that time, allowing Navajo Division of Transportation to begin soliciting for new proposals.

“Completing the Fuel Excise Tax projects that were left in limbo was a priority for our administration,” President Shelly said. “I’m happy to report that we’ve done our job and completed most of this work.

“Beyond that, we have been successful for the return of tribal FET dollars from the state of Arizona,” he added.

President Shelly said servicing school bus routes has been the priority and that the new Huerfano bridge was testament to the work of his administration.

Over the past decade, FET dollars have averaged more than $13 million annually on the Navajo Nation. From that amount, $4 million goes to the state of Arizona, $2 million is deposited into the Permanent Trust Fund, $3 million is for the tribal road fund and $3 million is utilized for road maintenance.

NDOT has followed the directives of President Shelly.

“President Shelly’s directive was very clear: finish the outstanding FET projects,” said Paulson Chaco, director of NDOT.

Chaco said his other priority was working with tribal legislators in the state legislature to begin recouping FET funds going into the state coffers.

“We are excited with the news that $1.2 million will be returned to the Nation from Arizona for transportation infrastructure. This would not have been possible without the help of Senator Carlyle Begay,” he said.

Sen. Begay said infrastructure development, especially transportation, has been a priority for him throughout his service in the Arizona Senate.

“Transportation is what binds our Nation together. It’s what allows our kids to go to school, to go to work, to go to the hospital,” Begay said.

The $1.2 million in FET dollars returning to the Navajo Nation will equate to about $750 per mile for unpaved school bus route maintenance, according to NDOT.

Begay said the $9.1 billion budget packet that was passed by the Arizona Legislature this past session allowed for the return of $1.2 million for the Navajo Nation.

“We’ll continue to pursue policies that will enable us to become more self-determined and really look at avenues to retain greater economies of scale,” Begay said. “Bringing more jobs, improving education, improving infrastructure.

“Much of that doesn’t occur overnight. We’ll continue making the small changes to move toward a more positive direction,” he said.

-30-

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—The Navajo Nation Fuel Excise Tax continues to make a difference in improving the quality of life for tribal members.

Since taking office in 2011, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly has pushed for the return of FET dollars that’s earmarked for the state of Ariz.

For every gallon of gasoline purchased, 18 cents is taxed and deposited into the Navajo Nation Road Fund. For every gallon of diesel, 25 cents is taxed and deposited into the fund. The state receives 6 cents from every gallon of gas sold on the Nation.

FET funding is used for road improvement projects such as school bus routes, drainage crossings, access roads, maintenance, grading and many other enhancements.

After their inauguration, the Shelly-Jim administration faced 78 unfinished FET projects left behind by the previous administration.

On March 28, 2013, the Naa’bik’iyati’ Committee placed a moratorium on new FET projects until the outstanding work was completed.
Navajo Head Start desperately needing facility upgrades

“Our facilities are dilapidated and are in need of major upgrades and renovations.”
—Sharon Singer, assistant superintendent

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Head Start serves roughly 2,200 children across the Navajo Nation. Most head start centers are utilizing facilities that are more than 30 years old. These outdated facilities are falling apart and are unsuitable for effective learning and educational development for children.

NHS has recently undergone a restructuring plan to improve and expand early childhood development services. The program is focused on preparing children for K-12 education by developing literacy, science and math skills. The plan also includes making much needed facility upgrades to the 96 head start centers across the Navajo Nation.

Studies have proven the quality, age and features of the building effect children’s ability to learn and retain information. Facilities on the Navajo Nation need to be modernized in order to most effectively educate young children, head start administrators say. Education facilities play a key role in the education process.

“Our facilities are dilapidated and are in need of major upgrades and renovations,” said Sharon Singer, assistant superintendent. “We want the best for all of our children, including the best facilities to facilitate learning and development.”

Newer facilities can improve a child’s overall learning of materials. In a study conducted by the Council of Educational Facility Planners, researchers found that students who were in new or renovated buildings had higher performance scores, especially in math. New structures help to make students feel safe which allows them to focus on their schooling. When children are not distracted by leaks, broken equipment or rundown facilitates, their attention is focused on what they are being taught.

New buildings will also benefit teachers and staff. In one study, educators in newer structures felt safer and more confident. When the instructor feels safe and confident in the classroom, children are the ones who benefit. Faculty can perform their job more effectively and students gain more knowledge.
Air quality is an important part of the building and can affect more than a student’s ability to learn. In some older buildings, contaminants such as asbestos, radon and formaldehyde float in the air. Children under the age of 10 are more vulnerable to these contaminants and could possibly get sick.

Indoor air quality can cause what the Environmental Protection Agency calls “sick building syndrome.” Symptoms of this syndrome can include irritated eyes, nose and throat, upper-respiratory infections, nausea, dizziness, headaches, fatigue and sleepiness. When children are out sick, they miss out on learning and fall behind. With new facilities, air flow is better and these illness are less likely.

There currently is not enough money in the NHS budget to make all the necessary changes. NHS has set aside some funding for new facilities but it is not nearly enough to address the problem. NHS hopes to gain attention and support of the U.S. Congress and other law makers, and is also looking for donations and grants to make necessary improvements. For Navajo Head Start to reach its maximum potential, facilities will need to be renovated.

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Navajo Head Start is the largest federally-funded grant program in the country. Head Start and Early Head Start services are provided within the geographical area of the Navajo Nation, an area approximately the size of West Virginia that spans more than 27,000-square-miles across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Central Administration offices are located in Window Rock, AZ, capital of the Navajo Nation.
President Shelly attends Zoo Fest, approves eagle aviary funding

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Parents and children came out in droves.

On May 2, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly attended the 8th annual Navajo Nation Zoo Fest. Guest speakers, entertainment, a play area for kids and animals were featured at the free event.

The tribal zoo features more than 50 different species of animals indigenous to the Navajo Nation. It is also the only zoo in the country owned and operated by a Native American tribe.

“A small but dedicated staff takes care of the animals in our zoo. If you see them, please take a moment to thank them for their service,” President Shelly said. “From the black bears to the golden eagles, these animals can be found across the Navajo Nation.”

He noted that the zoo operates on donations from the general public and tribal departments and entities that adopt animals. Entities adopting an animal provide funding for food, repairs for their enclosures and other needs.

Upon taking office in 2011, President Shelly and First Lady Martha Shelly adopted a golden eagle that could not fly because it was missing a wing. Shellie the golden eagle is one of the many animals on display at the zoo.

In 2011, President Shelly also made the commitment to fund an eagle aviary exhibit at the zoo. The project will give the birds more room to fly and provide the

President Shelly celebrates groundbreaking ceremony for Thompson’s Convenience Store in Church Rock

The junction of N.M. Highway 118 and Highway 566 was a hotbed of activity on the morning of May 9.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly celebrated the groundbreaking ceremony for Thompson’s convenience store and gas station in Church Rock.

Navajo businessman Alvin Thompson, council delegate Edmund Yazzie, Division of Economic Development director Albert Damon, chapter president Johnny Henry, representatives from the city of Gallup and state of N.M were also on hand to break ground for the new business.

“Today we are here to break ground and celebrate the construction of a new $4 million convenience store,” President Shelly said. “The Navajo Nation, through the Business Improvement Development Fund, contributed $1.5 million for this project.

“The new business will create 20-plus new jobs for the community,” he added.

Financial partners in the project include the DED, Navajo Division of Transportation, Great Western Bank and personal funds from Thompson.

The new store is a response to the community needs for food, gas and other supplies. Thompson has operated a store in the heart of Church Rock for many years.

In business since 1964, Thompson made the move for a better location to stimulate his business. The perfect location for the proposed gas station will undoubtedly generate traffic, as his business is directly across from “Campaign Hill.”

Thanking the staff of DED, Business Improvement Development Fund and the Eastern Regional Business Development Office, President Shelly noted that breaking ground for a new business on the Nation is always cause for celebration.

“Thank you Mr. Thompson for not giving up during the lengthy process involved in establishing a new business. It’s not easy, I know this reality firsthand,” President Shelly said.

Negotiating the bureaucracy of regulations from federal, tribal, state and county laws is not only tedious, but complicated as well, he said.

“The Navajo Nation continues to grow. We must enable our small business owners to be successful,” President Shelly said.

Once the business is off the ground and fully operational, the Navajo Nation will receive revenue from leasing, rental space and taxes.
Welcome to the final issue of Hózhoojí Nahat’áh Baa Hane’ for the Shelly-Jim administration.

On behalf of Vice President Rex Lee Jim and I, we want to thank you for the opportunity to serve as your leaders for the past four-plus years. It was a blessing to serve the Navajo people during this time in office.

The Navajo Nation is going through a paradigm shift and our tribal government is changing. Our young Navajos are returning home educated and determined to make the necessary changes for the future generations to come.

I always believed in giving our young and educated Navajos a chance to serve in this government. When we took office, I appointed a 29-year-old Navajo man to serve as our chief of staff. This was an unprecedented move.

During our administration I also enacted legislation that terminated the equivalency standard that was in place for employment with the tribal government.

Today, if you want a job with the Navajo Nation, you must have a college degree.

Our young and educated Navajos can now return home to participate in the tribal government. We worked with our tribal legislators to accomplish this shift in hiring practices.

In direct contrast to the previous administration, we have worked hard with our Navajo Nation Council and in doing so, we achieved many accomplishments on behalf of the Navajo people. We must work together, that is the key to getting things done.

Please respect your tribal leaders and your elders. We have gone the other direction from our traditional teachings and this is not good.

The preservation of language and culture was a mainstay of our administration and we pray this continues for the future.

Dine’ bizaad is Navajo sovereignty. It is vital that we preserve our Navajo language and teach our children the importance of speaking it and ensuring its survival for the generations ahead.

Take care of your elders and check up on them to ensure they have enough food, water and other necessities. They are living treasures and hold the rich history of our great Navajo Nation.

Take care of each other and bring our Nation back into harmony. We will move forward with peace and unity for our Navajo people.

Again, thank you for allowing us to serve the great Navajo Nation. It has been a privilege and an honor to be your leaders. May the Holy People bless the Navajo people and continue guiding us for the road ahead.

Ahe’hee!

Honorable Ben Shelly
NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT

Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

The premise of the Golden Rule is simple: treat others as you would like to be treated. This basic teaching has been around since biblical times and maybe even longer.

It’s human nature to disagree with others, but finding the proper way to resolve such conflicts in a positive manner was the premise of Navajo Nation Golden Rule Day, which was celebrated on April 5, with 120 nations across the globe participating.

Ambassadorship is awarded to leaders internationally who have exemplified the Golden Rule in their everyday lives.

For the 2015 Navajo Nation Golden Rule Day, festivities began with a fun run and walk hosted by the Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Program.

The fresh air and exercise prepared participants for a day of guest speakers and information.

Living a healthy life has been a mainstay in Vice President Jim’s term of office, as he ran across the Navajo Nation for all four years of the administration. Not just a marathon, either.

We’re talking hundreds of miles ran in the name of healthy living.

Council delegate Amber Crotty provided the welcome address as a member of the Health, Education and Human Services Committee. Vice President Jim provided the keynote address.

Milissa Tatum, research professor of law at the University of Arizona, also spoke and provided an hour-long presentation on “Culture Clash: Turning Confrontation into Cooperation.”

With lunch provided by the Casey Foundation, participants spent the day at the museum to learn about conflict resolution, negotiations and difficult conversations from a faith-based perspective.

Ama Doo Alchini Bighan, Inc. also presented information on domestic violence and the need to protect Navajo children from unhealthy home environments.

Vice President Jim encouraged all to make the extra effort to treat others with respect and positivity, regardless of the situation. The Golden Rule is alive and well and living on the Navajo Nation.

Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.
Chinle Denny’s groundbreaking ceremony

President Shelly supported Navajo businessman Romero Brown for new restaurant construction

**Chinle, Ariz.**—On April 29, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and First Lady Martha Shelly broke ground for a new Denny’s restaurant in Chinle.

The site of the restaurant is located adjacent to the Program for Self Reliance office.

The celebration began with a traditional Navajo blessing. Participants blessed themselves with Tádídíín (corn pollen) and the site of the restaurant. Navajo businessman Romero Brown joined President Shelly for groundbreaking ceremony.

Chinle Chapter president Andy Ayze and chapter vice president Myron McLaughlin participated, along with tribal officials from Division of Economic Development and the Navajo Nation Council.

The group took photos at the site of the Denny’s restaurant before convening at the Chinle Chapter House for the festivities.

President Shelly said, “I would like to thank Romero Brown for having the courage to step forward and start a new business here in Chinle.”

Romero Brown said work on the Denny’s project began in 2008. He noted that President Shelly’s involvement made the project a reality.

“When we build this Denny’s, it’s going to have 100 permanent employees. There will be 230 temporary construction jobs. We’re going to pay about $1 million per year in payroll. Then we’re going to pay the Navajo Tax Commission about $150,000 per year,” Brown said.

Construction will take six months and the anticipated completion date is Oct. 17.

“In October, we’ll have some Grand Slams,” Brown said.

Brown noted that he wants to open a chain of Denny’s restaurants across the Navajo Nation.
President Shelly negotiates gaming compact

SANTA FE—It came down to the wire.

With the 2015 N.M. Legislative Session expiring on March 21, Senate Joint Resolution 19 passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 61-5 on the evening of March 18.

The gaming compact now advances to Gov. Susana Martinez for approval before getting sent to the U.S. Department of Interior for final authorization.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly expressed appreciation for state lawmakers for approving the compact and not only saving thousands of jobs, but encouraging tribal economic independence.

“I want to say thank you to members of both the House and Senate for approval of this compact,” President Shelly said. “Gaming is independence and revenue for the tribes.

“Thanks are in order for the governor’s office as well, they worked hard on this compact alongside us,” he added.

Speaker LoRenzon Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T’istoh Sikaad, Tse’ Daa’ Kaan, Upper Fruitland) and council delegates Amber Crotty (Beclabito, Gadiiahi-To’Koi, Red Valley, Sheep Springs, Toadlena-Two Grey Hills, Tse’alnaozt’i’i’) and Tuchoney Slim, Jr. (Bodaway-Gap, Coppermine, K’aiibito, LeChee, Tonalae-Red Lake) joined President Shelly in the rostrum.

Rep. Sharon Clahchischilliage (R-San Juan) introduced SJR 19 to the House floor.

She described the joint resolution as a good bill and said five tribes united over the past three years to craft the compact with Gov. Martinez’s office.

“The tribe’s casinos have created thousands of jobs for New Mexicans and brings in millions of dollars every year in revenue sharing to the state of New Mexico,” Clahchischilliage said.

Time was of the essence, she said, because current compacts expire on June 30 and non-approval of SJR 19 would cause severe economic setbacks for the tribes.

She reviewed the main provisions of the compact: increased revenue sharing, limits on the number of gaming facilities for tribes, the extended 22-year expiration date, new provisions for comps and participation in the state self-exclusion program.

Many members of the House rose and stood in support of the bill, including Speaker. Ken Martinez (D-Bernalillo, Cibola, McKinley).

He said the negotiations were a long and difficult process, especially after last year’s session that saw the Navajo compact stall in the Senate. The difference with the new compact is that the tribes worked together to create a compact in the interests of all.

“It affects everybody,” Martinez said. “I rise in strong support of this gaming compact.”

Rep. Debbie Rodella also rose in support of the compact on behalf of the Jicarilla Apache Nation.

She said in north central N.M., jobs are hard to come by.

“This compact will keep more than 200 people employed,” Rodella said. “It provides stability for the next 22 years.”

Gov. Susan Martinez and President Shelly signed the compact on April 13 and sent it to the Interior Department.

HUERFANO, N.M.—The new bridge is open.

In the eastern portion of the Navajo Nation, residents of the remote chapter of Huerfano have waited for more than two decades for the replacement of a bridge that carries residents across County Road 5150.

The bridge is located about five miles west of U.S. Highway 550, south of Bloomfield.

“The most dangerous bridge is San Juan County has been replaced,” President Shelly said. “This was the first major construction project funded by Navajo Division of Transportation since we entered into a direct funding agreement with the Federal Highway Administration in February of 2013.

“Now, school buses can safety transport children to school,” he added.

In 2013, the FHWA executed a direct funding agreement with NDOT, providing $10 million to replace the bridge and the difference was paid by San Juan County and the N.M. gross receipts tax.

For more than two decades, the greatest hurdle to constructing the 356-feet bridge was funding.

The old bridge was known as the most dangerous bridge in San Juan County because it had a rating of 13 on a scale of 1 to 100.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly announced that the most dangerous bridge in San Juan County has finally been replaced. The new Huerfano bridge opened to traffic on April 28, 2015. It was the first project constructed with Tribal Transportation Improvement Project funds since the Feb. 2013 direct funding agreement with the Federal Highway Administration. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
$13.2 million for abandoned uranium mine cleanup plan
President Shelly praises U.S. DOJ announcement, pushes for more funding

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— The U.S. Department of Justice announced a settlement agreement with the Navajo Nation to provide $13.2 million for the cleanup evaluation of 16 abandoned uranium mines located across the Navajo Nation.

The first phase settlement agreement for the abandoned uranium mines will establish an environmental response trust to pay for the evaluations. The inspection of the 16 sites will initiate solutions for the final cleanup.

“The Navajo Nation is working with U.S. EPA for cleanup of uranium contamination that was abandoned upon tribal lands after the Cold War,” President Shelly said. “Countless Navajos have suffered from the health and environmental impacts from this contamination.

“It is our hope the U.S. will finally accept responsibility for the cleanup of this uranium contamination,” he added.

The U.S. DOJ is increasing their focus on environmental and health concerns across Indian Country. The commitment by the Obama administration to resolve these grievances from American Indian tribes is commendable, President Shelly said.

John Cruden, assistant attorney general for Justice Department Environmental and Natural Resources Division said the site evaluations are focused on mines that pose the most significant hazards.

“In partnership with our sister federal agencies, we will also continue our work to address the legacy of uranium mining on Navajo lands, including ongoing discussions with the Navajo Nation,” Cruden said.

Jared Blumenfeld, regional administrator for the U.S. EPA Pacific Southwest, said the EPA is proud to implement the historic settlement.

“It dovetails with our ongoing activities as we work together to make real progress on the environmental legacy of uranium mining on the Navajo Nation,” Blumenfeld said.

From 1944 to 1986, approximately four million tons of uranium ore was extracted from Navajo Nation lands. The U.S. DOJ said the federal government, through the Atomic Energy Commission, was the sole purchaser of uranium until 1970. The AEC continued to purchase ore until 1970. The last uranium mine on the Navajo Nation shut down in 1986.

Harrison Tsosie, attorney general for the Navajo Nation, said the environmental response trust is officially named the “Navajo Nation Abandoned Uranium Mine Environmental Response Trust – First Phase.”

He said Sadie Hoskie was selected to serve as trustee for the Nation. Hoskie was the first executive director of Navajo EPA. Most recently, she has served at the U.S. EPA Region 8 in Denver.

“She brings a unique combination of upper level administrative experience, technical environmental knowledge and a command of Navajo culture to this program,” Tsosie said.

A panel from the Navajo Nation made the selection of Hoskie. The panel consisted of representatives from the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo EPA and the Dine’ Medicine Men’s Association.

Navajo DOJ demonstrated there were well qualified Navajos to fill these important positions, Tsosie said, adding that their goal of showcasing competency was achieved. He said the Navajo Nation was optimistic about receiving a comprehensive settlement to restore tribal lands and the environment back into harmony.

President Shelly said, “I welcome this preliminary settlement agreement that will address 16 abandoned uranium mine sites. We have always said the U.S. is responsible for the cleanup of uranium legacy sites.”

The 16 sites are orphaned mines because the companies that operated the sites are no longer in existence.

Stephen Etsitty, executive director of Navajo EPA, said there are hundreds more that must be addressed.

“Sixteen abandoned uranium mines is a small number of the entire 521 sites on the current inventory,” Etsitty said.

“They do not have a responsible party or viable company to provide the cleanup,” he added.

The Navajo Nation will continue to work with U.S. DOJ and the U.S. Department of Energy to provide cleanup of all abandoned uranium mines left on tribal lands.

The U.S. EPA website states, “Today the mines are closed, but a legacy of uranium contamination remains, including over 500 abandoned uranium mines as well as homes and drinking water sources with elevated levels of radiation.”

Potential health effects include lung cancer from inhalation of radioactive particles, as well as bone cancer and impaired kidney function from exposure to radionuclides in drinking water.

Although the legacy of uranium mining is widespread and will take many years to address completely, the collaborative effort of U.S. EPA, other federal agencies and the Navajo Nation will bring an unprecedented level of support and protection for the people at risk from these sites. Much work remains to be done, and US EPA is committed to working with the Navajo Nation to remove the most immediate contamination risks and to find permanent solutions to the remaining contamination on Navajo lands.
President Shelly honors Navajo Nation Sovereignty Day, declares independence

NAVAJO SOVEREIGNTY

President Ben Shelly has stood firm on acknowledging Navajo sovereignty and said leaders must not go against the Navajo Nation. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

Navajo Nation Sovereignty is more than just another tribal holiday.

Tribal employees received eight hours off from work to mark the occasion, but its commemoration of independence must not be lost, said Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly.

On May 3, 1985, the tribal council established Navajo Nation Sovereignty Day after the U.S. Supreme Court upheld tribal rights to impose taxes without approval of the U.S. Secretary of Interior.

The case was Kerr-McGee v. Navajo Tribe. The Navajo Nation’s authority to tax energy companies and others involved in utilizing natural resources found on tribal lands was reaffirmed by the high court.

Since then the Possessory Interest Tax, Business Activity Tax and other tribal tariffs have brought in hundreds of millions of dollars to the tribal economy.

“Please remember the importance of this day, that the Navajo Nation has the authority and inherent right to impose taxes on companies doing business on the Nation,” President Shelly said.

He said the Navajo Nation’s strength and execution of tribal sovereignty is evident in many developments throughout the government.

“For decades, the Navajo Nation was not included in the negotiations of mineral leases for coal and other natural resources found on our tribal lands,” President Shelly said. “We fought hard to earn a seat at the table for these negotiations.

“We now, we have our own coal mine,” he added.

Today, funding from natural resources in the form of taxes, leases, employment and other forms of economic development fund a large part of the tribal budget. In turn, these funds provide important direct services to the Navajo people.

The recent tribal election for the tribal presidency is another example of exercising Navajo sovereignty the president said, especially given the fact the process was carried out in a democratic, peaceful manner.

The various factions exercising their right to protest was a demonstration of tribal sovereignty, he said, and the subsequent election of a president and vice president.

“We operate a young tribal government and we are changing processes that were written in the Navajo Nation Code to operate our government. Recent developments require that we change the law in accordance with the needs of the Navajo people,” President Shelly said.

Tribal sovereignty was also executed recently when the Navajo Nation sat down at the table with Pueblo and Apache Nations in N.M. to formulate the tribal gaming compact with the state.

The N.M. Senate and House passed the bill, with many legislators lauding the Navajo Nation’s decision to sit down with other tribes to hammer out an agreement that benefitted all. Because of this, Gov. Susana Martinez did not hesitate to sign off and approve the compact before forwarding it to the U.S. Department of Interior.

“We exercised Navajo sovereignty to pass a new gaming compact with the state of New Mexico,” President Shelly said. “Now, we have an agreement in place for the next 22 years.

“Those gaming funds not only stimulate the economy, but they also provide direct services to the Navajo people. That’s Navajo sovereignty,” he added.

$1.2 million in Navajo FET funds to be returned to Nation

The Navajo Nation Fuel Excise Tax continues to make a difference in improving the quality of life for tribal members.

Since taking office in 2011, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly has pushed for the return of FET dollars that’s earmarked for the state of Ariz.

For every gallon of gasoline purchased, 18 cents is taxed and deposited into the Navajo Nation Road Fund. For every gallon of diesel, 25 cents is taxed and deposited into the fund. The state receives 6 cents from every gallon of gas sold on the Nation.

FET funding is used for road improvement projects such as school bus routes, drainage crossings, access roads, maintenance, grading and many other enhancements.

After their inauguration, the Shelly-Jim administration faced 78 unfinished FET projects left behind by the previous administration.

On March 28, 2013, the Naa’bik’iyati’ Committee placed a moratorium on new FET projects until the outstanding work was completed.

More than 60 of the projects have been completed since that time, allowing Navajo Division of Transportation to begin soliciting for new proposals.

“Completing the Fuel Excise Tax projects that were left in limbo was a priority for our administration,” President Shelly said. “I’m happy to report that we’ve done our job and completed most of this work.

“Beyond that, we have been successful for the return of tribal FET dollars from the state of Arizona,” he added.

President Shelly said servicing school bus routes has been the priority and that the new Huerfano bridge was testament to the work of his administration.

Over the past decade, FET dollars have averaged more than $13 million annually on the Navajo Nation. From that amount, $4 million goes to the state of Arizona, $2 million is deposited into the Permanent Trust Fund, $3 million is for the tribal road fund and $3 million is utilized for road maintenance.

NDOT has followed the directives of President Shelly.

“President Shelly’s directive was very clear: finish the outstanding FET projects,” said Paulson Chaco, director of NDOT.

Chaco said his other priority was working with tribal legislators in the state legislature to begin recouping FET funds going into the state coffers.

“We are excited with the news that $1.2 million will be returned to the Nation from Arizona for transportation infrastructure. This would not have been possible without the help of Sen. Carlyle Begay,” he said.

Sen. Begay said infrastructure development, especially transportation, has been a priority for him throughout his service in the Arizona Senate.

“Transportation is what binds our Nation together. It’s what allows our kids to go to school, to go to work, to go to the hospital,” Begay said.

The $1.2 million in FET dollars returning to the Navajo Nation will equate to about $750 per mile for unpaved school bus route maintenance, according to NDOT.

Begay said the $9.1 billion budget packet that was passed by the Arizona Legislature this past session allowed for the return of $1.2 million for the Navajo Nation.

“We’ll continue to pursue policies that will enable us to become more self-determined and really look at avenues to retain greater economies of scale,” Begay said.

“Bringing more jobs, improving education, improving infrastructure.

“Much of that doesn’t occur overnight. We’ll continue making the small changes to move toward a more positive direction,” he said.
THOREAU, N.M.—Phase I of the Thoreau Industrial Park Railhead is officially underway.

On the afternoon of May 8, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly broke ground in Thoreau for the proposed rail port that will import goods to the Four Corners and export agriculture, coal and oil throughout the country via the Intercontinental Railway.

The grand design of the three-phase project is to have a rail spur connecting Thoreau to Farmington. Thoreau’s 380-acre industrial park will accommodate up to 20 companies through a transcontinental loading center.

“We have talked to New Mexico DOT and they really like this idea,” President Shelly said. “The New Mexico House and Senate are also supportive”

He said the storage area of one railcar is equivalent to four semi trailers.

Phase II of the project will involve construction of a four-lane highway on Highway 371. The middle of the roadway will be reserved for the railway, which will connect Farmington with Thoreau and then on to the Transcontinental Railway.

“The right of way will have to widened from the 160-feet width it currently is today. The feasibility study has been done and we have an investor for the $14 million cost on Phase I,” President Shelly said.

New businesses will follow, he added, for the benefit of Thoreau residents.

Elroy Drake of Blue Horse Energy, LLC, said it’s been a long journey to get to the groundbreaking ceremony for the project. Blue Horse Energy was selected to develop, operate, finance and manage the operation of the railhead.

“Sovereignty. Indian tribes are sovereign. It’s important to understand that,” Drake said.

Sovereign authorities, such as taxation, played a significant role in providing the Navajo Nation self-determination for their future economic efforts, he said.

In 1985, the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to uphold the Navajo Nation’s right to tax companies doing business on the Nation paved the way for the Permanent Trust Fund and the Narbona Growth Fund, he added.

“I wrote the concept paper for the Permanent Trust Fund,” Drake said. “It was capital resource creation through compounded rate of return. Now we have $2.6 billion.”

In 2013, the Navajo Nation established the Narbona Growth Fund, a for-profit company under Section 17 of the Indian Reorganization Act, to execute business with states and foreign countries.

“The Narbona Growth Fund will be a holding company, so we can have subsidiaries under it. If a company wants to joint venture with us, it can be done,” Drake said.

He noted that the Nation would not be subject to federal, state or corporate taxes.

“The Farmington power plants are closing units. Oil prices are dropping. The Navajo Nation must look into other opportunities like partnering with BNSF,” Drake said.

Pete Deswood, senior economic specialist with DED, said the Narbona Growth Fund is structured to allow the Navajo Nation to work with entities like BNSF.

“We have an investor waiting in the wings to help us with a bridge loan,” Deswood said.

The Thoreau Industrial Park Railhead will not only establish the Navajo Nation’s master lease agreement, but it will also be a business multiplier and create new shops for repairs, mechanics and other businesses associated with the industry.

The transcontinental loading center will reduce shipping costs, spur investment opportunities in new and existing markets and reduce the carbon footprint left behind by the trucking industry.

“That’s what this is all about. The opportunity is there,” Deswood said.
Navajo Land Summit II focuses on land, tribal paradigm shift for progress

TWIN ARROWS, Ariz.—Pay attention. Listen. Take notes.
Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly’s advice to the more than 800 registered attendees of the 2nd Annual Navajo Nation Land Summit was straightforward.

“Please be sure you attend the sessions and take good notes to take back with you to your offices,” President Shelly said. “There’s a lot of good information that will be shared with you over the next few days.

For a second year, the Navajo Land Department provided information on the rigors of tribal land management and the numerous layers of data that will be available to Navajos and non-Navajos alike. Once again, the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort played host.

The Navajo Nation Land Title Data System, a new database with exceptional firewall protection and countless tiers of information providing real-time data on everything from roads, infrastructure, forested areas, water wells and right-of-way areas, is the crown jewel of the Land Department.

President Shelly said, “This new database will automate services for chapter members, tribal officials, and the general public. People no longer have to travel to Window Rock to find information.”

Data is literally at the fingertips of the general public, as the NLTDS will be accessible on desktops, iPads and even smart phones. The database works in tandem with the Navajo Nation General Leasing Act of 2013, which was enacted by the U.S. Department of the Interior in the summer of 2014.

“The Navajo Nation now has authority over all leases on the Navajo Nation, with the exception of minerals and right-of-ways. Those two are still under the jurisdiction of the BIA,” President Shelly said.

The Navajo Nation is vastly different from the tribal government of 15 years past, he said, noting that technology savvy chapters are finding self-determination and transparency through online tools like the Woven Integrated Navajo Data System.

“Chapter officials attending the land summit will learn about creating the most effective Community Land Based Plans that serve as blueprints to their communities,” President Shelly said. “Gone are the days of building anywhere on the land.

“Everything is now recorded, monitored and protected to ensure we are getting the most of our tribal lands,” he added.

Paradigm Shift

“The Beginning of a Paradigm Shift that Promotes Independence” was the theme of the summit. Attendees included chapter officials, council delegates, tribal enterprises, community land use planning committees, grazing officials and land boards.

Moroni Benally, executive director of the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, provided the welcome address and encouraged the audience to realize that “land is life.”

“This is an incredibly important summit, not just for what’s happening now, but for the future of the Navajo Nation,” Benally said. “The information you leave with becomes power.”

He said it’s the power to change existing laws and policies, the power to change the way communities are organized, the power to change the way people use land.

Dissecting the theme of the summit, Benally explained that a paradigm is a set of rules or guidelines, whether it’s federal or tribal policies, school board directives or the Red Book that governs the Eastern Land Board.

Presently, a paradigm shift is occurring at DNR, he said, ever since he took over the reins to the division earlier this year.

“I began reviewing programmatic agreements with the federal government and realized that a lot of times, the Navajo Nation is in the back seat,” Benally said.

Updating outdated policies can be done with a little hard work and persistence, he said, because federal regulations are not carved in stone.

“There’s always creative ways around existing law. That’s what I kept telling the federal officials and now, we are changing the criteria for selecting contractors that are working on the Navajo Nation,” Benally said. “This did not require existing law. That’s what I kept telling the federal officials and now, we are changing the criteria for selecting contractors that are working on the Navajo Nation.”

Mitchell said. “This did not require existing law. That’s what I kept telling the federal officials and now, we are changing the criteria for selecting contractors that are working on the Navajo Nation.”

Benally challenged the attendees to take control of the land so cities, towns, schools, factories and hospitals could be created, all which create a tax base to draw money from for services to the people.

“Listen carefully. This is the beginning. It all starts with land,” he said.

Navajo Nation Strategic Plan

Arbin Mitchell, chief of staff for the Office of the Speaker, said the land is our Mother.

“As Navajo people, we have simple idea, a simple plan,” Mitchell said. “There are four items in our strategic plan: Nitsahkees, Nahat’á, Iiná, and Sihasin.

“(The plan) goes around and around. You plant it out, you think it out,” he said.

The four concepts of thinking, planning, life and hope are the foundation for the Navajo Nation.

Mitchell said his decades of experience serving at the highest levels of the Navajo Nation Executive Branch has taught him that progress begins at the local level.

Citing Title 26 of the Navajo Nation Code, the Local Governance Act, he said certified chapters have an opportunity to issue their own business site or home site leases.

“Any plan that starts in Window Rock is hard to finish. If it starts from the community, it’s not that hard to complete. Local empowerment is about doing for yourself,” Mitchell said.

The Navajo Land Department is currently uploading documents to the Navajo Land Title Data System and they anticipate the automation process to be completed in the next year or two.
President Shelly funds more than $12.5 million in supplemental appropriations for projects

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly has executed his line item veto authority on Legislation No. 0089-15, which was requesting more than $19.7 million in supplemental funding from the Undesignated, Unreserved Fund Balance.

The legislation had many projects listed, from power line extensions, chapter house construction, capital improvements, projects, summer youth employment, public employment program, zoo aviary, water line extension, veterans and Navajo Transitional Energy Company. President Shelly said, “When my administration first took office, the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance was in a deficit of more than $22 million.”

He said the administration worked diligently to replenish the UUFB and maintained the tribal policy of keeping the balance above the 10 percent threshold.

“Therefore, my administration will not leave office with a deficit in the UUFB,” President Shelly said. “After careful consideration, I will exercise my line item veto authority.”

The Teesto Chapter request for $2,922,425 to rebuild their chapter house has been vetoed. The $1,500,000 request for summer youth employment has been vetoed. The $1,500,000 for the public employment program has been vetoed. The request for $1,000,000 for veterans has been vetoed.

The president noted that the Teesto Chapter has an existing claim pending with Navajo Risk Management and said they need to proceed with the claim to resolve their funding needs.

“On behalf of Vice President Jim and I, we would like to express our appreciation to the Navajo Nation Council,” President Shelly said. “As we end our duties, the fact that our administration was fiscally responsible leaves us with great pride.”

A total of $12,859,429.21 of projects were approved and funded by President Shelly.

President Shelly cuts ribbon for Shiprock Youth Center

SHIPROCK, N.M.—It’s for the kids.

This morning, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly attended the grand opening of the Shiprock Youth Center and snipped the ribbon to officially open the spacious facility to the general public.

On March 6, 2013, President Shelly broke ground for the new youth center. The grand opening comes almost two years to the day.

“Our Navajo kids need opportunities to do something constructive with their time. This new facility will give them the opportunity to play sports and have a safe and sanitary place to meet,” President Shelly said.

The $6.6 million facility was funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Measuring 22,000 square feet, the center features rooms for art, games, learning, technology, media and the open ceiling gym.

The new facility is a welcome distraction for Navajo kids seeking recreational activities that don’t involve drug or alcohol abuse.

President Shelly said the war against drugs and alcohol on the Navajo Nation is a daily challenge.

“We need to teach our children about the dangers of these addictive lifestyles,” he said.

The new multipurpose building goes a long way toward addressing those dangers, in addition to replacing the dilapidated old facility, which is more than 50 years old.

Our kids are the future leaders of tomorrow, the president said, adding that more youth centers like the one in Shiprock need to be constructed at chapters across the Navajo Nation.

“First Lady and I have dedicated our lives to protecting Navajo children,” President Shelly said. “It started at our home with our kids and grandkids.

“Our homes are the first learning centers for our kids,” he added.

Thanking the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development, Navajo Housing Authority, Division of Dine’ Education and the Office of Dine Youth, President Shelly said it was a collaborative effort that made the project a reality.

Design and Engineering Services worked with Dyron Murphy for the architecture and design. Oakland-Arviso provided the construction.

President Shelly said the 2014 presidential election taught the Navajo people the most important lesson of all – the preservation of self-identity.

“(The election) taught us the importance of preserving our Navajo language and culture. I have great hope that this new facility will help us preserve those elements in our lives,” he said.

FARMINGTON, N.M.—Thousands of people gathered.

The funeral services for fallen Navajo Police officer Alex K. Yazzie was emotional.

Police officers, fire fighters, emergency medical personnel and other first responders answered the call to pay final respect to one of their comrades.

They came from different states, different counties and different tribes. But the common thread was that they all worked to serve the public and the greater good.

Members from the U.S. Armed Forces were also in attendance, with many wearing the dress uniforms in honor of the departed.

A large American flag draped between two cranes fully extended marked the entrance to the Pinon Hill Community Church, which was filled to capacity.

Police officers stood along the walls of church interior in a protective circle.

For those unable to be seated, they stood in the back and watched the proceedings, while hundreds of other stood outside the church and waited.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly provided remarks.

He said the Nation is grieving and saddened by the loss of a tribal officer that gave his life to protect others.

“I would like to thank all the law enforcement officers that are here from the different agencies. Thank you for being with us and with the family,” President Shelly said.

Police officers face many challenges: stress and emotional toll, he said, adding that interaction with the public is usually met with a sharp eye and equally cutting words.

“The people you stop, they never have a nice word to say to (officers.) They chew on you, they give you a hard time,” President Shelly said. “Domestic violence calls are the most dangerous.”

In spite of this, brave men and women don the uniform and protect their communities, he noted, with the understanding that they have only three to six seconds to react in dangerous situations.

Beyond those daily challenges, Navajo Police have to work with less. Whether it’s funding to purchase equipment, pay salaries or simple manpower, there’s not enough to cover the tremendous land base of the Navajo Nation, he added.

The times are changing.

“When I was growing up, I remember a non-Na- navajo, hungry or thirsty, another Navajo would pick him up, feed him and give him water,” President Shelly said. “What’s today’s world? Right now, if you’re in that situation, you get beat up or you get killed.

“These are Navajos I’m talking about. Society is changing,” he added.

With the increase in population and changing social values, President Shelly said more funding is needed from the federal, state and tribal governments to properly equip officers for changing times.

“We are shorthanded. Believe it or not, the Navajo Police officers that are here, one officer has to cover 1,282 persons. Farmington has more officers as whole, than the Navajo Police as a force,” President Shelly said.

Upon concluding his address, President Shelly presented the family of Alex K. Yazzie the Navajo Nation Flag and saluted his brave service and tragic sacrifice.

President Shelly HONORS ALEX K. YAZZIE
President Shelly praises Navajo Beef initiative, supports hard work of Navajo ranchers

Since 2011, the Navajo Beef initiative has been growing and offering unmatched culinary delights at casinos owned and operated by Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise.

On Feb. 10, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met with representatives of NN grou and Labatt Food Service at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort to discuss progress with the Navajo Beef program.

The group dined on Navajo Beef prepared by the executive chef of the Corn Maiden Restaurant for a high class dining experience that was one part demonstration.

Joining in the dinner were representatives from NN grou, Labatt, Navajo ranchers participating in the program and board members from NNGE.

The Labatt Premium Verified Native American Beef program partners select Navajo ranchers with Navajo casinos. The company has expanded their program to include other tribes and pueblos.

Navajo cattle is purchased, placed on to feed and ultimately processed into boxed beef items upon market readiness. The beef is then distributed to Navajo casinos to be enjoyed by the consumer.

Local Navajo ranchers ship their cattle to feedlots owned by Billy Hall, a cattle buyer who owns the number one certified Angus feedlot in the country. From there, cattle are shipped to a harvest facility and then to direct source meat processing facilities.

Finally, Labatt distributes the beef to casinos, schools, travel and health centers in the southwest. “Navajos supporting Navajos” is the overarching theme.

President Shelly said the Navajo Beef initiative is not only a source of pride, but also a tremendous opportunity for self-sufficiency.

“For generations, we have known that livestock is an important Navajo way of life that must be preserved,” President Shelly said. “By working with our partners at Navajo Gaming Enterprise and Labatt, we are enriching our tribal economy and traditional way of life.

“We look forward to growing this partnership for the generations to come,” he added.

Labatt is the eighth largest broad line food service distributor nationally, said Al Silva, chief operating officer of Labatt Food Service.

Silva said the idea to incorporate Navajo Beef into the menus of Navajo casinos was an important step to prove the quality of the meat. The decision by NNGE to become the first customer for Navajo Beef has opened the door to other opportunities like tribal schools and hospitals.

The partnership connects producers with consumers and Navajo cattle ranchers are able to market their cattle at a premium and increase their bottom line for economic stability.

In 2013, Navajo ranchers had a ranching economic impact of $439,768 through sales of their cattle. In 2014, that number increased by 15 percent to $745,940 for Navajo Beef.

In 2014, there were 481 head of cattle in the Navajo Beef Program. For 2015, that number grew to 561 and estimates for future project continued growth.

Silva said, “You can see the product is superior to anybody else’s product. There’s no apology there.”

The steaks served at the dinner were flavorful and marbled with succulent cuts of tenderness that Silva says is unmatched because of ranching techniques incorporating a low stress environment and low antibiotic use.

Navajo ranchers are literally dotting on their head of cattle, Silva said, ensuring they are vaccinated, watered and fed. They are herded by cattlemen on foot or on horseback, which reduces the stress on the cattle and in turn means a tender meat product.

“A calf needs a booster shot like your kid needs a booster shot,” Silva said.

Proper vaccinations mean the cattle are less susceptible to diseases and illnesses. Healthy cattle equals weight increase and a superior product for the growing niche market of Navajo Beef.

Last year, Navajo ranchers averaged $1,200 per head through the Navajo Beef program, Silva said. Labatt serves Navajo Beef at all Navajo casinos and plans are to pitch the product to other industries on the Navajo Nation.

President Shelly is proud of the Navajo Beef initiative and said the steak was the best he’s ever tasted.
President Shelly and First Lady Martha Shelly adopted Shellie, a golden eagle with an injured wing, upon taking office in 2011. Deeply moved by the plight of these majestic birds of prey, President Shelly resolved to fund an eagle aviary for the protection of the eagles. He said Navajo people, especially young ones, must learn about the conservation efforts for the golden eagles on the Nation. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
Diné Binaat’áanii Bił Da’íníshjí T’áá Naás Diné Yá Deílníísh

At the Navajo Nation Executive Branch, we continue to work on behalf of the Navajo Nation. It is our responsibility to carry out the administrative functions of the tribal government.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and Vice President Rex Lee Jim extend thanks and gratitude to our divisions, departments and programs for your loyal service on behalf of the Navajo people.

Our employees are the greatest natural resource for the Navajo Nation. By providing direct services to the Navajo people, you are at the seat of power for our tribal government.

We continue to work together with our partners at the Legislative and Judicial Branches. Together, we can achieve great things for our Navajo Nation. Ahe’hee!

Navajo Nation Divisions and Offices

Division of Community Development  
Division of Dine’ Education  
Division of Economic Development  
Division of Finance  
Division of Public Safety  
Division of General Services  
Division of Health  
Division of Human Resources  
Division of Natural Resources  
Division of Social Services  
Division of Transportation  

Navajo Environmental Protection Agency  
Navajo Nation Gaming Regulatory Office  
Navajo Nation Washington Office  
Office of Miss Navajo Nation  
Office of Management and Budget  
Office of the President and Vice President  
Office of the Navajo Tax Commission  
Office of Telecommunication Regulatory Commission

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President Begaye, Vice President Nez broadcast cabinet appointments, graduation message at KTNN AM 660 studios

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—It is the “Awakening of a New Dawn.”

That statement is more than a campaign slogan. It is a change in consciousness for the Navajo people, as the Begaye-Nez Administration begins their term of service.

Earlier this afternoon, President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez visited the studios of KTNN AM 660 to announce cabinet appointments and the agreement signed during the Presidential Inauguration on May 12.

“Thank you for your prayers and support. We are very appreciative,” said President Begaye.

Vice President Nez introduced himself and said, “Thank you to everyone who joined and watched our inauguration. I want to congratulate the new Navajo Board of Elections Supervisors.”

In direct contrast to the previous administration, there will be no separation of duties and responsibilities between the president and vice president. Instead, President Begaye and Vice President Nez will work together to make decisions in the best interest of the Navajo people.

Taking turns to speak and share their message during the KTNN broadcast, the new leaders of the Navajo Nation displayed their teamwork approach.

President Begaye said key cabinet appointments for the administration include Roland Becenti as the executive director of Navajo Division of Transportation, Jackson Brossey as executive director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office, and Bidah Becker as the executive director of Division of Natural Resources.

Vice President Nez announced the appointment of Terrelene Massey as executive director of the Division of Social Services, Ethel Branch as Attorney General and Wenona Benally as executive director for Navajo-Hopi Land Commission.

The administration will work on many different projects and will take a look at the agreement that was presented by the previous administration during the inauguration.

The agreement signed during the inauguration was done in the spirit of cooperation and transitioning to the “Awakening of a New Dawn” for the Navajo people.

President Begaye said, “We already spoke about our position on the Grand Canyon Escalade. We don’t support it.”

The media reported erroneous accounts that we supported the Escalade. We do not, he said.

Vice President Nez said the administration plans to continue broadcasting weekly to report on news from the Executive Branch.

“We visited students from Navajo Head Start. They speak Navajo very well and it was impressive. We appreciate the invitations to speak at your schools,” Vice President Nez said. “Congratulations to our promeetees and graduates of 2015.

“We want to open the door back up to you to build our Navajo Nation. God bless,” Vice President Nez said.

President Begaye said, “It’s the ‘Awakening of a New Dawn.’ We’ll move our Nation forward with K’e and Hozho’. We need your prayers. Thank you and God bless you all.”

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez shared news of key cabinet appointments and a special graduation message to Navajo students across the country. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
President Begaye, Vice President Nez immediately respond to Tohajiilee emergency

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Shortly before 6 p.m. on May 15, the Tohajiilee Chapter issued a declaration of emergency due to lack of water for 90 housing units operated by Navajo Housing Authority.

Chapter president Raymond Secatero stated, “The community of Tohajiilee is declaring a state of emergency for the 90 homes that were impacted.”

President Russell Begaye responded immediately and instructed Office of the President and Vice President staff to work with NHA and the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management to address the crisis.

“We have our emergency personnel assisting with the water crisis. The Department of Emergency Management has been contacted and we have water delivered in the morning,” said President Begaye.

“We encourage residents to use caution and remain safe during this emergency. The situation is being addressed,” he said.

Vice President Jonathan Nez agreed and said residents must take a proactive role in addressing the situation.

Vice President Nez said, “We encourage residents to check on each other. In an emergency like this, we must execute and recognize self-sufficiency and self-reliance.”

The immediate response to the emergency has ensured that residents will have water before noon on Sat.

Priscilla Tsinigine, housing director for the NHA Tohajiilee housing management office, said water well number 5 was not working and that it would take a few days for repairs by the Tohajiilee Water Department.

“In coordination with the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management and Indian Health Services, we have located water truck,” Tsinigine said.

In the meantime, NHA has setup 24 portable toilets at the housing subdivision for residents.

Rose Whitehair, director of NNDEM, said, “Navajo Tribal Utility Authority will be sending out a water tanker in the morning, although east Tohajiilee is not within in their jurisdiction.”

“We are thankful for the cooperation of all who responded,” she added.

President Begaye commended the participating agencies for the swift response and assured residents that water is on the way.

The NHA housing management office anticipates repair of the water well to be completed in a few days.

-30-
Navajo Head Start teachers graduate from Arizona State University

_Cohort, partnership a success_

**TEMPE, Ariz.**—Sharon H. Singer, assistant superintendent of the Navajo Department of Diné Education, and Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye congratulated three Navajo Head Start teachers who graduated from the Mary Lou Fulton College at Arizona State University (ASU) on May 15.

The three students who participated in the cohort include School Readiness Coach Samantha Johnson from Region I-Shiprock, School Readiness Coach Rolanda White from Region I-Shiprock, and Teacher Percilla Shortman from Region IV-Tuba City. The three graduated with a Master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in early childhood education.

Navajo Head Start has built a strong relationship with the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at ASU. The cohort is intended to provide educators an opportunity to continue their education and in return, bring their experiences and specialized study back to Navajo Head Start to help strengthen its childhood development services.

Singer said she is excited to see the teachers back in the classrooms.

“They have worked very hard through the whole restructuring [of Navajo Head Start] going on three years. Despite all the challenges, they have maintained the momentum. They are certainly role models for the rest of our staff,” said Singer minutes before the convocation began. “We look forward to having them [back] in the classrooms—so that all they have learned will be brought back to the people.”

-More-
Singer explained the cohort is a great program for Navajo Head Start employees to further their education and to strengthen Head Start’s vision to provide the best possible early childhood educational services. Navajo Head Start provides tuition assistance for employees earning a degree or advanced degree from the Mary Fulton Teachers College as long as the student-employee remains in good standing with the college and ASU.

The graduates met the college’s namesake Mary Lou Fulton and her husband Ira A. Fulton during a meet-and-greet and thanked Navajo Head Start, ASU, the college, and the Navajo Nation for working together to help teachers further their education. All expressed their desire to continue on with their education and obtain their doctorate degrees.

“We have a momentum going and I am excited to see where Head Start will take us,” said Shortman. “Opportunities like this don’t happen to a lot of people. I consider myself blessed. What an opportunity?! An education that I can use and share with others.”

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye was also in attendance, along with staff from the Navajo Department of Diné Education. The delegation visited the campus at ASU and met with ASU leadership, attended a tribal leader’s reception, the American Indian Convocation and the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College Convocation.

President Begaye praised Navajo Head Start and ASU for its collaboration. He expressed his anticipation for an expansion of other programs such as agriculture, parks and recreation, and technology to devise similar educational programs and partnerships. He believes the cohort between Navajo Head Start and ASU should serve as a model for future programs.

“Thank you for having that insight and foresight in getting this relationship established,” President Begaye said to Singer and Dr. Lamont Yazzie. “We really appreciate ASU because this is innovative. You got to be willing to get out into the community.”

Singer explained, “Next year, we plan to graduate 16 more [with] bachelor’s degrees.”

Navajo Head Start is the largest federally-funded grant program in the country. Head Start and Early Head Start services are provided within the geographical area of the Navajo Nation, an area approximately the size of West Virginia that spans more than 27,000-square-miles across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Central Administration offices are located in Window Rock, AZ, capital of the Navajo Nation.
TOHAJIILEE, N.M.—Water well number five has been repaired.

On Sunday morning, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye visited the Tohajiilee NHA housing development and the inoperable water well to ensure the necessary repairs were made expeditiously for the residents.

Children riding bicycles circled around the neighborhood streets as President Begaye checked on the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority water tanker parked in the neighborhood to supply residents with potable water.

Several portable restrooms provided by NHA also lined the neighborhood streets for use by residents.

“Thank you to NTUA for assisting our Navajo families in the community here,” President Begaye said. “Although they don’t provide services for this portion of the Navajo Nation, they still came out to help.

We also appreciate the assistance of the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management and NHA,” he added.

The NHA housing subdivision is located 3.3 miles north of I-40 on West Rio Puerco Road.

Raymond Secatero, chapter president, briefed President Begaye and led him to the site of the damaged water well.

The well is located north of the subdivision, away from the highway and accessible only by a dirt road. The chapter was ready to repair the well on May 16, but the weather, especially lighting, prevented the work crew from accessing the site.

The Tohajiilee Chapter, due to its satellite community status, operates and maintains its own water works system, with more than 50 miles of waterline to service the vast community.

Water system operator Mark Begay was onsite overseeing the repair of the water well pump. He said pump house number five went out of service on May 15 after about 15 months of use.

“This is our only production well. We have real bad water. It’s rust, hydrogen sulfide. It rusts out our draw pipes in about two years,” Begay said.

The rusted pipes and burned out water pump were laid out on the ground. Several pipes were separated because pinhole-sized punctures were discovered.

The motor will be taken apart to see if it’s salvageable. If so, it will be returned to the manufacturer for reconditioning, to provide the chapter with a spare.

The new pipes, made from galvanized steel, are connected to the 18-stage, 50 horsepower motor that draws water from the ground at a rate of 160 gallons per minute. The drilling company, based in Milan, N.M. was able to secure a new pump from a company in Clovis.

The other four wells in the community are inoperable and both Secatero and Begay said the community is in need of a backup system.

“We tried upgrading and rehabilitating some of those older wells, but we’ve only been able to get about 30 to 40 gallons a minute,” Begay said. “We have a big community and there’s about 50 miles of waterline.”

He estimated the cost of the repairs at about $30,000.

The water pipes and motor go down to a depth of 800 feet. The total depth of the well is 900 feet. During an onsite test, the pipes hit water 72 feet below the surface of the earth.

“We appreciate the quick response from the nation, from President Begaye all the way down to the departments. It’s good to know that we have a president that’s dedicated and true to his word, as far as helping out at the community level,” Secatero said.

Secatero is on his second term as chapter president. He was a three-term council delegate in the 1970s, when the council was comprised of 74 delegates. He said the main challenges for the satellite community are housing and economic development.

“We need to begin developing something where there’s revenue coming into the community to offset some of the costs and expenses that we have regarding health, water, land and livestock issues,” he said.

Rose Whitehair, director of NNDEM, reported at 5:15 p.m. that the water well pump was operating and that it would take an hour or two to fully pressurize the water tank.

“Herman Shorty, chairman of the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management, is meeting with the repair crew to ensure the water will be safe to consume,” Whitehair said.

-30-
President Begaye encourages public safety after Tuba City bank robbery

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—A male suspect is on the loose after robbing the Tuba City Wells Fargo Bank earlier this afternoon.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye said, “When there’s a robbery that occurs on the Navajo Nation, our number one concern is public safety. We must protect innocent bystanders and ensure they call law enforcement and let them handle the situation.”

He encouraged anyone who sees the suspect to please call the police department and report the location.

“The police are trained and know how to handle dangerous criminals. You can assist the law enforcement by being aware of your surroundings and by reporting any crimes,” President Begaye said.

Navajo Police Officer Roland Dash reported the bank robbery to Navajo Police headquarters in Window Rock. The Tuba City Wells Fargo Bank reported the robbery at 1:42 p.m., Dash said.

The responding officer was Patrick Hall, who confirmed the robbery and asked for backup, including criminal investigators and the FBI.

Video cameras in the bank captured photo surveillance of the suspect.

The description of the suspect is a Native American male, 5 feet 11 inches to 6 feet tall, heavy set with long shoulder length hair. He was wearing a blue colored straw hat, dark sunglasses, blue jeans and a blue windbreaker.

Criminal investigators from the Navajo Police remained on the scene to conduct the investigation. The bank was shut down as the investigation took place. Local offices, such as the NTUA Tuba City District Office, also went on lockdown to protect the public and employees.

“The suspect didn’t show a weapon, he just passed a note to the teller,” Dash said. “He received the money and walked out of the bank.”

The FBI Flagstaff Regional Office has jurisdiction in the case. All media inquiries are to be directed to the FBI Flagstaff office.

“Please remember to look out for each other. Take care of each other. We’re a nation based on Hozho’ and Ke’,” President Begaye said.

Vice President Jonathan Nez said, “We condemn this act of violence on our nation and give our full support to law enforcement who will bring this man to justice.”

If the public has any information on the case, they are encouraged to call Navajo Police at 928-283-3111 or the FBI Flagstaff Regional Office at 928-774-0631.

-30-
Navajo Head Start celebrates 50 years

*The program was established in 1965*

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Head Start (NHS) is celebrating 50 years on the Navajo Nation. The program was established in 1965 and has benefited the Navajo People with early childhood educational services since.

In 1965, NHS opened its doors after being created as part of a much-larger project launched by the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). Then-U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson announced "Project Head Start" in 1964 as an effort to fight poverty in the U.S.

The program was designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children and low-income families with a comprehensive program to help meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs, according to the Office of Head Start.

The first head start program was in operation in the summer of 1965 and it was designed as an eight-week demonstration project used to validate its intent and purpose as a new program.

In the same year, the Navajo Tribe, as it was referred to at the time, was awarded $920,000 from the OEO to set up programs on the reservation including the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity (ONEO). Peter MacDonald Sr. was appointed director at that time to head a program that established preschool classes to help prepare children for learning. This program eventually evolved into Navajo Head Start.

By 1969, Head Start was a full year-round service. From that point, Head Start continued to grow and its funding surpassed more than $1 billion by 1984.
Today, there are more than 50-plus head start programs across the country and there is one in every state in the U.S., including the District of Columbia and the six U.S. territories that provide services to more than 30 million children and their families.

Just as the national head start program improved and expanded, so did NHS. At its peak, NHS had more than 120 head start centers in five regions of operation spread across 27,000-square-miles of the Navajo Nation. NHS implemented its early head start program dedicated to providing care and early education to infants and toddlers, as well as providing assistance to expecting mothers.

NHS has seen a lot of success. And like other programs, they have hit some bumps in the road. At one point, NHS was at the cusp of losing its program and funding because of noncompliance. But in 2014, under new leadership and energy, NHS passed its federal review and regained full-funding of its programs.

Today, NHS operates 96 centers across four regions that provide services to hundreds of children. The future is bright for NHS and they are looking towards expansion of its programs and opening more centers to serve a growing population on the Navajo Nation.

In 50 years, NHS has become an integral part of the Navajo Nation and has played a vital role in the development and success of its children.

Sharon H. Singer, assistant superintendent of the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education, is celebrating the program’s 50 year existence but said there is much more work to be done.

“We are proud of the work we accomplished thus far, but we know there is always more that can be done,” said Singer. “Navajo Head Start is continuously searching for ways to improve the development process, child health, family and community involvement, and the infrastructure needed to provide services.”

“We want the best for our children on the Navajo Nation because they deserve the best,” she added.

In celebration, NHS has commissioned a new 50th Anniversary logo that will be used for the year and will plan a celebration later this summer.

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Navajo Head Start is the largest federally-funded grant program in the country. Head Start and Early Head Start services are provided within the geographical area of the Navajo Nation, an area approximately the size of West Virginia that spans more than 27,000-square-miles across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Central Administration offices are located in Window Rock, Ariz., capital of the Navajo Nation.
President Begaye meets with ASU leadership, attends convocations

TEMPE—On May 15, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye spent the day in Tempe for several key meetings and scheduled convocations at Arizona State University.

Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President Policy Advisor Dr. Peterson Zah and Attorney General Ethel Branch joined President Begaye for the events.

Throughout the day, the common thread during the discussions was the need for educated Navajo professionals, especially CPAs, nurses and attorneys.

ASU Office of the President

The first meeting was with ASU President Michael Crow.

There, top management at the university provided an update on the collaboration with Navajo Head Start for the master’s degree cohort program that was established to assist teachers with obtaining post-graduate level education.

President Begaye praised the program and said there were many Navajo leaders and students that were educated at ASU. He commended the creativity of ASU to implement the master’s degree cohort program to assist the Navajo people with education.

“I’d like to see the school entertain some other aspects of education that you might help us with,” President Begaye said. “Such as the need for CPAs.

“I think we could incubate some Navajos in the financial field because there’s a huge need for us,” he added.

Branch said she worked for the ASU Center for Indian Education to establish a grant program at Rough Rock Community School.

“We were trying to revitalize the bilingual education program (at Rough Rock). I’ve watched ASU Law School really build its Indian Law Program,” Branch said. “You are helping us grow our own on our nation.”

The sentiment of appreciation for ASU was echoed by Sharon Singer, assistant superintendent for the Department of Dine’ Education. She said Navajo Head Start began working with the Mary Lou Fulton Teacher’s College two years ago.

“We have a master agreement that was actually initiated by
former President Peterson Zah. Now we have three students who will be receiving their master’s degree in curriculum instruction and assessment with an emphasis on early childhood education,” Singer said.

One of the primary goals of the 2007 reauthorization of Navajo Head Start was to establish a highly qualified workforce. More than 50 percent of the staff obtained their bachelor’s degrees.

The ASU master’s degree cohort program provided classroom instruction on the Navajo Nation on the weekends.

“We found it to be very successful using the cohort model. We’re very excited to continue the partnership with ASU. It’s been a very good move for the nation,” Singer said.

Dr. Lamont Yazzie, director of educational services at Navajo Head Start, said it’s a very exciting time for the Navajo Nation because of the ASU partnership.

Initiatives like the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Bureau of Indian Education restructuring and developing the Navajo Nation response plan to the common core are new opportunities for the tribe, he said.

“It’s very exciting to be able to develop the foundation of all of this through Navajo Head Start. We’re also infusing language and culture,” Yazzie said.

**ASU American Indian Convocation**

There were 368 American Indian students that graduated from ASU in 2015. The ASU American Indian convocation was held at the Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium.

President Begaye sat on stage and when introduced, was greeted by a roaring crowd. During the procession of students receiving their degrees, he shook hands with them and congratulated them on their educational achievement.

Toward the end of the ceremony, the tribal leaders on stage were allowed time to speak.

“I’m really honored today because we have so many graduates from the Navajo Nation,” President Begaye said.

He spoke of the need for lawyers to litigate on behalf of the Navajo Nation to secure water rights and to prosecute all crimes that occur on tribal lands, including those committed by non-Navajos.

During the evening, President Begaye attended the Mary Lou Fulton Teacher’s College convocation, which was held at the Wells Fargo Arena. There, he met Mary Lou Fulton, the namesake of the college and alumna.

Fulton met with the three Navajo students receiving their master’s degrees and expressed happiness with the post-graduate initiative with the Navajo Nation and ASU.

Samantha Johnson works as a school readiness coach for Navajo Head Start. She was excited to receive her master’s degree.

“We want to continue and we want to get our doctoral,” Johnson said.

Another graduate, Rolanda White also worked for Navajo Head Start as a school readiness coach said she was thankful and happy.

“I’m very thankful for Ms. Singer and Dr. Yazzie. Thank you ASU for establishing the partnership and paving the way for us,” White said.

Priscilla Shortman serves as a teacher for Navajo Head Start.

“This is exciting to practice what I’m learning in the classroom. Opportunities like this don’t happen for a lot people and I consider myself blessed because it’s an education I can use and share with others,” Shortman said.
President Begaye, Vice President Nez issue message to Navajo graduates

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Congratulations to the graduates of 2015!
That is the message from Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez. Education is a main pillar for the administration and their first round of cabinet appointments highlight that point.

“Congratulations to our high school graduates across the Navajo Nation. We are also very proud of all our graduates from the colleges and universities across the country,” said President Begaye. “Our administration is excited to bring you home to work for the Navajo people.”

On May 15, President Begaye spent the day in Tempe to attend several meetings and convocation ceremonies. There were 368 graduates for the Arizona State University convocation ceremony and many of them were Navajo.

A unique partnership between ASU and the Navajo Nation provided an opportunity for three Navajo Head Start staff members to receive their master’s degrees in curriculum instruction and assessment, with an emphasis on early childhood education.

The partnership brought educators from ASU to the Navajo Nation to instruct the students on the weekends. More than 50 percent of Navajo Head Start staff have bachelor’s degrees.

Both leaders of the Navajo Nation view education as the key to solve many of the challenges facing the tribe.

Vice President Jonathan Nez said, “I congratulate all of our Navajo students, from those being promoted to the next grade level, to our graduates from high school and college. I want to thank shi nali, President Begaye, for opening the doors to a lot of our educated folks coming back to the Navajo Nation.”

Vice President Nez attended convocation ceremonies last week and addressed the graduating students at Navajo Technical University and Northern Arizona University.

He also attended and spoke at the eighth grade promotion ceremony at Pueblo Pintado Community School, and the Red Valley-Cove High School graduation. He attended the Monument Valley High School graduation in Kayenta.

On May 21, Vice President Nez will be the commencement speaker for the Shonto Preparatory School promotion ceremony. The following day, he will be the commencement speaker at Monument Valley High School in Utah.

Both President Begaye and Vice President Nez attended the Hunters Point Boarding School promotion ceremony at the Navajo Nation Museum on May 18.

They thanked all of the schools, colleges and universities for the invitations to speak at their events. Due to their busy schedule, they are not able to attend all ceremonies.

Dr. Peterson Zah, special advisor to the president, said, “This administration believes in education. For the thousand of students across the Navajo Nation, we want you to stay in school and do your homework every day. Help your school, local people, grandma and grandpa.

“And for you parents and grandparents, please support them. They’re coming home, just like Chief Manuelito said. Teachers and school boards, you too, must help us,” he added.

The Begaye-Nez administration appointed three Harvard educated appointees for cabinet positions in the administration and more appointments will be announced soon.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 21, 2015

Open Indian Rodeo to Return to 2015 Navajo Nation Fourth of July Celebration

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – After several years of absence, the Annual Navajo Nation Fourth of July Celebration will feature an Open Indian Rodeo.

Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department Manager Martin L. Begaye, said, “We’ve decided to add Open Indian Rodeo back to our Annual Navajo Nation Fourth of July Celebration here in the capital of the Navajo Nation. The Open Indian Rodeo will be held in conjunction with a PRCA Pro Rodeo.”

Begaye said the PRCA Pro Rodeo has been a highlight of the Navajo Nation Fourth of July Celebration for the past several years.

“We are extremely honored to be the only American tribe in the U.S. to host a PRCA Pro Rodeo,” Begaye said. “Many Navajo people especially enjoy watching top caliber cowboys and cowgirls from throughout the country vie for thousands of dollars in prize money.”

The PRCA Pro Rodeo in Window Rock also provides an opportunity for the local people to see Navajo contestants who are a PRCA card holder.

However, Begaye noted, “There are many Navajo cowboys and cowgirls who do not rodeo professionally yet they are just as talented, which is why we wanted to also include an Open Indian Rodeo here in Window Rock.”

Begaye said it is hoped having a professional and Open Indian rodeo in conjunction with each other will attract a wider audience.

“The Navajo Nation Fourth of July Celebration is a great place and time to celebrate our freedom and honor our Navajo veterans,” Begaye said. “It is also a great venue for rodeo fans to see exciting rodeo action and support their favorite cowboys and cowgirls whether that be professionally or personally.”
Moreover, Begay added, “Many Navajo families cannot afford to travel long distances. Window Rock is therefore, an ideal location to enjoy the Fourth of July weekend with family and friends.”

The theme for the 29th Annual Navajo Nation Fourth of July Celebration is Honoring Our Warriors for our Freedom, which will feature a recognition ceremony for Navajo Code Talkers at 12 noon on July fourth.

In addition to the afternoon and evening rodeo performances, the 29th Annual Navajo Nation Fourth of July Celebration will also include fireworks on July fourth, a carnival, a cash drawing and food vendors throughout the midway.

A combined total of more than $132,000 will be added for both rodeos making the PRCA Pro Rodeo and Open Indian Rodeo one of the most coveted rodeos during the July Fourth holiday.

The 29th Annual Navajo Nation Fourth of July Celebration will be held on July 2-5th beginning with an 8 a.m. PRCA Pro Rodeo slack on Thursday, July 2nd and a final Open Indian Rodeo performance on Sunday, July 5th at 1 p.m.

For more information about the Navajo Nation Fourth of July Celebration, contact Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department staff at (928) 871-6478 or 7833 or at www.navajonationfair.com
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 22, 2015

Navajo Nation Minerals Audit Program Receives Coveted Award
Recognizing Superior Audit & Investigative Performance

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – Demonstrating excellence in audit and investigative activities to ensure the collection of every dollar due to the Navajo Nation.

That’s how the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR), described the Navajo Nation Minerals Audit Program, which is a program under the Minerals Department that was created to conduct audits and investigations of financial obligations due to the Navajo Nation under mineral leases located on tribal trust lands.

Greg Gould, Director of the Office of Natural Resources (ONRR) – an agency with the US. Department of Interior presents Joan Kilgore Award to Rowena Cheromiah, Principal Investigator at the Navajo Nation Minerals Department.
In recognition for the Navajo Nation’s outstanding audit and investigative performance, ONRR awarded the Navajo Nation with the Joan Kilgore Award. The Joan Kilgore Award is named in honor of Joan Kilgore, who was a staunch advocate for Indian royalty issues. ONRR based the award on the Navajo Nation’s active participation in royalty collection and compliance activities and contributions to ongoing initiatives undertaken in partnership with ONRR.

ONRR Director Greg Gould stated, “We congratulate the Navajo Nation for working closely with ONRR and for developing a strong and robust royalty compliance program.” He added, “In testament to your professionalism and commitment to excellence, the Navajo Nation received a top ranking on the 2014 peer review.”

The peer review was conducted late in 2013 by Williams, Adley & Company, a CPA firm based in Washington, D.C. The peer review examined audits performed by the Navajo Nation’s Minerals Audit Program. Under the peer review process, an audit organization can receive a rating of pass, pass with deficiencies or fail. The Navajo Nation’s Minerals Audit Program received a rating of pass, which is the highest rating that can be received.

ONRR Director Greg Gould noted the Navajo Nation also received a top ranking in the annual attestation engagement, adding that the Navajo Nation “has demonstrated a commitment to excellence and a spirit of cooperation that is critical to the success of ONRR.”

Erik Tsosie, a Senior Minerals Auditor with the Navajo Nation, described the dedication of the audit program’s staff, “We often come to work early, and leave late in the evening.” He added, “Auditing is hard work, but we are dedicated to verifying that the extractive industries on the Navajo Nation fully comply with all federal laws, regulations, and lease terms, and pay what they are required to pay to the Navajo Nation.”

In closing, ONRR Director Greg Gould thanked the Navajo Nation for the tribe’s efforts to ensure that the Navajo Nation receives the full return of royalties due. He added, “The Navajo Nation is truly a leader among ONRR’s state and tribal partners.”
Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources Executive Director Bidtah Becker, stated, “I would like to congratulate all the Navajo Nation Minerals Audit Program staff for their steadfast dedication and commitment. As a result of their efforts, the Navajo Nation has one of the best royalty compliance programs in the country. Their work truly benefits the Navajo people and the Navajo Nation.”

Navajo Nation Minerals Department Director Akhtar Zaman, emphasized the importance of the audit function, which provides assurance to the Navajo Nation about the accuracy of revenues derived from the tribe’s vast mineral resources.

According to Zaman, the Navajo Nation is one of only a handful of tribes across the United States that performs its own audits of royalties and other financial obligations derived from mineral leases. He explained, “It’s a testament to the Navajo Nation’s resolve for self-determination and control over its mineral producing assets.”

In support of continued collaboration between the Navajo Nation and ONRR, Brian Bex, a Minerals Auditor with the Navajo Nation, will be joining ONRR for a two-year period under the agency’s Intergovernmental Personnel Act Fellowship Program. Participants in the program develop additional audit and compliance experience and gain special knowledge related to minerals asset valuation and enforcement.

The origin of the Navajo Nation’s Minerals Audit Program can be traced to the Federal Oil and Gas Royalty Management Act of 1982. Sections 202 and 205 of the Act provides the authority for tribes and states to enter into cooperative agreements or delegations with the Secretary of the Interior to conduct audits and investigations of mineral leases.

The Navajo Nation entered into its first cooperative agreement in 1984. The Navajo Nation is one of a small number of tribes and states that are currently performing audits and compliance reviews under agreements with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Natural Resources Revenue.

The Minerals Audit Program is led by Rowena Cheromiah who is the Principal Investigator under the cooperative agreement and Marlene Nakai, Minerals Audit Manager. Both have provided decades of service to the Navajo Nation in support of the tribe’s minerals management function through audit and compliance related activities.
Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 9000
Window Rock, Arizona 86515
(928) 871-6592 & 6593
Fax# (928) 871-7040

The Navajo Nation Minerals Audit Program performs audit and investigation of mineral royalty payments and other lease-level obligations to the Navajo Nation including bonuses, water usage fees, scholarship payments, and all other financial obligations that are specifically required under Navajo Nation oil, gas, and solid minerals leases and agreements.

The audits are performed in accordance with the Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards promulgated by the Comptroller General of the United States.
President Begaye, Vice President Nez urge caution when traveling for Memorial Day Weekend

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—A Navajo Transit System bus was involved in a head-on collision with a subcompact car shortly after 7 a.m. today.

The bus was traveling southbound on U.S. Route 491 when a black subcompact car hit the bus head-on. The accident site was about a mile north of the Mexican Springs turnoff.

Traffic was backed up for miles in both directions, as emergency responders and police from various agencies responded to the scene to begin their investigation.

The responding agencies included Navajo Police, N.M. State Police, McKinley County Sheriffs Office, Tsayatoh Volunteer Fire Department, Navajo Nation Fire Department, Navajo Emergency Medical Services and N.M. Department of Transportation.

The car door, broken glass and other debris were littered across the road. The small black car was crushed and was sitting west of the highway in the dirt. The bus, a large 40-passenger model, was parked on the shoulder of the highway on the east side of the road in a southern direction.

Alvernon Tsosie, criminal investigator for the Navajo Police said there were no fatalities. A medical helicopter was spotted leaving the scene after the critically injured were airlifted to the hospital.

“Quite a few people were around the car, trying to help. About 20 minutes later, the police came and told the people to leave. People were getting out of the bus,” Harker said.

He said he was traveling to Farmington to pickup a load of corn for transport to Snowflake, Ariz.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye urged the traveling public to be extremely cautious when traveling for the Memorial Day Weekend.

“Please exercise good judgment and give yourself enough time to reach your respective destination. Drive defensively and lookout for the other driver,” President Begaye said.

Vice President Jonathan Nez agreed and said, “Please do not drink and drive. Think about the lives of others and your own life before getting behind the wheel of a car. This also means no texting and driving. Pay attention when traveling.”

The accident is under investigation by the Navajo Police. No further details available at this time.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 23, 2015

Location for NNHRC June Regular Meeting moved to Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort.

ST. MICHAELS, Ariz. — The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission regular meeting location is moved to Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort, 22181 Resort Boulevard, Flagstaff, Ariz. The NNHRC will meet at 10 a.m. on Friday, June 5, 2015. The regular meeting is open to the public.

For more information, call the NNHRC office at 928.871.7436 or visit the NNHRC website at www.nnhrcc.navajo-nsn.gov

###
President Begaye, Vice President Nez issue Memorial Day message

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Freedom is not free. It is paid for by the lives of patriots and heroes who answered the call of duty to protect our country.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez honor the heroic men and women who paid the ultimate price to defend our nation from enemies foreign and domestic.

“We salute the courageous men and women who gave their lives in defense of this great nation, especially our Navajo warriors who answered the call for war,” President Begaye said. “We extend our support to the Gold Star Mothers who lost family members in action.”

For the Navajo Nation, Memorial Day festivities will be held in Chinle and Leupp to honor veterans killed in action, beginning with early morning flag raising ceremonies. Vice President Nez will be honoring warfighters lost in battle and speaking at the event in Leupp.

“The Navajo Nation pays respect to the fallen warriors of this country. For those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our nation, your sacrifice will not be forgotten,” said Vice President Nez.

Before Navajo men and women began volunteering for service in the U.S. Armed Forces, our Navajo ancestors fought ana’í, the enemy, during Hwéeldi, the Long Walk, for the freedom of the Navajo people. They too, must be remembered and honored.

Memorial Day is a time of respect and reverence for those who did not return home. From the more than 2,000 Navajos who perished during Hwéeldi, to battlefields of World War I and World War II, we will always remember their courageous sacrifice.

Our brave Navajo Code Talkers transmitted messages on the battlefields of the Pacific Theater during World War II, utilizing Diné bizaad, the Navajo language, for an unbreakable code that was never deciphered by the enemy.

We honor the men and women we lost on the icy battlefields of Korea and in the hot jungles of Vietnam. For the patriots who gave their lives in the Persian Gulf War, Operation Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom, you too, will not be forgotten.

As you see the American flags raised across the great Navajo Nation, please take moment to reflect on the heroes who sacrificed their lives for us to continue our Navajo way of life. Memorial Day is a time of respect. Please share this reverence with your children.

For our brave Navajo warriors who lost brothers and sisters on the battlefield, we are here for you. The sacrifices of your brethren will be honored and remembered.

President Thomas Jefferson once said, “The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants.”

We must not take the freedom of choice and liberties we have for granted. Please remember to honor the brave men and women who paid for the liberties we enjoy today. They paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

We salute your sacrifice. Ahééhé’.

-30-
Navajo Head Start celebrates end of year, student promotions

“Our goal in Head Start is to get your children school-ready for kindergarten.”
—Sharon H. Singer

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. —
Sharon H. Singer, assistant superintendent of the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education, congratulates all the Navajo Head Start (NHS) students that were promoted last week to Kindergarten in several promotion ceremonies and End of Year Celebrations held across the Navajo Nation.

In total, Navajo Head Start will promote more than 1,450 three to five-year-old children in 86 promotional ceremonies.

Singer spent the week attending various promotions and events across the Nation and encouraged parents to stay involved in their children’s education. Singer was the keynote speaker at the End of Year Celebration and promotion ceremony for St. Michaels Head Start on May 21 at the St. Michaels Chapter House. She highlighted accomplishments of the children, as well as Navajo Head Start for the past two years.

“Two years ago, we started our journey to school readiness, transforming, and restructuring Head Start. Today, we have 50% of our teachers with bachelor's degrees and we are very proud of them,” she explained.

She also explained NHS has been in operation for the last 50 years.

- More -
“We are celebrating our 50th birthday—Happy Birthday Head Start!” she said.

Singer stressed the importance of NHS’s goal to have children ready for kindergarten.

“Our goal in Head Start is to get your children school-ready for kindergarten, so they are able to write their names, know their alphabets, and know their numbers,” said Singer. “We started integrating math, science, and technology as well. We want them to be prepared and we need your support.”

Singer also expressed gratitude to all who took part in the education and development of the Head Start children, which includes the parents and families, teachers, paraprofessionals, bus drivers and the community.

Lambert Perry, local parent committee president, served as the master of ceremony at the St. Michaels event and he explained it has been a pleasure to work with the Head Start children.

“I want to thank you all, it has been my pleasure to work with the kids, staff and the entire Head Start program,” said Perry.

Perry also thanked and praised the staff and faculty of NHS who provide services to more than 96 Head Start Centers spread across the Navajo Nation, which is more than 27,000-square-miles sprawled across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah.

“Our head start staff are really gifted and dedicated,” he said.

One highlight of the promotion ceremony was the singing of “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” by the children.

Navajo Head Start thanks parents, teachers, faculty and the community for their on-going support and they look forward to the upcoming school year.

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Navajo Head Start is the largest federally-funded grant program in the country. Head Start and Early Head Start services are provided within the geographical area of the Navajo Nation, an area approximately the size of West Virginia that spans more than 27,000-square-miles across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Central Administration offices are located in Window Rock, Ariz., capital of the Navajo Nation.
Begaye-Nez administration announce new cabinet appointments

President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez sit with their cabinet members during a recent division directors meeting at Quality Inn. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

Two more individuals have joined the awakening of a new dawn.

Today, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye announced the appointment of Jesse Delmar as the executive director of the Division of Public Safety.

“We congratulate and welcome Jesse Delmar as our new executive director of the Navajo Division of Public Safety,” President Begaye said. “His extensive background in law enforcement and education in criminal justice will complement the team we have assembled.”

Vice President Jonathan Nez agreed and said, “Our administration has selected Jesse Delmar because of his education, experience and knowledge of issues facing law enforcement officers across Indian Country. We are happy to have him aboard.”

Delmar is a graduate of Northern Arizona University with a bachelor’s degree in administration of criminal justice with a minor in psychology. He is also a graduate of the Federal Law Enforcement Academy and FBI National Academy.

He served as an executive fellow with the FBI Executive Fellowship Program in Washington, D.C. and served as vice president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police Indian Section and served as president of the Indian Country Intelligence of Arizona.

In addition, Delmar served many terms as chief of police for the Ft. McDowell Yavapai Nation Police Department.

Serving in these various capacities over the years not only gave him the experience in dealing with the many issues facing Indian Country, but also the opportunity to share these concerns on a national level.

“I’m deeply humbled and honored to be asked by the Begaye-Nez administration to serve as executive director for the Navajo Division of Public Safety,” Delmar said. “I do buy into what they have to offer the Navajo people.

“I’m very impressed by their direction and I do want to be part of the awakening of this new dawn,” he added.

Delmar is not stranger to the Navajo Nation, especially since he served more than 26 years for the tribe.

His recent decision to retire was to be closer to family, in particular, his grandson, Mason. Delmar has been married for more than 31 years to his wife, Marjorie. The couple has three daughters, Audrey, Melody and Josselyn.

“I feel I can contribute my wisdom, experience, and knowledge in advancing the nation and going forward in helping my people with regard to matters with the Navajo Division of Public Safety,” Delmar said.

The second appointment by President Begaye was Dr. Donald Benn to serve as executive director of Navajo Environmental Protection Agency.

“We proudly announce the selection of Dr. Donald Benn as the director of Navajo EPA. His education in chemistry is extraordinary and we know he will do a good job leading an important division for the Navajo Nation,” said President Begaye.

Vice President Nez was also excited with the selection for Navajo EPA.

“We have a scientist joining the team, a man who has worked with NASA during his professional career. We are excited to see his leadership style with Navajo EPA,” Vice President Nez said.

Benn earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry form the University of New Mexico in 1997. He obtained a master’s degree in chemistry from New Mexico State University in 2000. In 2005, Benn earned his doctoral degree in chemistry at NMSU.

Benn said he was thankful for the selection to work with President Begaye and Vice President Nez and that he has returned home to help the Navajo people.

From July 2010 to May 2015, he worked as director of Navajo EPA.

His education in chemistry is extraordinary and we know he will do a good job leading an important division for the Navajo Nation,” said President Begaye.

Vice President Nez was also excited with the selection for Navajo EPA.

“We have a scientist joining the team, a man who has worked with NASA during his professional career. We are excited to see his leadership style with Navajo EPA,” Vice President Nez said.

Benn earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry form the University of New Mexico in 1997. He obtained a master’s degree in chemistry from New Mexico State University in 2000. In 2005, Benn earned his doctoral degree in chemistry at NMSU.

Benn said he was thankful for the selection to work with President Begaye and Vice President Nez and that he has returned home to help the Navajo people.

From July 2010 to May 2015, Benn worked as a research scientist consultant for Nihidah Nidii Dal, LLC in Lukachukai, Ariz. from May 2010 to July 2010, he successfully wrote and received a NASA-MIRS research grant to use at the Navajo Technical University in Crownpoint, N.M.

From May 2009 to May 2010, he worked as director of the Native American Research Laboratory at the University of Montana in Missoula. From August 2008 to May 2009, Benn taught chemistry, biology and nutrition at Diné College in Tsaile, Ariz.


“Historically, Native Americans did not need an environmental protection service because we were not destructive, but now that we have one it is my pleasure to serve as its director with the Begaye-Nez team,” Benn said. “I came back to the reservation to help Diné people and thanks to both President Begaye and Vice-President Nez, I am have been given the unique opportunity to do just that.”

Over the years, he has received a number of academic awards and honors, including the GK-12 National Science Foundation Inquiry Based Scientist Award from NMSU from 2003 to 2004, designation as an Alfred P. Sloan fellow for NMSU from 1997-1999, and the Presidential Scholar Award from UNM from 1987-1989.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 27, 2015

Notice of Temporary Closure – Department for Self Reliance

Greasewood, Ariz. - The Department for Self Reliance (DSR) is releasing this notice to make it known that the Greasewood DSR Office location will be temporarily closed beginning Wednesday, May 27th, through June 30th, 2015 due to water damages from flooding.

The Greasewood staff will be temporarily relocated to DSR’s St. Michaels location within the Navajo Nation Oil & Gas building at 48 West HWY 264. To reach the Greasewood DSR staff, contact the DSR’s St. Michaels location at (928) 810-8592 or toll free at (866) 860-9549.

The DSR apologizes for any inconvenience this unforeseen closure may cause. For more information please call the Support Services office at (928) 810-8553 or toll free at (866) 347-2403.

###
Vice President Nez attends Birdsprings Memorial Day event

BIRDSPRINGS, Ariz.—The Birdsprings Chapter honored their fallen warriors on Memorial Day. The daylong event brought in veterans from the surrounding communities of Leupp and Tolani Lake.

While many gathered for the event, the mood was not celebratory.

“I wouldn’t really call this a celebration. In a Memorial Day event, we honor all of our fallen soldiers: POW, MIA, KIA. That’s what this event is all about,” said Randolf David, commander of the Birdsprings Chapter Veterans Organization.

He said people seem to forget the purpose of Memorial Day, instead focusing their attention on cookouts and celebrating the start of summer.

“It’s about the men and women who gave their lives for our freedom. You guys are very lucky and fortunate that we have men and women willing to give their lives for our freedom and our rights,” David said.

Those words set the tone for the event, as more than 100 people packed into the domed confines of the Birdsprings Chapter House on May 25. A wall on the south side of the facility featured photos of veterans killed in action. The community also had framed photos of veterans that served in the military.

Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez was in attendance and said he was proud to honor the fallen heroes that died in service to the U.S. Armed Forces.

He said veterans fought for Navajo culture, for preservation of Diné bizaad, which was used to end the atrocities of World War II.

“Our prayers are our foundation. We pray for our people throughout the Navajo Nation, especially our military men and women,” Vice President Nez said. “That’s what makes our Navajo Nation so unique, we are a spiritual people.”

On May 24, Vice President Nez participated in the Jemez Mountain Trail Run in Los Alamos, N.M. in honor of veterans that died in combat.

The 50-kilometer ultra marathon was a distance of about 32 miles, beginning at an elevation of 7,000 feet and increasing to an elevation of 10,000 feet.

“I wanted to run for our veterans and those that lost their lives in the military. I dedicated that run to each and everyone of you throughout the Navajo Nation,” Vice President Nez said.

He said that participating in endurance sports like ultra marathons provides plenty of time to think. The incessant urge to quit is also always there, but prayer and perseverance overcome those doubts, he added.

“Sometimes, I feel like giving up and stopping, but I say to myself that our veterans push their bodies to the ultimate limit. If they can do it, I can do it. I ran 32 miles for (them) and it took me nine hours to finish,” Vice President Nez said.

He said President Russell
Begaye was in Washington, D.C. and that he sent a message of gratitude and respect to honor the fallen warriors on Memorial Day.

Navajo veterans are one of the four pillars of the administration and plans include appointing a veteran within the Office of the President and Vice President to work solely on veteran issues.

“We know that you need a veteran in our office. They know what you’ve been through and what you’re facing on a daily basis. We’re going to put a good person in there who knows the veteran issues,” Vice President Nez said.

Melvin Nez, adjunct for Post 112 of the American Legion in Leupp, praised the Birdsprings event in memory and honor of those who died in battle.

“It’s really humbling to experience where the chapter veterans organizations are taking the lead,” Nez said.

He noted that previously, it was the American Legion that coordinated events such as the Memorial Day recognition of veterans lost in battle.

He asked for two minutes of silence in honor of veterans in the area that lost their lives in service to the U.S. Armed Forces. He then read their names to the audience.

Alvin Begay, John C. Begay, Stephen K. Begay, Delfred B. Bitsue, Joseph H. Curley, Ben Joe, Leon Jones, Riley Jones, David Kelly Sr., Michael Lee, Jack D. Nelson, John Redsteer, R. Riggs, Arliss Sloan, Yoland Tom Swift, Elwood Thompson, Virgil H. Todakoozie, Murphy Tsosie, Austin Williams, Lesley Williams and Alex Williams Sr. were all honored.

They were from different branches of service and died fighting in the battles of World War II, Korean Conflict, Vietnam War, and Desert Storm.

The Birdsprings church choir performed “Amazing Grace” in Navajo and English to honor the fallen veterans.

Families that brought the flags of loved ones who died in battle participated in the flag folding ceremony with the honor guard from Birdsprings and Tolani Lake.

The veterans unfolded the flags, shook them out, inspected them and refolded the flags before presenting them back to the families. Nez read the 13 folds of the American flag to the audience, detailing the significance behind each fold.

The flags were refolded for veterans killed in action from the local communities: Tony Kenneth Begay, John W. Redsteer, Murphy Tsosie, Joe K. Wagner, Fred Chee, Billy Thompson, Nathan Curtis and Robert Williams.

The American and Navajo flags were also refolded for Loren Whitehat Sr., a Navajo Police officer killed in the line of duty.

At the conclusion of the flag folding ceremony, the honor guard stepped outside the chapter house to perform a 21-gun salute for those who died in combat.

Other dignitaries in attendance included Sen. Carlyle Begay and Navajo County Supervisor Jesse Thompson.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 27, 2015

Notice of Temporary Closure – Department for Self Reliance

Greasewood, Ariz. - The Department for Self Reliance (DSR) is releasing this notice to make it known that the Greasewood DSR Office location will be temporarily closed beginning Wednesday, May 27th, through June 30th, 2015 due to water damages from flooding.

The Greasewood staff will be temporarily relocated to DSR’s St. Michaels location within the Navajo Nation Oil & Gas building at 48 West HWY 264. To reach the Greasewood DSR staff, contact the DSR’s St. Michaels location at (928) 810-8592 or toll free at (866) 860-9549.

The DSR apologizes for any inconvenience this unforeseen closure may cause. For more information please call the Support Services office at (928) 810-8553 or toll free at (866) 347-2403.

###
MEDIA ADVISORY

WHO : President Russell Begaye
THE NAVajo NATION

Vice President Jonathan Nez
THE NAVajo NATION

Rex Lee Jim, Former Vice President
THE NAVajo NATION

Gabriel Yazzie, Town Manager
KAYENta TOWNSHIP

Carol Todecheene, Chairperson
KAYENta TOWNSHIP COMMISSION

Nate Brown, Delegate
23 RD NAVajo NATION COUNCIL

WHAT : Grand Opening Celebration
Kayenta Correctional Facility

WHERE : Kayenta, Ariz.

WHEN : May 29, 2015
10 a.m.

CONTACT : Rick Abasta, Press Officer
Office of the President and Vice President
THE NAVajo NATION
Phone: 928-871-7204
Fax: 928-871-4025
Email: rickyabasta@navajo-nsn.gov
President Begaye, Vice President Nez address San Juan County fire protection services

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Earlier this week, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez met with representatives from San Juan County regarding the fire protection services provided for the Navajo chapters located within the county boundaries.

It was a follow up discussion to last week’s initial meeting between the Navajo Nation and San Juan County, which was organized by county commissioner Wallace Charley to address the loss of fire defense services from the county to the Navajo Nation on Sept. 1, 2015.

Other tribal officials in attendance included tribal corrections director Delores Greyeyes from the Navajo Division of Public Safety, attorney Regina Holyan from Navajo Department of Justice and Navajo Nation Fire Chief Larry Chee.

President Begaye said, “There is a shortage of funds to enable our Navajo Nation Fire Department to take over the response and we are exploring temporary options with the county to continue adequate response and protection to these locations.”

Temporary options include the transfer of needed equipment from the county to the tribe and mutual aid response with the county for which the tribe would reimburse the county for each emergency fire response.

“We will plan on a more permanent possibility for next fiscal year,” he added.

The affected Navajo chapters located within county lines include Newcomb, Ojo Amarillo and Shiprock.

From the perspective of a former county supervisor, Vice President Nez said the economic benefit Navajo citizens provide the county through the purchase of goods and services is undeniable.

“The myth is that Navajos don’t pay taxes,” Vice President Nez said. “Navajos visit the border towns and infuse millions of dollars.

“We need to remind the commission that if it wasn’t for the economic power of Navajos, the county budget crisis would be worse than it is,” he said.

Although deadlines set by the county expired under the previous administration, President Begaye and Vice President Nez reminded the county of the dire situation facing tribal members, who are also residents of San Juan County in need of fire defense.

“San Juan County receives taxes to benefit the entire county, including residents that reside on the Navajo Nation. We need more advocacy from our commissioners to ensure these Navajo people have fire protection services,” said President Begaye.

He said the county must work with the Navajo Nation and the commissioners need to protect all of their constituents within the county.

“When I was a county supervisor, my job was to advocate for the citizens who voted me into office, including tribal members who were both county and Navajo Nation citizens. I advocated to provide services for their communities,” Vice President Nez said.

The fire tax appropriation is based on statistics for fire services, including the calls for assistance on the Navajo Nation. To say the county tax base decreased and the need to cut services for tribal communities is not only unfair, but also illogical, President Begaye said.

“These are critical services,” President Begaye said. “Our people go to Farmington and shop, paying taxes in the process. Those taxes benefit the county, including the fire tax. Quite a number of our people also own homes and pay property taxes.

“The county must take that into consideration,” he added.
Shiprock Department for Self Reliance Schedule for June 2015

SHIPROCK, New Mex. — SHIPROCK, New Mex. — The Department for Self Reliance’s (DSR) Shiprock office would like to announce their office schedule for the month of June.

The DSR will continue to utilize the small building next to the Teen Life Center located off of Highway 64, immediately west of the Shiprock Chapter House. This location is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. until further notice.

Please be informed that only limited services can be provided at this location. Customers of the Shiprock DSR must contact the Gallup DSR office, toll free at 1 (866) 704-6940 or (505) 722-8415, to inquire about their case status due to no network connection at this location. Customers are welcome to submit their applications and documents at this location.

Despite the constant efforts of the DSR to locate an adequate office facility, the Shiprock office will continue to be displaced, unless a facility which meets the needs of the DSR is found.

The schedule of services for the Shiprock DSR office for the month of June 2015 is as follows:
Please be advised that the schedule is subject to change and can change without notice.

Shiprock, NM (Limited staff will be available only to receive documents. Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Located next to the Teen Life Center, off of Highway 64, immediately west of the Shiprock Chapter House.)

• Mondays: No intake interviews.
• Tuesdays: Appointments only.
• Wednesdays: No intake interviews.
• Thursdays: Appointments only.
• Fridays: Intakes (walk-ins).

Shiprock DSR Itinerate sites will continue to operate as scheduled:

NMHSD Income Support – Farmington (located at 101 W. Animas in Farmington, New Mexico.)
• June 2, Tuesday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
• June 16, Tuesday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Aneth Chapter House (located off of HWY 162 in Aneth, Utah.)
• June 11, Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
• June 18, Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Continued on Page 2.)
Please be reminded that the following information will be required when applying for DSR services: Social Security Cards; Birth Certificates; valid picture I.D. for adults; information on income, assets and resources; school enrollment/attendance verification for minor children; if there is an absent parent, child support information is required; and if you are a caregiver, guardianship documents are required.

To contact the Shiprock DSR staff please call, the Gallup, New Mex. DSR office, toll free at 1 (866) 704-6940 or (505) 722-8415. For more information please call the DSR Support Services Office at 1 (928) 810-8553 or toll free at 1 (866) 347-2403.

###
President Begaye, Vice President Nez honor Navajo Nation Treaty Day

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez shared their message in honor of our Navajo ancestors who were in the Long Walk for their Navajo Nation Treaty Day message. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

We stand strong by this treaty. We will stand by this treaty forever and it will not be taken from us.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez send a message of unity and strength for Navajo Nation Treaty Day.

It is a day to remember those who came before us, our Navajo ancestors, many of whom suffered and died to allow the survival of our tribe to become the thriving nation it is today.

This afternoon, President Begaye and Vice President Nez visited the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., where they toured the exhibit of the Treaty of 1868.

Speaking in Navajo, President Begaye said, “Today, we celebrate this treaty across the Navajo Nation.”

“This exhibit talks about the Navajo people being moved off Navajo land and marched to Ft. Sumner. The Treaty of 1868 is the authority and according to it, we are the Navajo people of today,” President Begaye said.

Our ancestors suffered at Ft. Sumner.

Vice President Nez said it is because of their strength and perseverance that Navajo people are survivors of the highest caliber today.

“Our Navajo people are strong. Many of them still live the old way: they haul water, chop wood, care for their livestock and make a living from the land. Today, we acknowledge the sacrifice of our forefathers and pay tribute to their strength and leadership,” Vice President Nez said.

The intestinal fortitude of leaders like Chief Manuelito and Chief Barboncito led to the agreement with General Sherman to end the war and allow our ancestors to return home to Navajo land.

Centuries later, the Navajo people are thriving. We have tribal members who heeded the words of Chief Manuelito to obtain their education and return home under the rainbow of Navajo sovereignty to advance our nation forward.

“My relations, my people, we stand strong by this treaty. We will stand by this treaty forever and it will not be taken from us. Thank you for observing this day and may God bless you,” President Begaye said.

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Executive Branch Report

EASTERN AGENCY COUNCIL MEETING

Nahodishgish, N.M.

THE NAVAJO NATION
Office of the President and Vice President
June 6, 2015
It is the awakening of a new dawn for the Navajo Nation. Our administration is doing things differently than previous leaders and we believe that the Navajo people have given us a mandate, through their vote, on what they want to see during our administration.

As such, we have four pillars that we will be focused on during our time of office, four mandates that have come directly from the Navajo people.

The first one is our Navajo Veterans. We will be working hard to ensure they are properly acknowledged and provided a helping hand with the issues they face. Our veterans are in need of housing and mental health counseling services for the post-traumatic stress syndrome they must deal with on a daily basis. They put their lives on the line for our nation and now it’s time we provide the assistance they need.

The second mandate from the Navajo people is our Navajo elders. They are the bedrock and foundation of our Navajo sovereignty. They too, must be properly taken care of and provided for, whether it is nursing homes of assisted living centers. Our youth are included in this effort, as they are both interconnected. We will encourage our elders to teach our youth our language and our culture to continue for the years to come.

The third mandate from our people is infrastructure. Time and again we see countless trucks traveling the roads to haul water in huge barrels to provide their families with drinking water, but also for cleaning and bathing. Many of our people also haul water for their livestock. Beyond the water issues, there is also a tremendous need for electricity and power lines to provide basic life necessities that improve the quality of life.

The fourth mandate from the Navajo people is job creation and employment. We have heard over and again about the unemployment rate hovering at more than 50 percent across our nation. However, in some chapters, it is as high as 70 and 80 percent. We are planning on taking advantage of our desert economy to create jobs such as making creams, lotions and ointments from aloe vera and yucca plants.

From Capitol Hill to the Navajo Nation, you can rest assured that we have selected the best and brightest Navajos to help us with these mandates that came directly from the Navajo people. Please join us in this awakening of a new dawn. It is only by working together and with each other that these tasks can be completed. Ahe'hee.

**CAPITOL HILL MEETINGS**

For the first week in June 2015, we traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with federal officials and leaders from the House and Senate to discuss issues important to the Navajo Nation. These issues ranged from water rights, infrastructure, funding formula changes, appointing members to national tribal organizations, energy, Navajo veterans, employment, economic development, Ft. Wingate, working with the U.S. EPA, transportation, and the reauthorization of NAHASDA.

We met with 11 congressmen and congresswomen, seven senators and several leaders from various federal departments. The legislators we met with were the decision makers: ranking members and chairpersons of committees in both the House and Senate.

It is our intention to ensure that our leaders on Capitol Hill know that Big Navajo is back. The voting block from the Navajo Nation has been the difference in key elections this past season, including the reelection of Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (D-Ariz.), who acknowledged this fact by proudly displaying the Navajo flag outside her office doors.

**NAVAJO NATION TREATY DAY**

A time ago, our grandmothers and grandfathers returned back from Ft. Sumner on foot, after years of captivity by the federal government. The Long Walk of the Navajo people was a time of suffering and sadness for the tribe.

It is because of the strength and resilience of our Navajo ancestors that the Treaty of 1868, naaltsosoos sání, was signed and the war of the federal government against the Navajo people ended. The Long Walk, Hwéeldi, tested the limits of our people, but through our sacred language, traditions and songs, we overcame these challenges over time to become the thriving Navajo Nation of today.

We honored the bravery and sacrifice of Navajo leaders such as Manuelito, Barboncito, Largo, Narbono, Ganado Mucho and others at the Smithsonian Institute National Museum of American Indians. We met with the director, Kevin Gover and spoke about the possibility of displaying the original Treaty of 1868 inside the museum and possibly, at the Navajo Nation Museum to share with the Navajo people and others.

We will stand by the Treaty of 1868 forever and it will never be taken from us. Thank you to all who observed Navajo Nation Treaty Day and may our God bless the Navajo Nation.
TÓDÍNÉESHZHEÉ PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX GRAND OPENING
On May 29, 2015, the Kayenta Township celebrated the grand opening of the Kayenta Department of Corrections and the Kayenta Support Facility.

The new facility was funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, at a cost of $34 million and provides a 54,000 square feet facility with 84 beds, a short-term holding facility for male and female inmates, plus a 13,500 square feet support building to house dispatch, police and criminal investigation departments.

The facility is located near the Kayenta District Court, which is another benefit because it reduces travel distance, in addition to relieving overcrowding. The facility also features culturally beneficial healing areas such as a sweat lodge, teepee ground and traditional Navajo hogan. Throughout the construction, there was an 80 percent Navajo workforce participating in its construction.

President Begaye said the construction of the facility was not one person’s work or one person’s idea. Rather, it was a collective work effort that blessed the Kayenta Chapter with a new public safety facility. He said the new building is symbolic of public safety, from the police officers, emergency medical services and all people serving to protect the Navajo people.

Vice President Nez said the work, dedication, and sacrifice of public safety personnel must be respected. He said the new building was also because of Navajo residents in the community buying goods and services that were taxed and subsequently went toward the facility’s construction. He said the fallen Navajo officers must also be honored for the sacrifices they made to protect the Navajo people in the line of duty.

SAN JUAN FIRE SUPPORT SERVICES
Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez met with representatives from San Juan County and the Navajo Nation to discuss fire protection support services provided for three Navajo chapters located within the county boundaries. The chapters are Newcomb, Ojo Amarillo and Shiprock.

San Juan County Commissioner Wallace Charley organized the meeting, which was held in late May 2015. It was the first time that this issue was brought forth to the Begaye-Nez administration. President Begaye said the Navajo Nation is exploring temporary options with the county to provide protection to the affected chapters.

This includes the transfer of needed equipment from the county to the tribe and mutual aid response, which would allow the Navajo Nation to reimburse San Juan County for each emergency fire response on the Nation. The tribe will plan for a more permanent solution next fiscal year.

Vice President Nez, who previously served with the Navajo County Board of Supervisors, said the taxes collected by the county from Navajo people paying for goods and services must be taken into account.

“‘The myth is that Navajos don’t pay taxes. Navajos visit the border towns and infuse millions of dollars. We need to remind the commission that if it wasn’t for the economic power of Navajos, the county budget crisis would be worse that it is,’” Vice President Nez said.

President Begaye agreed and said more advocacy from commissioners elected into office by the Navajo people needs to be done. Because they represent these Navajo constituents, they need to advocate on their behalf, he said.

“These are critical services,” said President Begaye. “Our people go to Farmington and shop, paying taxes in the process. Those taxes benefit the county, including the fire tax. The county must take that into consideration.”

BIRDSPRINGS MEMORIAL DAY
The Birdsprings Chapter honored their fallen warriors on Memorial Day and Vice President Nez attended the event to pay his respects to members of the U.S. Armed Forces who paid the ultimate sacrifice. The veteran organizations from Birdsprings, Leupp and Tolani Lake also participated in the event.

More than 100 people were packed into the domed confines of the chapter, including a large group of veterans. The group honored their fallen comrades with photos of Navajo warriors hung on the wall to honor their service. The color guard also unfolded the flags of these American heroes, inspected them for any wear and tear before refolding them and giving the flags back to family members.

Vice President Nez said Navajo veterans are one of the four main pillars of the administration and that a veteran would be appointed to the Office of the President and Vice President to serve on behalf of the veterans.

“We know that you need a veteran in our office. They know you’ve been through and what you’re facing on a daily basis. We’re going to put a good person in there who knows the veteran issues,” said Vice President Nez.
Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez joined Navajo Nation Council Delegate Seth Damon on May 19 to present the chapter with a check amounting to more than $168,000 for power line extensions.

The chapter members were moved to tears upon seeing their tribal leaders attend their meeting unannounced. They said it was the first time a sitting president and vice president visited their chapter for other reasons than campaigning for election.

Both President Begaye and Vice President Nez praised the tenacity and intelligence of Damon and told community members they raised a good leader who is looking out for their best interests. Damon said what initially began as a $50,000 supplemental appropriations request grew to more than $168,000 to meet chapter needs.

A young man introduced himself as a member of the Notah family and said he was in the eleventh grade. He recounted his life of doing homework in the dark and worrying about his elder grandmother in the winter, as his family stacked blankets to keep warm.

Breaking down in tears of joy he said, “Maybe now my younger brothers and sisters will finally have light to do their homework and we can utilize heaters and those kind of things to stay warm in the winter.”

President Begaye and Vice President Nez congratulated students that graduated from high school and colleges and universities across the country. They said education is crucial for tribal leadership and that their first round of cabinet member appointments highlights that point.

Several graduates of Harvard University have been appointed to the Begaye-Nez administration to provide solutions to problems facing the Navajo people.

In May, President Begaye traveled to Tempe, Ariz. to honor Navajo students graduating from Arizona State University. ASU has partnered with the Navajo Nation to educate teachers and staff from Navajo Head Start, which currently has more than 50 percent of their staff with a bachelor’s degree education.

“Congratulations to our high school graduates across the nation. We are also very proud of all our graduates from the colleges and universities across the country,” said President Begaye. “Our administration is excited to bring you home to work for the Navajo people.”

Vice President Nez commended the president for opening the door to educated Navajos to return home and serve the people.

“I want to thank shi nali, President Begaye, for opening the doors to a lot of our educated folks coming back to the Navajo Nation,” said Vice President Nez.

For the awakening of a new dawn, it was important for President Begaye and Vice President Nez to change the consciousness of the Navajo people, especially the tribal employees providing direct services to the people. The administration did this by appointing highly educated and qualified executive directors to their cabinet to oversee the different tribal divisions.

These key appointments include Jackson Brossy as the executive director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office, Bidtah Becker as the executive director of the Division of Natural Resources, Wenona Benally as the executive director for the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission, Jesse Delmar as the executive director of the Division of Public Safety, and Dr. Donald Benn as the executive director of the Navajo Environmental Protection Agency.

The Begaye-Nez administration received hundreds of resumes and applications to join the team and President Begaye and Vice President Nez will be announcing more new appointments soon. In the interim, they have asked others to assist temporarily as they assemble the right team to assist the Navajo Nation.

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President Begaye, Vice President Nez encourage public to be cautious when traveling

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez urge tribal members to be safe during rainstorms passing over the nation.

“We encourage the traveling public to be cautious with the recent storms arising on the Navajo Nation. There have been marble sized hail, a tornado and rockslides reported,” said President Begaye.

He encouraged the public to report any storm related damages to their local law enforcement and to allow emergency personnel to do their job.

Vice President Jonathan Nez was in Monument Valley today and he, too, encouraged public safety.

“We saw some ominous clouds, but did not see the tornado. We are requesting that the general public slow down when traveling and to be careful during the storm,” said Vice President Nez.

Around 8 p.m., Rose Whitehair, director of the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management, sent photos of a tornado touching down northeast of Monument Valley.

“There was (silver) dollar sized hail and multiple rockslides in the Montezuma Creek and Bluff area,” Whitehair said. “No injuries or damages reported thus far.”

Herman Shorty, chairman of the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management said the commissioners would be on standby and would convene on Sun., if necessary.

Otherwise, he said the commission would meet on June 8, beginning at 9 a.m. at the Emergency Operations Center at the Navajo Transportation Complex in Tse Bonito, N.M. for updates and preparation for possible action.

“I’m most concerned with the road between Bluff and Aneth, Montezuma Creek included. We must act as prudently as possible,” Shorty said.

The traveling public is encouraged to stay away from Highway 95 near the Comb Ridge in Bluff, Utah. There were reports of rockslides in the area and the NNDEM is awaiting confirmation on road closures and alternate detour routes.

More updates will be provided as information becomes available.
WHEREAS, The Navajo Nation is greatly saddened by the loss of the late Bahe Ketchum, who served in the United States Marine Corps; and

WHEREAS, The late Bahe Ketchum was a Navajo Code Talker who served the United States of America, the Navajo Nation, and U.S. Marine Corps with courage, honor and distinction; serving from 1944 to 1946, when he was honorably discharged; and

WHEREAS, The late Bahe Ketchum served as a Navajo Code Talker and was stationed in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater from 1944 to 1946, fighting in the Battles of Guadalcanal, Okinawa, and Tsingtao; and

WHEREAS, The late Bahe Ketchum also was a Navajo Code Talker who was awarded the Good Conduct Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign and the Congressional Silver Medal; and

WHEREAS, The Navajo Nation unites and offers prayers for his family and friends during this time of grief;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RUSSELL BEGAYE, President of the Navajo Nation, do hereby proclaim that all Navajo Nation flags shall be flown at half-staff in honor of the late Navajo Code Talker Private First Class Bahe Ketchum, from sunrise on June 9 to sunset on June 12, 2015.

ORDERED THIS 8th DAY OF JUNE 2015

Russell Begaye, President
THE NAVAJO NATION
President Begaye orders flags at half-staff in honor of Bahe Ketchum

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye ordered flags across the Navajo Nation to be flown at half-staff in honor of Navajo Code Talker Behe Ketchum, who passed this morning in Flagstaff, Ariz. (Courtesy photo)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—The Navajo Nation is in mourning.

President Russell Begaye ordered flags across the Navajo Nation to be flown at half-staff from sunrise on June 9 to sunset on June 12, 2015, in honor of the late Navajo Code Talker Bahe Ketchum.

Ketchum passed at the age of 96 at 9:20 a.m. today in Flagstaff.

"The Navajo Nation sends its deepest condolences to the family and friends of Bahe Ketchum. As a Navajo Code Talker, he defended not only the Navajo Nation, but the United States of America against tyranny and oppression," said President Begaye.

"We salute his bravery, sacrifice and determination for the Navajo people," he added.

Vice President Jonathan Nez said, "Bahe Ketchum honored the Navajo people, not only through his service as a Navajo Code Talker, but by his willingness to help people throughout his lifetime."

"Bahe Ketchum was an American hero and he will be honored by the generations to come for his service to his country. We salute his life and his military service," said Vice President Nez.

Vice President Nez was the former council delegate for the chapters of Inscription House, Navajo Mountain, Oljato and Shonto.

Ketchum reached the rank of private first class and served with the 6th Marine Division from 1944 to 1946. He saw combat in the Battles of Guadalcanal, Okinawa and Tsingtao. He was born in Kaibeto, Ariz. and grew up at Inscription House.

He was married to Estelle Ketchum, who passed in 2006. The couple had 10 sons, two daughters, 29 grandchildren and 18 grandchildren.

Marvin Ketchum, his son, said his father received a "whole slew of medals," including the Congressional Silver Medal for his service as a Navajo Code Talker.

The funeral date has not been set and the family will be meeting at the Navajo Mountain Chapter House on June 9 at 5 p.m. to plan arrangements, including establishing a bank account for monetary donations.

Marvin Ketchum said his father often talked of working for the headquarters during the war, transmitting and translating messages for generals, commanders and top brass. He said his father also saw action on the battlefield.

"He said he was in Phoenix, about to catch a train, when he ran into a U.S. Marine Corps officer who recommended that he enlist," Ketchum said. "My father was with a friend he was working with and the officer said, 'You guys aren't doing anything, so you should enlist.'"

His friend, Willard Nez Tsosie, joined Ketchum and enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps to become Navajo Code Talkers.

Ketchum said of his father, "He did a lot of services for the community of Navajo Mountain and people in general. He served his country. He was a positive role model. We ask the public for a lot of prayers for the family."

-30-
WASHINGTON, D.C.—Big Navajo is back.

From June 1 to 5, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez spent the week on Capitol Hill lobbying on behalf of the Navajo Nation. Their whirlwind tour of the nation’s capitol was not a haphazard affair, however. Everything was carefully strategized and well researched before the two most powerful men in Indian Country began meeting with congressmen, congresswomen and senators from various states.

Their meetings were with majority leaders and the chairpersons of committees in both the House and Senate. Additionally, they met with key programs such as the U.S. Department of Interior and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

At each step of the way, President Begaye and Vice President Nez were well received by federal officials and legislators alike. They were very popular with the contingent of tribal members residing in Washington, D.C.

The Begaye-Nez administration stuck to the four pillars of their platform when addressing the nation’s legislators: Navajo veterans, infrastructure, Navajo elders/youth, and employment.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez honed in on these priority areas throughout their discussions on Capitol Hill. They explained to legislators that the four pillars were a mandate by the Navajo people that elected them into office by such an overwhelming margin against their opponent.

The Navajo people are tired of the old system, they said, adding that it was truly the “awakening of a new dawn” for the nation.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez spent last week in Washington, D.C. meeting with Congressmen, Congresswomen and Senators on behalf of the Navajo Nation. Their first meeting was at the White House, with Raina Thiele, Associate Director for the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
on Navajo elders and youth, which are interrelated by the preservation of the Navajo language and culture.

Vice President Nez said the 2014 presidential election was a contentious time in the tribe’s history and framed in the middle of the controversy was Dine’ bizaad and the effort to preserve it for the future generations.

“Our Navajo elders are the foundation of who we are, our cultural identity. We need to encourage our elders to spend time with our youth. The youth can take care of them and in return, our elders can teach them our language and traditions,” said Vice President Nez.

The other component to be addressed by the administration, he said, was the need for nursing homes and assisted living centers across the nation for Navajo elders.

Vice President Nez said, “We need to provide these kind of facilities so our elders can eat traditional Navajo food, communicate in Navajo and be taken care of by people who understand the culture and language.”

The large land base of the Navajo Nation must be taken into consideration when decisions are made on infrastructure development, President Begaye said, especially when it comes to the funding formulas for distribution.

“People don’t understand our unique issues. It’s hard to imagine unless you travel the land and meet the people, visit homes and families,” President Begaye said. “People are constantly hauling water for drinking, cooking, bathing and livestock.”

He shared the story about how he and Vice President Nez presented a check for more than $168,000 for power line extensions in the Tsayatoh Chapter in N.M. in late May 2015, along with tribal council delegate Seth Damon.

The chapter members wept at the news that their community would finally receive electricity after a lifetime of waiting for electricity.

“One young man in the eleventh grade stood up and said he and his siblings studied every night with their flashlights. It was a humbling experience to see our people get those necessities of life we take for granted,” President Begaye said.

He noted that the needs of electricity and water on the nation are overshadowed by the need for broadband access. Only a small portion of the nation has online access because other infrastructure like electricity must be in place before Internet access can occur, he added.

Vice President Nez said the other mandate from Navajo voters was for job creation to combat the high number of unemployed Navajos, which hovers at more than 50 percent.

Possibilities included taking advantage of the desert economy of the Navajo Nation to begin producing goods from local products such as yucca plants for the production of soap, lotions, ointments, lip balm and other products.

“Yanabah Navajo Tea is being sold right now across the country and that’s an example of our desert economy creating not only jobs, but economic development. Our people are attached to the land, that is why many of our elders refused to leave, even during the Navajo-Hopi relocation,” Vice President Nez said.

He also spoke of innovative efforts like those employed by Habitat For Humanity utilizing sweat equity for tax credits and mentorship programs to help with initiatives like building homes for Navajo veterans.

Throughout the week, theNavajo delegation met with 11 congressmen and congresswomen, seven senators, and several leaders from various federal departments.
Navajo Head Start partners with Diné College to help teachers obtain degree

“This partnership will further promote our initiative to have a highly-qualified workforce.”—Sharon H. Singer

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Sharon H. Singer, assistant superintendent of the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education, is pleased to announce a new partnership between Navajo Head Start (NHS) and Diné College to help paraprofessionals obtain their associates degree in early childhood education, and Navajo language and culture.

Singer explained NHS and Diné College established this partnership to further the mission and vision of both institutions, which is to make higher education and a highly-qualified workforce a priority for NHS.

“We are excited with our new partnership with Din. College, who will be working with our para-professionals in obtaining their A.A. degrees in early childhood education, and Diné language and culture,” said Singer. “This partnership will further promote our initiative to have a highly-qualified workforce.”

Diné College entered into the memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Navajo Nation, which was signed by Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly in April. Per the agreement, the Navajo Nation and the Navajo Department of Diné Education (DODE) will be committed to supporting NHS and its staff in attaining Associate of Arts degrees in early childhood education from Diné College for the next three years.

In 1995, the Navajo Nation, under the leadership of then-Navajo Nation President Albert Hale, made a promise to develop the capacity for Navajo language and culture immersion in NHS centers.

Dr. Daniel McLaughlin, chairperson for the Center for Diné Teacher Education, explained that Diné College is preparing future teachers to become respectful and effective teachers utilizing Navajo-Diné teachings with all students. He described the partnership as a “win-win-win.”

“It’s a win-win-win. It’s a win for Navajo Head Start, it’s a win for Diné College, and it’s also a win for the teacher candidates, not to mention communities and Head Start centers across the Nation,” said McLaughlin. “We like to beef up our enrollment and have our faculty busy doing what they do best—that is train teachers.”
McLaughlin said their lessons will be based on Sá’h Naagháí Bik’eh Hózhóón, developing their students according to Navajo teachings and traditions.

The partnership begins this summer and more than 25 NHS staff plan to attend classes at various Diné College sites across the Navajo Nation.

Navajo Head Start recently established a partnership and cohort program with Arizona State University, which recently graduated three NHS teachers with master’s degrees in instruction and curriculum with an emphasis in early childhood education.

“We look forward to working with Diné College in getting our staff into their classrooms and on the road to earning their bachelor’s degrees,” said Singer.

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Navajo Head Start is the largest federally-funded grant program in the country. Head Start and Early Head Start services are provided within the geographical area of the Navajo Nation, an area approximately the size of West Virginia that spans more than 27,000-square-miles across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Central Administration offices are located in Window Rock, Ariz., capital of the Navajo Nation.
Pinon Unified School District loses nine buses to overnight fire

TWIN ARROWS, Ariz.—Nine school buses from the Pinon Unified School District were burned sometime after midnight.

Seven of the buses were completely destroyed and two were partially burned.

The Navajo Nation Fire Department from Window Rock is in Pinon, Ariz., investigating the fire. The scene has been shutdown and summer school is cancelled for Thursday and Friday.

The preliminary report is that the incident is suspected arson.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye admonished the person or persons responsible and said it is the children and the community that will suffer the consequences.

“It is unfortunate that there are people out there burning buses that transport our children who are continuing their education during the summer,” President Begaye said. “The people responsible are not harming the vehicles, but our children and our communities.”

He said during the summer, kids are out of school and enjoying free activities sponsored by the school districts, like summer school and the free lunch program.

People with negative intentions need to pause and think about what they are about to do and the people that will be harmed by their actions, he said.

“We’re asking the public to also be on the lookout for people that may want to harm our children and our people,” President Begaye said.

Anyone with information on the fire is encouraged to step forward and contact the local authorities.

“Our community members need to be vigilant. Keep an eye out for your chapter. NDOT and NECA’s equipment get vandalized also,” said Vice President Nez. “We need to hold each other accountable, from the young to the old.”

Navajo Nation Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon was equally disappointed with the news of the buses being burned.

“It saddens my heart that any school would be a target for arson,” said Witherspoon.

Attakai Tso, former transportation manager for the Pinon Unified School District, said the fire occurred between midnight and 1 a.m.

“The school security saw the fire and reported it. One bus caught fire and then it spread to other buses. They were able to move some buses, but nine buses were burned,” Attakai said.

“It’s bad, real bad,” he added.

Doug Vaughan, superintendent for Pinion Unified School District, said there were no injuries. Although buses were burned, the bus barn did not burn in the fire.

“There was an incident in the middle of last night. We conducted an extensive survey of all staff and students and there are zero injuries reported. The incident is under investigation,” said Vaughan.

He said the estimated damage from the blaze is $1.4 million. The school district is already moving toward replacement of the buses for the upcoming school year beginning in the fall.

“For today and tomorrow, it’s having a drastic effect, we had to cancel summer school. We’ll have summer school back in session on Monday,” Vaughan said.

Pinon Unified School district has a total of 33 buses and for now, there will be enough buses to transport students for the summer school session.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez were attending the Navajo Nation Council Leadership Meeting at Twin Arrows when they received word about the fire.

“I’m asking people to refrain from doing any further damage to our property and ultimately, our children and our people,” President Begaye said.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 12, 2015

No More Snakes at the Navajo Nation Zoo

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – No more snakes.

The Navajo Nation Zoo is no longer a home for two bull or gopher snakes and a rattlesnake.

Navajo Nation Zoo Manager David Mikesic said the bull snakes were rehomed in March and the rattlesnake was rehomed in May.

More than 3,000 students from various schools on the Navajo Nation visit the Navajo Nation Zoo every year.

Mikesic said approximately 25 percent of the teachers who accompanied the students expressed concerns from parents who did not want their children viewing the snakes at the zoo.

“It was not a case of fear. It goes beyond fear,” Mikesic explained. “It was a cultural issue. The parents did not want them to view, nor breathe the same air as the snakes. If there’s a concern that people can’t view snakes, why continue to house the snakes here. I want all classrooms to see all the other animals that we have in the rest of the Discovery Center.”

The Discovery Center is home to other classes of animals and mammals such as spotted skunks, ringtail, Gila monsters, scorpions, spiders, frogs, toads, fish and lizards.

The bull snakes were sent to the Loveland Living Planet Aquarium in Draper, Utah and the rattler was transported to the Staten Island Zoological Society in Staten, New York.

The Navajo Nation Zoo is the only zoo in the U.S. that is managed and owned by an American Indian tribe. It is home to over 100 animals representing over 50 different species. Nearly all of the animals housed at the Navajo Nation are injured or orphaned, leaving them unable to be released back into the wild.

After several months of renovation the Discovery Center will reopen on Monday, June 15th for visitors to see new upgrades that the Zoo’s construction staff has completed. For more information, contact them at www.navajozoo.org or (928) 871-6574.
Navajo Nation leaders meet to address top priorities

TWIN ARROWS, Ariz.— For the first time in tribal history, Navajo leaders from the Executive and Legislative Branches met to discuss the needs and priorities of the Navajo Nation to present a unified voice on the national and international stage.

These meetings will be continued for the duration of the administration and will also include the Judicial Branch to strengthen the voice and position of the Navajo Nation on Capitol Hill and the world at large.

The 23rd Navajo Nation Council and Speaker LoRenzo Bates hosted the meeting at the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort. The purpose was to align the Nation’s priorities and re-establish relations between the tribal branches of government to advocate and lobby on behalf of the Navajo people for funding from the county, state and federal levels.

"For years, dating back to before any of us took office, there has been this mentality that legislative is on one side of the street and executive is on the other side — that mindset needs to be eliminated to truly make progress," said Speaker Bates, emphasizing the need to be united and consistent when lobbying for external funding through the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

President Begaye provided an overview of the four pillars of his administration: Navajo veterans, elders and youth, infrastructure and job creation. He said the Navajo Nation’s power and authority needs to be re-established nationally.

Speaking in Navajo, President Begaye said, “The time has come for us to execute the platform we presented during our campaign. We’ve been talking about it for a while now, the need to strengthen relations with the tribal branches and work together.”

He said areas of discussion include water rights, expanding Navajo lands and establishing authority over surface and subsurface leasing.

He said only seven to 12 percent of the Navajo population holds authority over the land in the form of grazing permits, often impeding progress such as home site leasing, farming and infrastructure development.
“We want to open this up to make the process easier. We want to strengthen partnerships with county, state and federal officials,” said President Begaye. “The leveraging of funds is important to the Nation and when these funds are reverted, it really impacts our programs and communities.

“We also need to revitalize the local governance and strengthen the voice and needs of the people,” he added.

The chairpersons from each of the Council’s standing committees also presented their respective priorities as they relate to their oversight authorities, outlined in Title II of the Navajo Nation Code. Additionally, each delegate was provided time to present an overview of the needs and priorities within each of their respective chapters.

The two-day discussion covered a wide range of topics including water rights, economic development, rangeland issues, housing, public safety, external funding, scholarships, elderly care, and others.

Speaker Bates and President Begaye said the meeting marked the first time that elected leaders from the legislative and executive branches had met to discuss issues at length.

“The meeting allowed the elected officials to put everything on the table, from Nation-wide issues to the chapter level, so that we can now begin to align our priorities and to develop and finalize legislation that will allow us to move in the same direction,” added Speaker Bates.

Throughout the two-day meeting, elected officials emphasized the importance of establishing timelines and also to identify which initiatives can be handled administratively and which may require policy changes.

Vice President Nez said the priorities of the Executive and Legislative Branches are related and that the administration looks forward to working in tandem with the Council.

“I appreciate Speaker Bates mentioning the need for unification. To be able to speak with one voice, not only in D.C., but we’re players in the United Nations as well. We really need to have that one voice,” said Vice President Nez.

President Begaye and Council members agreed to meet later in the month to develop a plan of action to address the many issues discussed while stressing that continued communication is key to moving forward together.

“Ultimately, our goal is to establish priorities that help the Navajo People in the form of a resolution that the President and Council agree upon,” Speaker Bates stated.

“These priority areas I shared are from the Navajo people and we view this as a mandate. We will work on their behalf,” President Begaye said.

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President Russell Begaye honors Navajo Code Talker Bahe Ketchum

NAVAJO MOUNTAIN, Ariz.—A national hero was laid to rest on June 13.

Hundreds of people gathered inside a striped tent at the Pioneer Days Event Field for the funeral service of Navajo Code Talker Bahe Ketchum, who passed on June 8 in Flagstaff.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye was in attendance to pay respect to Ketchum on behalf of the Navajo people. Rep. Jennifer Benally (D-Ariz.) also attended the funeral service.

Four Navajo Code Talkers were also on hand to honor their brother and comrade in arms. Members of the Navajo-Hopi Honor Riders and a detachment of U.S. Marines from Phoenix joined the Code Talkers to remember Ketchum.

“We extend our heartfelt condolences to his children, friends, relatives and the community of Navajo Mountain.”

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“Today, our nation is mourning over the loss of Bahe Ketchum, one of our national heroes. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his children, friends, relatives and the community of Navajo Mountain,” said President Begaye.

He said Ketchum was not only a hero and Marine, but also a kind person who served his community and advocated for the next generation, the children.

“Our nation extends gratitude for his service and his work will continue for the years to come and may he rest...
in peace,” President Begaye said.

President Begaye presented the Ketchum family with the Navajo Nation flag, a framed and signed proclamation for flags across the Nation to be flown at half-staff in honor of Bahe Ketchum, and a framed document explaining the 13 folds of the American flag.

Former chairman and Navajo Code Talker Peter MacDonald Sr. provided the eulogy, recounting the humble background and childhood of Ketchum, before he began his service to the country as a Code Talker.

Ketchum was of the Many Goats Clan, born for the Edge Water Clan. His maternal grandfathers were Bitter Water Clan and his paternal grandfathers were Black Streak Wood Clan.

After Ketchum’s biological mother passed when he was a toddler, Asdzaa Bi Tlizi Ligaii, Lady with White Goats, raised him.

In his late teens, Ketchum was married Hastii Bi Gishii’s daughter from the Kaibeto area, but she died giving birth to their daughter when Ketchum was serving in World War II.

After returning from the war, he married Estella Nez Tsosie, who preceded him in death in 2006. Eight children, 29 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren survive Ketchum.

“`What he experienced growing up out here in the remote area helped him, I’m sure, to survive the years he was in the military,” said MacDonald.

Ketchum’s children celebrated their father’s gentle spirit that was never harsh in speech or actions. They said he was a man of faith who never hesitated to share his love of God with others.

“Dad was an honest, reliable and faithful provider to his wife and children. He encouraged his children to attain higher education and was an active community member and leader of Navajo Mountain,” his children said.

“We are hopeful our family will follow in the footsteps of his kindness, faith and leadership.

“We'll miss you Dad, but we know you are in a good place with God and other family members who left before you,” they added.

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### NAVAJO PHONETIC ALPHABET

A  Wóláchíí’ Ant
B  Shash Bear
C  Mósí Cat
D  Bįįh Deer
E  Dzeeh Elk
F  Mą’ii Fox
G  Tlizí Goat
H  Li’i Horse
I  Tin Ice
J  Télicho’í Jackass
K  Tlizí yázhí Kid
L  Dibé yázhí Lamb
M  Naats’oosi Mouse
N  Neeshch’íí’ Nut
O  Né’éshjaa’ Owl
P  Béésh Pig
Q  K’aa’ yelíjíh Quiver
R  Gah Rabbit
S  Dibé Sheep
T  Tązhii Turkey
U  Nóóda’í Ute
V  Ak’ehdidlii Victor
W  Dl’ooii Weasel
X  Alná’ázdzoh Cross
Y  Tsá’ászi’ Yucca
Z  Béésh dootl’izh Zinc

Many people asked to be photographed with President Begaye after the funeral service concluded. He met with young and old, veterans and civilians alike for photos. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

Private First Class Bahe Ketchum was honored not only by his community and tribal leaders, but his comrades, the Navajo Code Talkers, as well. Four members were present for the ceremony. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

Hundreds of people packed inside the yellow and white striped tent that was erected at the Navajo Mountain Pioneer Days Event Grounds. Although it was hot, the community and public paid their respect to a hero. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
Vice President Nez attends agency council, Coyote Canyon building dedication

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—On June 13, Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez was in attendance at the Northern Agency Council meeting at Tsayatoh, N.M. The meeting was scheduled during the same time President Begaye was at the funeral services for Navajo Code Talker Bahe Ketchum at Navajo Mountain.

Vice President Nez provided an update on the Executive Branch issues he and President Russell Begaye have addressed since taking the oath of office on May 12.

Information included details of meetings with congressmen, congresswomen and senators on Capitol Hill, Navajo Nation Treaty Day, the Tódínéeszhéé Public Safety Complex, San Juan County fire support services, Birdsprings Memorial Day, Tsayatoh power line extension, graduation message for students, and cabinet appointments from the Begaye-Nez administration.

“We are working together and opening the door for our educated Navajos to walk through and return home to help the nation,” he said.

More than 100 people were in attendance for the meeting, a similar crowd as the Eastern Agency Council meeting that was held the week before at Nahodishgish, N.M.

Same as the previous meeting, the chapter officials were eager to begin working with the administration and meet the new leaders of the Navajo Nation.

Later in the morning, Vice President Nez attended the building dedication ceremony at Coyote Canyon. The chapter house was renamed the Marshall Plummer Memorial Hall.

A traditional blessing began the festivities, which included members of the Plummer family, Vice President Nez, Dr. Peterson Zah, Office of the President and Vice President Chief of Staff Robert Joe, Sen. John Pinto (D-N.M.), Rep. Patty Lundstrom (D-N.M.), former vice chairman Ed T. Begay and others.

Vice President Nez said, “We appreciate the Plummer family and realize the sacrifice their father, uncle, brother and náá made serving in a leadership capacity. He was out there serving the community.”

While serving as vice president, Plummer was not home very much, Vice President Nez said, offering gratitude for the family’s understanding and support.

He also acknowledged the service and dedication of Navajo veterans and first responders, including police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians.

Vice President Nez said it was appropriate for the community to celebrate the legacy of Marshall Plummer by naming the building after him.

Speaking in Navajo, Vice President Nez said he is standing beside President Begaye and not “sitting behind him,” which is the literal translation for vice president in Navajo.

“That is what Vice President Plummer did for President Zah, he stood beside him and supported him,” Vice President Nez said.

Dr. Peterson Zah spoke of the time in office he shared with Plummer, who served as Navajo Nation Vice President during their administration from 1991-1994.

He said it was a privilege and an honor to serve with Plummer.

“As a show of respect, the residents Coyote Canyon are renaming the chapter house after Mr. Plummer for his many years of service to their community and the Navajo Nation,” Zah said. “Thank you.”

Plummer was a true statesman for the Navajo people, Zah said, and had a unique ability to remain calm and collected during times of crises.

Zah recalled a time in 2006, when the city of Farmington called upon Plummer to quell racial tensions that were growing after an Anglo police officer shot and killed a Navajo man. During that time, three Anglo kids were also charged with severely beating a Navajo.

“Marshall Plummer was a Navajo leader with the innate ability of protecting his Navajo people, which shouldn’t be surprising when you consider his service to his country as a former Vietnam veteran,” said Zah.

Before serving as the first vice president of the Navajo Nation, Plummer served as a council delegate for Coyote Canyon from 1988 to 1991.

During that time, he was a member of the 49ers, a minority group of council delegates that fought against former chairman Peter MacDonald after federal crimes were filed against him.

Subsequently, the tribal council voted in Plummer to serve as interim chairman.

“Ever the statesman, (Plummer) stepped down when Johnny R. Thompson, former vice chairman, argued he had legal title to the chairmanship,” Zah said. “That’s the kind of man he was, diplomatic.

“Thank you for honoring Marshall Plummer in this manner. It shows the character and commitment he had to the Navajo Nation,” he added.

Joe said, “Marshall Plummer was a passionate leader that influenced communities and diverse cultures to work toward a common vision. His legacy is honored by the chapter.”
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 17, 2015

New Land Withdrawal Designation Regulations Approved

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – The Resources and Development Committee of the Navajo Nation Council passed a resolution on Tuesday, June 16th approving the Land Withdrawal Designation Regulation to designate land for future development.

The Navajo Land Department has been working diligently to amend regulations to clarify and expedite the land withdrawal designation process, which was causing a little confusion among the chapters and making project time lines longer. These regulations will enhance the chapter Land Use Plans.

Navajo Nation Land Department Director Mike Halona, stated, “We’re trying to clarify the difference between a land withdrawal designation process and land conveyance process. We hope the passage of these new regulations will help clarify and streamline the land withdrawal process for the Navajo chapters to develop their community land use plans. Without recording chapter land use plan (CLUP) land designation, we could be adversely developing within an area planned for other use.”

A land withdrawal designation does not authorize development or disturbance on Navajo Nation land. Moreover, it does not apply to how to get a lease. Prior to any development on the land, a lease must be obtained in addition to the withdrawal.
The purpose of a land withdrawal designation is to designate an area of land for future development by ensuring that the rights of grazing permittees, who are in compliance with their grazing permits are properly addressed as applicable and as required under 16 N.N.C. §§ 1401 et seq. and to prevent any subsequent claims to the land and ensuring that the affected chapter supports the land withdrawal designation and use of the land.

Halona added, “With the approval of the Navajo Nation General Leasing Regulations of 2013, which gave the Navajo Nation authority to approve leases; this Land Withdrawal Designation Regulation is step one in the Land Use Planning process. The Navajo Land Department is in the process of establishing a Navajo General Leasing Office, where all leases and permits will be administered by the Navajo Nation. Land Withdrawal Designation Regulations was just one among other regulations that are being developed.”

The Resources Development Committee within approval of this legislation also included that “the Navajo Nation government may develop on land designated by the Land Withdrawal Designation without a lease for government purposes only.”

The Resources and Development Committee authorized the Navajo Land Department director the power and authority to give final approval of all land withdrawal designations on the Navajo Nation.

For more information about how to acquire a land withdrawal, contact the Navajo Nation Land Department at (928) 871-6401.
WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—With eight days to spare, the Tribal-State Gaming Compact between the State of N.M. and the Navajo Nation is in effect, as of June 22.

The agreement allows the Navajo Nation, Jicarilla Apache Nation, Mescalero Apache Tribe, Pueblo of Acoma and Pueblo of Jemez to continue gaming operations for the next 22 years.

The gaming compact was set to expire on June 30.

“We worked hard on the compact. This compact is an integral part of the Navajo economy and an exercise of our tribal sovereignty and self-determination,” said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye.

President Begaye said he was disappointed last year when the compact died on the senate floor of the N.M. Legislature by a vote of 10-31.

The 2014 gaming compact was solely for the Navajo Nation and contained provisions that were unpopular with neighboring tribes in the state.

For more than a year, the Navajo Nation negotiated with neighboring tribes and crafted an agreement that was favorable to all. President Begaye commended the tribes for working cooperatively, but said the jurisdiction over gaming compacts by the federal government must be maintained.

The lack of knowledge on Indian nations and the issues facing N.M. tribes by state legislators was the problem in getting the compact passed the first time around, he said. The negotiation of tribal gaming compacts and other issues such as water rights must remain in the hands of the federal government, he added.

“The federal government must live up to their trust responsibility and not push that obligation to the states,” President Begaye said.

“Last year, we were really disappointed to see (the compact) get voted down.

“I guess in some ways, it’s good because this year, the compact is a little better than what the state was going to give us from last year,” he added.

A new provision included in the 2015 gaming compact allows...
casinos to remain open for 24 hours a day. Another provision established a marker program for gamblers who meet income guidelines and cash balances in their bank accounts.

Allowing tribes to provide complimentary food and lodging was another new provision.

Other components include the tribal self-exclusion program, which reports information on how funds are spent for problem gambling programs and enforcement of arbitration provisions for the state.

Additional concessions by the state provided that tribes would no longer have to make revenue sharing payments if state operated racetrack casinos expanded beyond six or increased the number of gambling machines or hours of operation.

Vice President Jonathan Nez said he has hope that the spirit of cooperation that was demonstrated with N.M. can also be a part of the negotiations with Ariz. when the tribal gaming compact comes up for review.

“We would like to see the same willingness to work together with our friends in Arizona,” said Vice President Nez.

Karis Begaye, an attorney with Navajo Nation Department of Justice, said the compact was officially published in the Federal Register on June 22.

“We are updating our gaming ordinance for implementation of the compact,” Begaye said. “The Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise is also conducting training for implementation of the compact.”

She said the Flowing Water Casino would be designated as the Navajo Nation’s legacy casino under terms of the compact.

Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary on Indian Affairs for the U.S. Department of Interior, sent a letter detailing the approval of the tribal-state gaming compacts to President Begaye on June 9.

Washburn stated, “Each tribe is a separate and independent sovereign with its own identity and salient issues, and that good faith negotiations require the State to address issues that are actually relevant to each tribe.

“Here, our understanding is that each of the Tribes made an independent determination that coordinating their efforts to negotiate the 2015 Compacts was in their best interests,” he added.

Derrick Watchman, CEO of Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise, said they are working with their stakeholders and partners moving forward.

“We are implementing the new provisions, including updating the gaming ordinance through the Navajo Nation Council,” Watchman said. “We are training our team members about the new provisions.

“This will take about 30 days to complete and make us more competitive and keep us consistent with the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act,” he added.

Paulene Thomas, executive director of the Navajo Nation Gaming Regulatory Office, echoed Watchman’s sentiments.

“We are very pleased with the new gaming compact. There are new provisions and the Navajo casinos and gaming regulatory office are able to fulfill them,” Thomas said.

She said the role of her office is to ensure that Navajo casinos are in compliance with Ariz. and N.M. compacts, including federal and tribal laws.

The Interior Department took no action on the 2015 gaming compacts within the 45-day review period and as a result, the compacts were deemed approved and became effective upon publication of notice in the Federal Register on June 22.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 24, 2015

New Dawn for Navajo Nation Zoo

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – Saving the lives of eagles.

That’s one goal of a new Navajo Nation Eagle Aviary here at the Navajo Nation Zoo.

Navajo Nation Zoo Department Manager David Mikesic, said “Thanks to a host of partners, we will now be able to build a new eagle aviary to help save the lives of eagles that have been injured in the wild.”

An 80 feet by 30 feet observation type of facility will be constructed to house approximately 20 golden eagles. It will also include an adjoining office, food prep room and a medical center for eagles.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided initial funding of $200,000, which was used for planning and design. The Navajo Nation Council also approved an appropriation of $401,000 from the Navajo Nation Undesignated Unreserved Fund Balance in May. The Navajo Tourism Department under the Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development also contributed $200,000 to help construct a new eagle aviary.

“I want to thank all of our partners for their support and funding that we received,” Mikesic stated. “This is a very exciting and important project for the Navajo people.”

The four main goals of the Navajo Nation Eagle Aviary are to save the lives of injured eagles; It will allow the Navajo people to legally obtain eagle feathers; The facility will be used to educate the public about eagle conservation and it will allow the Navajo people to view and maintain a spiritual connection with eagles.
The Navajo Nation Eagle Aviary will primarily house injured golden eagles; however, it will also include injured bald eagles.

“Although there are legal ways to obtain an eagle feather, there are still individuals out there who are shooting eagles and selling their feathers illegally in the black market,” Mikesic noted. “In addition to education, the Navajo Nation Eagle Aviary will also be used to help the public establish a spiritual connection to the eagles.”

Mikesic said it is hoped the Navajo Nation Eagle Aviary Project will begin construction in July.

The Navajo Nation will also soon be home to a black-footed ferret, which was once considered the most endangered mammal in the U.S.

“The black-footed ferret was once part of the natural environment on the Navajo Nation,” Mikesic explained. “It went extinct from the Navajo Nation in the 1930’s due to canine diseases, reductions in prairie dog towns and other grassland issues.

After the ferret was rediscovered in Wyoming in the 1980s, a number of zoos began captive breeding programs to increase the number of ferrets in the U.S. The young produced from breeding programs are then trained to be put back into the wild. After the ferret was rediscovered in Wyoming in the 1980s, a number of zoos began captive breeding programs to increase the number of ferrets in the U.S. The young produced from breeding programs are then trained to be put back into the wild.
According to Mikesic, there are approximately 25 locations that black-footed ferrets have been reintroduced into the wild and reintroduced into the western U.S - the closest being the Big Boquillas Ranch in northern Arizona.

The Navajo Nation Zoo also recently renovated three exhibits in its Discovery Center facility, which features a greatly enlarged pond, lizards, Gila monster and other species.

The Navajo Zoo features over 100 different animals of 50 different species and is the only zoo in the U.S. that is managed and owned by an American Indian tribe. It is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, visit their website at navajozoo.org or contact them at (928) 871-6574.
President Begaye announces $6.7 million settlement for mitigation projects

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Earlier today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Justice announced a federal Clean Air Act settlement regarding the Four Corners Power Plant.

The agreement requires an estimated $160 million upgrade to the power plant’s sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide pollution controls. A portion of the settlement funds, $6.7 million, will be utilized for three health and environmental mitigation projects for the Navajo Nation, near Shiprock, N.M.

Arizona Public Service Co., primary owner of FCPP, along with former and current co-owners, El Paso Electric Co., Public Service Company of New Mexico, Salt River Project, Tucson Electric Power Co. and Southern California Edison Co. funded the settlement.

The settlement agreement is the result of past power plant violations, including lack of prevention for significant deterioration requirements and new source review standards under the CAA.

“We appreciate that the health of the Navajo people was considered,” said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye. “While $6.7 million will provide many needed improvements for the Navajo people affected by the power plant emissions, we still have much more that needs to be addressed.

“We applaud the tenacity and dedication of the grassroots organizations that remained united throughout this process and never gave up, for the health and wellbeing of their people,” he added.

By continuing to work together, the Navajo Nation and federal government will address the numerous health concerns associated with air quality and need for pollution control technology.

In June 2011, Earthjustice, a non-profit environmental law organization, filed a complaint on behalf of Dine’ Citizens Against Ruining the Environment, To’Nizhoni Ani, Sierra Club and the National Parks Conservation Association.

The complaint alleged that FCPP did not properly obtain permits for major modifications made to the power plant from 1985 to 1986.

When Earthjustice filed the complaint, the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency expressed concerns to the federal agencies that any monetary penalties assessed to the power plant by the U.S. would exclude any benefits to the tribe.

Navajo EPA recommended a number of mitigation projects to the U.S. EPA.

The projects included a coal burning stove replacement program, home weatherization, installation of solar panels at tribal buildings, funding an allergist position at Northern Navajo Medical Center, funding tribal programs for asthma screening, and subsidizing a study to investigate health risks from exposure to biomass combustion in homes.

The $6.7 million settlement agreement will fund three tribal mitigation projects for the stove replacement program, home weatherization and a health trust fund for medical treatment.

The medical treatment will include physician visits, equipment and medication for people affected with upper respiratory disease.

The mitigation projects recommended were based upon the potential to directly and measurably improve public health and local employment.

-30-
President Begaye, Vice President Nez announce OPVP Veterans Liaison, attend Navajo Nation Veterans Services and Benefits Summit

GALLUP, N.M.—Navajo veterans are the number one priority for the Begaye-Nez administration.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez conveyed that fact to the veterans in attendance at the Navajo Nation Veterans Services and Benefits Summit at the UNM-Gallup Campus on June 24.

They shared the four pillars of the administration: Navajo Veterans, Elders and Youth, Infrastructure and Job Creation.

“The way we see it, veterans are first because they are the protectors, they keep us safe,” said President Begaye.

Elders are second on the priority listing because they are the keepers of Navajo way of life and the Navajo language, he added. The youth are included with this pillar because of the intergenerational opportunities that exist between the two age groups.

“Then come the things we make a life with: roads, facilities, electricity and water. Infrastructure,” President Begaye said.

Finally, it’s how we are going to make a living for ourselves, providing food, shelter and transportation to our families. Job creation, he added.

He said the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President met with the 23rd Navajo Nation Council to align priorities for the nation to ensure one voice on issues nationally and internationally.

Since then, the administration has met with all divisions under the Executive Branch and stressed the need to include Navajo veterans in their division strategy, whether for employment, training or other forms of assistance.

“Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs is not the only entity that will be working with veterans, it’s going to be the entire Executive Branch,” said President Begaye.
Veterans employ a common sense approach to overcoming challenges, he said, and their primary objective in all things is to get the job done.

Vice President Jonathan Nez said they went to Washington, D.C. and met with 18 members of Congress and the Senate.

They shared veteran issues with housing, employment and health care, in particular, mental health counseling services for post traumatic stress disorder.

“The reason why we’re here is for passage of the Navajo Nation Veterans Act. We want to know what our veterans think,” Vice President Nez said.

He said a meeting with U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro was productive and that a housing voucher system for veterans is available to assist with paying their rent and utilities.

“This isn’t the only veterans summit we’ll have. We’re going to meet again on the Navajo Nation for the duration of the administration,” said Vice President Nez.

The administration will be focused on three areas during the term of office: passage of the Navajo Nation Veterans Act, veterans housing and veterans health care through the creation of regional service center for the Veterans Administration on the Navajo Nation.

“We’re going to create partnerships with the Veterans Administration, HUD and IHS. We want to bring these three agencies into one, so the restrictions between the three can be minimized,” President Begaye said.

Vice President Nez introduced former Ariz. Rep. Jamescita Peshlakai as the veteran liaison for OPVP.

“We brought a new individual on to our team, the Begaye-Nez administration. She is a veteran and former state representative for Arizona,” Vice President Nez said. “President and I felt that she could bridge that gap between Office of the President, Vice President and Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs.”

Jamescita Mae Peshlakai is a U.S. Army veteran who served with the 403rd Combat Support Hospital in the Persian Gulf War. She was stationed in the neutral zone between Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

She has a bachelor’s degree in history and philosophy and a master’s degree in educational psychology.

“I worked with the workforce investment act programs. I served in the public safety, military and regulatory affairs committee and the veterans caucus,” Peshlakai said of her service as a state representative.

“I hope that I serve in the capacity that you all so deserve,” she added.

Prior to the summit, President Begaye and Vice President Nez met with the commander and vice commander of the Northern Agency Veterans Organization to discuss issues facing veterans from that region.

Many of the priorities there fell in line with the topics presented during the discussions at the summit. Their interests were to identify veteran initiatives endorsed by the administration and how they could be a part of the process.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 29, 2015

Navajo Nation Museum Launches Children’s Cultural Arts Summer Program

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – Navajo youth can enrich their summer with cultural arts.

That’s the goal of the Navajo Nation Museum here in the capital of the Navajo Nation.

Navajo Nation Museum Director Manuelito Wheeler, stated, “We want to reach out to the Navajo youth especially during the summer season. We have great staff who have developed a host of unique events and activities for the Navajo people and the public at large.”

One such series of events includes month-long cultural arts workshops and activities for the summer. On July 1st, a workshop titled “Navajo Relationship with Nature, Land and Dinetah” will be presented by Navajo Cultural Speaker Ben Sorrel from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

On July 6th, Navajo Nation Museum Curator Clarenda Begay will feature side walk art based on the theme, “An Important Diné Value You Cherish ” from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Youth will engage in cultural arts and crafts with the assistance of Navajo Artist Lisa Richards on July 8th, 20th and 22nd.

A cultural workshop will also be presented by Sorrel on July 13th titled, “What is the Past Made of?” from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. He will also present another workshop on July 27th titled “What Does it Mean to Me to be Navajo?” from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
“Who R U?” is the name of a July 29th activity that will be facilitated by Curator Begay from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Participants are requested to bring a pair of white loafers or sneakers for their canvas.

On August 12th, a Young Men’s Sweat Purification Ceremony will be held for young men ages 13 to 18 and is limited to 10 participants. Sweat Lodge Instructor and Chanter Ronald Largo, will teach young men about The Hero Twins and sing purification songs. The sweat lodge is located north of the Navajo Nation Museum.

Curator Begay, explained, “We have already had a couple of cultural activities for the youth and interest is slowing increasing. We want to invite the youth to come and join us. The Navajo Nation Museum is a great venue to learn about Navajo culture.”

The free children’s cultural arts program are for children kindergarten through sixth grade, with the exception of the Young Men’s Sweat Purification Ceremony, which is for young men between 13 and 18-years-old.

Wheeler added, “The Navajo Nation Museum is unlike many other museums in the U.S. as exemplified in the host of unique Navajo cultural activities that are specifically designed to help educate the youth about the Navajo culture and preserve the Navajo heritage. We hope you are able to visit the Navajo Nation Museum and enhance your understanding of the Navajo people and embrace the rich legacy of the Navajo Nation.”

Located in northeast Arizona just off Arizona Highway 264, the Navajo Nation Museum is a great venue to retrace early Navajo history while captivating the contemporary yet traditional spirit of the Navajo people.
The Navajo Nation Museum is open on Monday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Tuesday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information about other cultural events and unique exhibits, contact the Navajo Nation Museum at (928) 871-7941 or via their website at www.navajonationmuseum.org
President Begaye announces new appointments to Dine’ College Board of Regents

President Begaye made two new appointments to the Dine’ College Board of Regents. According to the Dine’ College website, the eight-member board is the college’s guiding light, helping to establish a direction for the future and directing the college in the process of establishing educational programs and institutional goals. “They help us to strengthen our personal foundations for responsible learning and living consistent with Sa’ah Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhóón,” the website states.

Johnson Dennison was selected to serve on the Dine’ College Board of Regents for the Chinle Agency and Greg Bigman was also selected to the board to serve the Northern Agency.

Dennison has a master’s degree in educational administration from the University of New Mexico, which was obtained in 1978. In 1973, he obtained his bachelor’s degree in education from UNM. Since 1999, he has served as an adjunct faculty at Dine’ College, instructing Dine’ educational philosophy for the teacher education program. He also taught school law for college seniors. “I believe that I am well qualified. I have more than two decades of experience in higher education as a dean of instruction, cultural consultant and instructor,” Dennison said. “I have more than three decades experience in K-12 schools as a principal and teacher.”

He said most importantly, he is diligent, patient, balanced and honest. “I believe that these skills are much needed at Dine’ College and that I can make a difference for that institution’s stakeholders and for the Navajo Nation,” Dennison said.

Bigman, 34, is also an educator who served four years as a high school teacher. “In any educational institution, the teachers and faculty provide a direct service and are instrumental in improving the organization,” Bigman said. “I want to be a part of making Dine’ College an even greater institution for Navajo.”

He added that he has proven ability to build relationships, identify objectives and needs, including creation of strategies to solve problems with decisiveness and integrity. He previously served as a senior executive analyst with a Navajo Nation owned company. Prior to that, Bigman was the sole proprietor of Impressions, LLC.

“The Vice President and I vowed to bring young, educated Navajo professionals back to help make us an even greater Nation,” said President Begaye. “Mr. Bigman would bring the needs, thinking and the voice of the younger generation to the table.”

In 2004, Bigman obtained his bachelor’s degree in biochemistry from UNM. In 2010, he completed the alternative teacher licensure program at San Juan College.
President Begaye appoints two new members to Dine’ Board of Education

On June 29, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye appointed two individuals to the Dine’ Board of Education.

“We have selected two highly educated and qualified applicants to the Dine Education Board,” said President Begaye. “These individuals have the education and experience to make a difference for the Navajo people.

“We did not enter into these selections hastily and ensured we did our due diligence to bring high caliber educators back home to help our nation,” he added.

Dr. Manley Alan Begay Jr. and Dr. Benjamin Jones were appointed to the Dine’ Board of Education.

Begay has more than 35 years of professional educational experience and was previously serving as a tenured professor at Northern Arizona University for the Department of Applied Indigenous Studies College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

He also worked for the College of Education for the Department of Educational Leadership at NAU.

He obtained his doctoral degree in education for administration, planning and social policy from Harvard University in Nov. 1997. He also obtained his master’s degree from Harvard University in education for administration, planning and social policy in June 1989.

In August 1985, he received an education specialist degree from Brigham Young University in educational administration. He was selected as valedictorian, but deferred the honors to the salutatorian.

Begay did not want to repeat the honors because he was previously selected as valedictorian and gave the commencement address when he obtained his master’s degree in educational administration with emphasis in community education from BYU in August 1983.

In August 1977, he received his bachelor’s degree in secondary education with emphasis in social studies from the University of Arizona. Prior to that, he obtained his associate’s degree from Navajo Community College and was the valedictorian commencement speaker.

Begay’s academic focus is Indigenous Nation-Building, with specific emphasis on economic development, leadership, education and governance.

“My recent work includes executive education sessions and research, with and relevant to, First Nations and organizations in Canada and Native nations and organizations in the United States,” Begay said.

He plans to expand his work and research to include the Navajo Nation, Australian Aborigines and the Maoris of New Zealand.

“I have professional interests in putting theory into practice regarding issues of Indigenous education, Navajo history and philosophy, and development,” Begay said.

The second individual selected to the Dine’ Education Board by President Begaye is Dr. Benjamin Jones.

Jones previously served as an associate’s degree in business administration. In Dec. 1985, he obtained his bachelor’s degree in business administration with an emphasis in accounting.

“The world is undergoing a paradigm shift in economic growth with the need for balance to temper the instability of climate change,” Jones said. “The Navajo Nation is uniquely positioned to reinvent their educational framework recognizing their strong beliefs in maintaining harmony and adapting their skills to changes in the environment.”

He noted that Navajo education has been addressed in an isolated vacuum concerned primarily with shifting curriculum to improve the outcomes of standardized testing.

Instead, Navajo youth deserve a new approach that refocuses on strengthening Navajo economic livelihood, he said, and building value in the Navajo homeland that coincides with the Navajo educational ambitions.

“I believe Navajo education works best grounded in academia that integrates our culture and language,” Jones said. “The uniqueness in combining these parameters of education not only makes us more holistic, but provides the most effective means in how we apply and adapt ourselves to the challenges of today’s changing world,” said Jones.

Jones previously served as the entrepreneurial director of Navajo Technical University since Jan. 2015.
Navajo Nation leaders reach unprecedented agreement on priorities

CHURCHROCK, N.M.—The Navajo Nation branch chiefs and the 23rd Navajo Nation Council met on June 27 at Fire Rock Navajo Casino and hammered out a priority listing for the tribal government to share nationally and internationally.

Nine priorities were outlined, with particular emphasis on water rights/projects and economic development, and infrastructure. Other areas included were housing, education, human services, governance, public safety, natural resources and judicial needs.

President Russell Begaye, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Speaker LoRenzo Bates and acting Chief Justice Eleanor Shirley spoke on the needs of the Navajo people. It was a follow up to the meeting held weeks earlier at Twin Arrows, where the Executive and Legislative Branches agreed it was imperative to include the Judicial Branch in the discussions.

“We are looking at a six-percent shortfall across the board and we’re going to make sure we have adequate funding, especially for the priority areas,” said President Begaye.

He expressed the need for the tribe to establish property taxes and other sustainable revenues that will revive the economic health of the Navajo Nation, aside from the volatile funding sources derived from gas, oil and coal.

“How do we show that we can raise revenue that is sustainable on the Navajo Nation and not rely heavily on volatile revenue? We need to have this larger discussion,” President Begaye said.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) hosted the meeting and restated that the Council has emphasized the need for the Nation to be united to move its initiatives and to lobby effectively.

“As I previously stated, the three branches need to communicate and have honest discussions on a regular basis in order for our government to make real progress,” said Speaker Bates.

Council members also issued several recommendations including adding uranium issues under the nine priorities and developing a new and more effective annual budget process that will help to meet the needs of the people.
Vice President Jonathan Nez said the creation of an OPVP workgroup to research infrastructure will provide the Council recommendations on policy, structure or law changes that are needed. He cited the need for such changes with Division of Community Development, Division of Economic Development, Office of Management and Budget and Office of the Controller as examples.

“The $554 million is available, but how do we keep those dollars on Navajo? That should be the overall goal for us because we don’t want it to flow off the Nation,” Vice President Nez said. “We’ll be in the same social, economic condition after these new facilities are built.”

Acting Chief Justice Eleanor Shirley presented several priorities on Saturday, including the need for legislative support to assist in funding for new judicial facilities to replace dilapidated judicial buildings that pose health and safety risks for judicial employees. Additionally, the presentation highlighted other areas of need such as improvements to the restorative justice or peacemaking program.

The Council directed Speaker Bates to hold the leadership meetings with the purpose of aligning the Nation’s priorities and to re-establish relations between the tribal branches of government to advocate and lobby on behalf of the Navajo people for funding from the county, state and federal levels.

President Begaye said that he is in agreement with the nine priorities, which encompass the four pillars of his administration: Navajo veterans, elders and youth, infrastructure and job creation. He added that the division directors within his administration now have their “marching orders” to begin aligning their respective programs with the priorities.

The nine priorities were established based off of the priorities identified at the chapter level, President Begaye’s administration, the Council’s standing committees, and public comments received last year during public hearings held to gain input as to how the Nation’s $554 million trust settlement award should be used and/or invested.

“Working and communicating together will make our Nation much stronger internally and at all other levels of government,” added Speaker Bates, adding that the three branches will continue to hold meetings on a regular basis to move the Nation’s agenda forward.

Near the conclusion of the meeting, the three branches agreed to sign a written agreement in the near future that outlines the nine priorities.

- # -
June 2, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

President Begaye issues safety warning for Sanostee wildland forest fire

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—On July 1, the Navajo Forestry Department reported a forest fire in the vicinity of Sanostee, N.M.

Alexious Becenti, forest manager, said the fire was caused by lightning and is currently burning on a slope on the Chuska Mountain Range.

“BIA Fire Management is on scene with the following resources: BIA Navajo Hot Shot crew, BIA Navajo Helitack crew, and a U.S. Forestry Service Flagstaff Hot Shot crew is en route,” said Becenti.

Two air tanker drops have been made on the fire. No report was available on the total acres burned by the fire and more information will be released later today.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye said, “We are praying for the protection of the various teams fighting the forest fire. We encourage the public to give right of way to official vehicles as they make their way to the impacted area.”

He also added that extra precautions must be taken this weekend with the Independence Day holiday, especially with campfires.

“The possession, sale and use of fireworks are against the health, safety and welfare of the Navajo people, the resolution states, and tribal council concurs with the intent and purpose for banning such fireworks from the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Nation employees will have a tribal holiday on July 3 in observance of Fourth of July holiday.

President Begaye encouraged tribal members to attend the Fourth of July Celebration in Window Rock.

A fireworks display will be free to spectators at the event on the evening of July 4.
Executive Branch Report

CHINLE AGENCY COUNCIL MEETING
Wheatfields, Ariz.

GREAT SEAL OF THE NAVAJO NATION

THE NAVAJO NATION
Office of the President and Vice President
July 11, 2015
Yá’át’ééh!

It is the awakening of a new dawn for the Navajo Nation. Our administration is doing things differently than previous leaders and we believe that the Navajo people have given us a mandate, through their vote, on what they want to see during our administration.

As such, we have four pillars that we will be focused on during our time of office, four mandates that have come directly from the Navajo people.

The first one is our Navajo Veterans. We will be working hard to ensure they are properly acknowledged and provided a helping hand with the issues they face. Our veterans are in need of housing and mental health counseling services for the post-traumatic stress syndrome they must deal with on a daily basis. They put their lives on the line for our nation and now it’s time we provide the assistance they need.

The second mandate from the Navajo people is our Navajo Elders. They are the bedrock and foundation of our Navajo sovereignty. They too, must be properly taken care of and provided for, whether it is nursing homes of assisted living centers. Our youth are included in this effort, as they are both interconnected. We will encourage our elders to teach our youth our language and our culture to continue for the years to come.

The third mandate from our people is Infrastructure. Time and again we see countless trucks traveling the roads to haul water in huge barrels to provide their families with drinking water, but also for cleaning and bathing. Many of our people also haul water for their livestock. Beyond the water issues, there is also a tremendous need for electricity and power lines to provide basic life necessities that improve the quality of life.

The fourth mandate from the Navajo people is Job Creation and Employment. We have heard over and again about the unemployment rate hovering at more than 50 percent across our nation. However, in some chapters, it is as high as 70 and 80 percent. We are planning on taking advantage of our desert economy to create jobs such as making creams, lotions and ointments from aloe vera and yucca plants.

From Capitol Hill to the Navajo Nation, you can rest assured that we have selected the best and brightest Navajos to help us with these mandates that came directly from the Navajo people. Please join us in this awakening of a new dawn. It is only by working together and with each other that these tasks can be completed. Ahe’hee.

NEW OPVP, CABINET APPOINTMENTS
We selected new appointments recently and we believe they will compliment the team that we have already assembled. The first is Teresa Hopkins, our new executive director for Navajo Telecommunications Regulatory Office. Her impressive career in the field of telecommunications will undoubtedly make a positive impact for the administration, we believe, and she will work with such technological areas such as broadband, cellphone coverage and how we communicate with one another. We also appointed Jamescita Peshlakai to serve as the Office of the President and Vice President Veterans Administration Liaison. A veteran of the Persian Gulf War, we know she will represent our Navajo veterans at the highest levels and her experience as a state legislator brings a wealth of knowledge to the table. We also selected Rick Abasta as our communications director for OPVP. His knowledge of the newspaper industry and tribal government will be beneficial in keeping our tribal members updated on news from the Executive Branch.

NAVAJO CODE TALKERS APPRECIATION EVENT
On July 4, we honored the Navajo Code Talkers at the Dean C. Jackson Memorial Arena. We said their strength and resiliency during World War II not only ended the war, but served as a prime example of the strength and power of Dine’ bizaad, the Navajo language. Navajo Code Talkers John Kinsel, Sam Holiday, Thomas H. Begay and Roy Hawthorne were in attendance at the event and honored President Begaye and Vice President Nez.
Speaker LoRenzo Bates also honored the four brave men that proudly served in the U.S. Marine Corps as Navajo Code Talkers and set the bar for the many men and women that would follow in their footsteps for the generations.

N.M. TRIBAL LEADERS SUMMIT
On July 1 and 2, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye attended the N.M. State-Tribal leaders Summit at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort at Santa Ana Pueblo. Presidents, chairmen and governors across N.M. convened at the summit and spoke about issues relating to their respective nations, in particular Tribal Infrastructure Funding and Capital Outlay appropriations to address the needs on the reservations. President Begaye met with Gov. Susana Martinez and advocated on behalf of the Navajo Nation to address infrastructure development for N.M. chapters. He was also on the panel for economic development and led the discussions, focused in particular on increasing bond ratings for outside investors, leveraging funding for infrastructure projects and how the Navajo Nation invested $26 million that grew to about $2 billion.

SCOTUS RULINGS
The Supreme Court of the U.S. issued a ruling on same sex marriage a few weeks ago and the Navajo Nation OPVP was flooded with calls from media and persons interested in the decision. President Begaye said, “People must understand that we are a sovereign nation. We have our lawmakers and we support the laws that are in place. We stand behind the laws of what marriage is on the Navajo Nation. We’ve always said the people need to decide on these issues that impact our families and the future generations.”

The Supreme Court also presided over the Arizona State Legislature v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission. President Begaye and Vice President Nez applauded the high court ruling in favor of the commission. President Begaye expressed appreciation for the Supreme Court honoring the values and voice of tribal people. “At the end of the day, it shows that the people won,” Vice President Nez said. “They voted through the ballot to create an independent entity to develop balanced districts throughout the state without political influence by elected leaders. It’s a win for the people of Arizona”

The Supreme Court also ruled that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency unreasonably interpreted the Clean Air Act when it decided to set limits on the emissions of toxic pollutants from power plants without first considering the costs on the industry. President Begaye said, “We value the health of our people. We lived with power plants that provided revenue and jobs to our nation, but also have been a source of health issues for our people. The ruling should be a call to the industry that they need to be more cognizant of the people that they serve.”

SANOSTEE FIRE SAFETY WARNING, FIREWORKS BAN
President Begaye issued a safety warning on July 2, after the Navajo Forestry Department reported a forest fire in the vicinity of Sanostee, N.M. on July 1. The fire was caused by lightening and was burning on a slope of the Chuska Mountain Range. BAI Fire Management responded to the scene, along with Navajo Hot Shots, Navajo Helitack and the U.S. Forestry Service Hot Shot crew.

President advised residents in the area to yield right-of-way to firefighters responding to the scene as they made their way to the impacted areas. He also advised against campfires in light of the forest fire.

Vice President Nez reminded tribal members that fireworks are illegal on the reservation and that the Navajo Nation Fireworks Code must be observed. He cited Navajo Nation Council Resolution No. CAP-18-86 as the tribal law that details the restriction under Title 17 of the Navajo Nation Code.

NAVAJO NATION-ASU COLLEGE OF LAW MOA
The Navajo Nation and Arizona State University Sandra Day O’Conner College of Law are officially in collaboration to provide opportunities to Navajo students to attend law school.
President Begaye signed the agreement into law on June 30, approving the memorandum of agreement between the university and the nation.

“We are working with ASU for more Navajo attorneys. This agreement will provide Navajo law school students an opportunity to continue their education and one day return home to help the Nation,” President Begaye said.

According to the agreement, the parties will implement a program known as the Peterson Zah Legacy Fellowship, which will provide financial support and academic counseling to 15 Navajo Fellows and assist them with obtaining their Juris Doctorates at ASU.

Vice President Jonathan Nez said the agreement is an opportunity to bring home talented and educated professionals to assist with moving the Navajo Nation forward.

“My náá, President Begaye, opened the door for many of our educated to Navajos to come home and help their people. We feel this program will continue that effort in the field of law,” Vice President Nez said.

The agreement will be in place for six academic years, continuing through 2020. Upon graduation, the participants will have commitment to work for the Navajo Nation for a period of five years.

CONCLUSION

The administration is off to fast start and we have hit the ground running. From lobbying more than 20 congressmen, congresswomen and senators on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. to meeting with the Branch Chiefs of the Navajo Nation, we are committed to serving the Navajo people.

There are many new developments that you will be hearing about very soon. We cannot disclose that information right now because they are still under negotiations. However, we are very confident the Navajo people will be happy with what will be achieved on their behalf.

As we stated previously, the only way such achievements can be done is by working together, including our Navajo chapters across the nation. We look forward to working with you on projects in the future. Ahe’hee!

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WASHINGTON, D.C.— About 800 Native American youth from around the country, representing more than 200 tribes, converged upon the nation’s capital last week for two conferences aimed at empowering native youth. The efforts to inspire these native youth were supported by the two top leaders from the Navajo Nation, especially with regard to native language revitalization and preservation.

President Barack Obama extended an invitation to the Begaye-Nez administration to attend the White House youth summit and support the Obama administration’s outreach to Native American youth.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez were on Capitol Hill from July 6 to 10, meeting with congressional members, senators and top federal officials from various departments.

They met with Navajo youth and other youth ambassadors from across Indian Country to encourage and support them during the youth summit.

On July 8, President Begaye issued a proclamation in honor, recognition and celebration of native youth. The Navajo Nation was the only tribe to issue a proclamation to acknowledge the youth in Washington, D.C. last week.

The proclamation referenced the Obama administration’s historic White House initiative, Generation Indigenous, to support native youth in advancing their education and gain firsthand experience on the federal government operations in Washington, D.C.

“It is the hope of the Navajo Nation that these native youth will use the skills and knowledge they attained in Washington, D.C. to improve the lives of their people in their communities,” stated President Begaye.

He said, “These incredible Native American youth should
be honored, celebrated and congratulated.”

Vice President Nez was particularly proud of native youth who fostered the effort to preserve tribal languages and speak their native tongue, identifying this as an important aspect of their self-identity.

“Native American youth gathered here in Washington, D.C. stood up for preserving their language. We appreciate that,” Vice President Nez said.

“Diné bizaad is inherent within you. You just need to bring it out. We’re proud of those Navajo youth that speak the language and we encourage all of our kids to learn,” said Vice President Nez.

In addition to the Generation Indigenous gathering, more than 60 Navajo youth were also in Washington, D.C. to attend the 2015 United National Indian Tribal Youth Conference.

For more than 37 years, UNITY has promoted the spiritual, mental, physical and social development of American Indian and Alaska Native youth to build a strong, unified and self-reliant Native America through greater youth involvement.

One group in attendance, chaperoned by Claudia Jackson, traveled from Dilkon, Ariz. to represent the Navajo Nation at both conferences.

Jackson works for the Dilkon Youth Services as a program and projects specialist, a position she has held since October 2014.

“The UNITY Conference is important to Navajo youth because it helps to foster their curiosity of the world and they build on their experiences when they travel to other places and meet new people,” Jackson said.

She noted that DYS encourages Navajo youth to network and branch out to locally, regionally and nationally.

Jackson began working with Navajo youth in 2008, through the Leupp Family Farms initiative. At the time, she was the legislative district assistant to former 22nd Navajo Nation Council Delegate Elmer Begay.

Begay is the founder of DYS and is still involved with the program to help educate youth of the Dilkon community. The other primary supporter is the Holbrook Unified School District, in particular, the Indian Wells Elementary School.

The school district has been assisting DYS since its inception and helped develop an afterschool program. The program will again be in place in August, when school starts.

“This Navajo Nation Proclamation will make a difference, with the support of our Navajo leaders, President Begay and Vice President Nez,” Jackson said. “The biggest challenge facing our Navajo kids is providing services such as afterschool programs.

“We know the kids want to be involved, but transportation is one of the main challenges for our kids to participate in the activities that we provide,” she added.

Currently, the DYS is only program providing activities to kids in the community. She encouraged the general public to support the youth programs by sending their kids to activities offered in the community.

“Let’s nurture our young leaders of today with the knowledge we already possess and help them build a better Navajo Nation,” said Jackson.

The youth ambassadors of Dilkon Chapter will be returning to the Navajo Nation on July 14.
Proclamation

IN HONOR, RECOGNITION AND CELEBRATION OF NATIVE YOUTH
July 8, 2015

WHEREAS, President Obama launched the Generation Indigenous initiative to help remove the barriers between Native youth and their opportunities to succeed; and

WHEREAS, Native youth from across the nation are attending the historic Generation Indigenous White House Gathering to interact directly with senior administration officials; and

WHEREAS, The Navajo Nation continues to support these Native youth in advancing their education; and

WHEREAS, these Native youth will gain firsthand experience and valuable insight into how the United States is governed by meeting administration officials in Washington, DC; and

WHEREAS, these bright and passionate Native youth are the future leaders of Indian Country; and

WHEREAS, it is the hope of the Navajo Nation that these Native youth will use the skills and knowledge they attain in Washington, DC to improve the lives of their people in their communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RUSSELL BEGAYE, President of the Navajo Nation, do hereby proclaim that these incredible Native Youth shall be honored, celebrated and congratulated.

ORDERED THIS 8th DAY OF JUNE 2015

Russell Begaye, President
THE NAVAJO NATION

AFFIRMED

Jonathan Nez, Vice President
THE NAVAJO NATION
President Begaye announces new appointments to NNTRC, Navajo DOT

She was responsible for all information technology related projects, planning and implementation of a new court case management system, execution of an archived court records system and other duties.

“If you look at her background, it’s always been in telecommunications. She has a very strong background and is very knowledgeable,” said President Begaye. “She was operating her own business in telecommunications.

“We selected her to be executive director of Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission. We know that she will really move the Navajo Nation forward,” he added.

Hopkins was appreciative for the opportunity and said, “I am honored to have been selected to join the Begaye-Nez team. It is my hope that I will exceed their expectations.”

The second appointment to Begaye-Nez cabinet was Garret Silversmith as executive director of Navajo Division of Transportation.

“We really looked across the Navajo Nation and outside the tribe to find somebody for this position,” President Begaye said. He said Silversmith most recently worked for BIA Department of Transportation in Chinle Agency and is knowledgeable with funding from the Federal Highway Administration and the processes for road construction and maintenance.

“Navajo Nation is going to be assuming all responsibilities in the area of roads. The division director for NDOT needs to understand roads, from planning, assessments and engineering,” President Begaye said. “Garret knows all of that. He’s young, intelligent and has very strong leadership.

“He did a lot of work on the Nation and now, he is going to help us. We are very excited about Garret Silversmith heading up NDOT,” he added.

Since 2012, Silversmith served as the supervisory highway engineer for the BIA DOT in Chinle. Prior to that, beginning in 2003, he served as a civil engineer to Bighorse Engineers.

Silversmith received his bachelor’s of science degree in civil engineering from New Mexico State University in 1993.

He previously served as a staff engineer for Nation’s Gas Technologies, Inc. and as a project engineer with Navajo Housing Authority.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 15, 2015

Bowl Canyon Recreation Area Re-Open

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – The Bowl Canyon Recreation Area is open for day use at Asaayi Lake.

Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department Manager Martin L. Begaye, stated, “After receiving numerous inquiries about the Bowl Canyon Recreation Area, we want to assure the public that Asaayi Lake is not closed, but open for camping and picnicking.”

Begaye said there is no entrance fee to visit Bowl Canyon Recreation Area; however, visitors must purchase a day-use camping permit for camping or picnicking from the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department. Camping permits can be obtained at Gorman Hall on the Navajo Nation Fairgrounds in Window Rock, Arizona. Visitors are encouraged to “take in, take out” meaning all trash should be hauled out since trash collection is limited.

Bowl Canyon Recreation Area consists of Asaayi Lake, which was never closed and Camp Asaayi, which is closed due to ongoing renovation. Visitors are invited to go camping and picnicking at Camp Asaayi, however, the lake has not been restocked with fish yet.

There have been concerns by the public that Asaayi Lake became contaminated due to a 2014 fire in the watershed around Bowl Canyon Recreation area; however, Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife officials said it is a misconception.
Navajo Nation Fish and Wildlife Manager Jeffrey Cole said that the Navajo Department of Fish and Wildlife conducted an assessment and found that Asaayi Lake is not contaminated.

Cole explained, “Most of the fish had died due to ash flowing into the lake. The water is still too warm for us to stock with trout. Some fish did survive and fisherman are catching a few fish at this time. We will continue to monitor the water quality and when that is stabilized, we will then stock the lake.”

Camping permits are $15 per site per night up to seven people. For group sites, it is $25 for half a day and $50 for a full day. Day use permits for picnicking are also $15.00 per site. For more information about fishing permits, contact the Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife at (928) 871-6450, 6451 or 6452.

Visitors can enter Bowl Canyon Recreation on the north side from New Mexico State Highway 134 near Crystal, New Mexico. For more information about camping permits, contact the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department at (928) 871-6647 or via their website at www.navajonationparks.org
Navajo Head Start partners with Navajo Technical University to help its employees obtain degrees

25 NHS employees enrolled in summer classes at NTU

CROWNPOINT, N.M. — Navajo Head Start employees now have a better opportunity to pursue and obtain their college degrees thanks to a partnership established between Navajo Head Start and Navajo Technical University.

On July 15, Navajo Head Start (NHS) signed a memorandum of understanding with Navajo Technical University (NTU) to help its teachers obtain their Associate of Science degrees or their Bachelor of Science degrees in early childhood multicultural education from NTU.

The partnership, forged by Sharon Henderson Singer, assistant superintendent of the Navajo Department of Diné Education and Dr. Elmer J. Guy, president of NTU, creates even better opportunity for NHS employees to attend classes during the summer session when NHS is on break and on the weekends all while remaining full-time employees.

Both entities were swift in implementing the new partnership and getting NHS employees enrolled in classes.

“Within two weeks, we were able to get things running. It was amazing having two entities come together with a vision and just making it happen right then and there,” said Singer. “Though it was short notice for our employees, we had over 30 students who applied and are now taking classes at NTU.”
Currently, there are 25 NHS employees enrolled in summer classes at NTU. Other employees have consulted with their school readiness coaches inquiring about available courses since the partnership was established.

Rolanda White, a school readiness coach at NHS, participated in a similar partnership at Arizona State University where she earned her Masters of Curriculum and Instruction. Becenti was involved in this new partnership between NHS and NTU, from recruiting staff, to chaperoning visits to NTU to ensure needs were met.

“The employees were excited about the opportunity to attend classes in the vicinity of their homes and a lot of them are very dedicated,” said White. “The employees have come together as a group to help each other succeed—I think that is their goal.”

Singer is pleased with the program thus far and is impressed with the variety and flexibility of class structures offered at NTU, as well as the university’s emphasis on culture in early childhood education.

“Dr. Lamont Yazzie and I got to meet with Dr. Guy and his staff, we let them know some of our needs as far as obtaining our goal of having a 100% highly-qualified workforce,” she said. “We wanted to go with the weekend college concept, which I think was really unique for an institution and its paraprofessionals who work full-time.”

Dr. Lamont Yazzie, director of educational services at NHS, also commended the NHS staff for taking advantage of the opportunity to improve themselves and in turn, improving early childhood development services on the Navajo Nation. He also commended NTU for partnering with NHS as they share similar goals to develop a highly-qualified workforce for the Navajo Nation.

“Partnerships, with sound and quality services responding to the needs of our communities on the Navajo Reservation such as this partnership with Navajo Technical University, help us pursue and meet those efforts in serving the birth through five-year-old population,” Dr. Yazzie said.

Dr. Guy explained NTU is proud to have new students enrolled at NTU and is excited to see the perspectives they bring to the classrooms. He hopes to help create similar partnerships in the future.

“We been wanting to partner with Head Start because we know they need early childhood teachers as well as other institutions, the bureau school and public schools. We want to help build the Navajo Nation so that we have our own professionals,” said Dr. Guy. “That is the only way to build our nation, through education.”

###
Navajo Head Start is the largest federally-funded grant program in the country. Head Start and Early Head Start services are provided within the geographical area of the Navajo Nation, an area approximately the size of West Virginia that spans more than 27,000-square-miles across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Central Administration offices are located in Window Rock, Ariz., capital of the Navajo Nation.
THE STATE OF THE NAVAJO NATION
President Russell Begaye
and
Vice President Jonathan Nez

The Executive Branch Report

Presented to the
23rd Navajo Nation Council
July 20, 2015
Mr. Speaker, members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, distinguished guests, visitors in the gallery, and my fellow Navajo people:

Welcome to the 2015 Summer Session. We are honored and privileged to join you today inside this historic council chamber. Thank you for the opportunity. The summer rains have blessed our tribal lands and it is great to see the green vegetation across our nation. It’s a sign that our great Navajo Nation is blooming and our lands are thriving.

Vice President Jonathan Nez and I are two months into our administration and already, we are making significant strides tribally, regionally and nationally. There is definitely more to come and we have selected key individuals that will build upon the four pillars of our administration and make our vision a reality.

We selected Ethel Branch to serve as Navajo Nation Attorney General. She is a graduate of Harvard Law School with both transactional and litigation experience. Ethel also obtained her master’s degree in public policy and bachelor’s degree from Harvard University.

Born in Tuba City, Ethel grew up in Leupp, herding sheep and tending to cattle on her family’s ranch. She is licensed to practice law on the Navajo Nation and in the states of Arizona, Oregon and Washington. Ethel is a critical part of our administration.

We also selected Wenona Benally to serve as the executive director for the Office of the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission. She most recently served as the assistant attorney general for the Pascua Yaqui Tribe near Tucson, Arizona and previously worked for the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona.

Wenona is from Kayenta. She earned her Juris Doctorate and master’s degree in public policy at Harvard University. She obtained her master of law from the University of Arizona and earned her bachelor’s of arts degree in English, summa cum laude, from Arizona State University.

For executive director of the Division of Natural Resources, we selected Bidtah Becker. She previously served as the assistant attorney general for the Navajo Department of Justice, under the Natural Resources Unit.

Bidtah earned her Juris Doctorate at the University of New Mexico School of Law. She is also a graduate of Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service. In 2012, President Barack Obama appointed her as a trustee for the Institute of American Indian Arts. She was also appointed to the boards of Navajo Studies, Inc. and the Southwestern Association of Indian Arts.

For the Division of Social Services, we tapped Terrelene Massey to serve as executive director. Terrelene is from Pinon, Arizona and holds a Juris Doctorate and Certificate in Indian Law from the University of New Mexico School of Law. She earned her master’s degree in public affairs from the University of Texas at Austin and her bachelor’s of science in political science from Arizona State University.

She previously worked for New Mexico Legal Aid, Incorporated, New Mexico Human Services Department, New Mexico Indian Affairs Department and the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development.
We selected Jackson Brossy to serve as executive director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office. Jackson is a graduate of Stanford University, where he received his bachelor’s degree in economics, statistics and public policy. He is pursuing a master’s degree in public policy from the Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Jackson knows his way around Capitol Hill politics and has plenty of diplomatic connections from his previous work as a Native American policy advocate and senior associate with Upper Mowhawk, Inc. He also worked for the National Congress of American Indians in Washington, D.C.

For the Division of Public Safety, we selected Jesse Delmar to serve as executive director. Jesse is a graduate of Northern Arizona University with a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice administration with a minor in psychology. He is also a graduate of the Federal Law Enforcement Academy and FBI National Academy.

Jesse most recently served multiple terms as chief of police for the Ft. McDowell Yavapai Nation. He served as an executive fellow with the FBI Executive Fellowship Program in Washington, D.C., as vice president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police Indian Section and as president of the Indian Country Intelligence of Arizona.

For executive director of Navajo EPA, we selected Dr. Donald Benn. Dr. Benn earned his doctoral degree in chemistry at New Mexico State University in 2005. In 2000, he obtained his master’s degree in chemistry from NMSU. In 1997, he earned his bachelor’s degree in chemistry from University of New Mexico.

Dr. Benn is a scientist and most recently worked as research science consultant for Nihidah Nidii Dal, LLC in Lukachukai, from July 2010 to May 2015. In 2010, he successfully wrote and received the NASA-MIRS research grant for use at Navajo Technical University. He also worked as director of the Native American Research Laboratory at the University of Montana in Missoula.

For the executive director of the Navajo Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, we selected M. Teresa Hopkins. She worked for more than eight years with the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch, but has a strong background in telecommunications and is also chief executive officer of her own business, Diné Digital Services, LLC.

Teresa is experienced and very knowledgeable in such areas as telecommunications licensing, federal funding support, computer networking, microcomputer systems, local area networks, and more. We are very confident she will bring these skills to the table for the Navajo Nation.

For the executive director of Navajo Division of Transportation, we selected Garret Silversmith. Garret most recently worked for the BIA Department of Transportation in Chinle and is very familiar with the Federal Highway Administration funding and the processes for road construction and maintenance.

An engineer by trade, he obtained his bachelor’s of science degree in civil engineering from New Mexico State University in 1993. Since then, he has worked as a project engineer with Navajo Housing Authority, staff engineer with Nations Gas Technologies, Incorporated, and as a civil engineer with Bighorse Engineers.

Our administration is very proud and excited to bring these highly educated and experienced professionals back to the Navajo Nation and you should be, too. They will assist us with restoring the confidence of the Navajo people back with the Office of the President and Vice President. The restoration of this trust also includes Capitol Hill, the Obama administration, tribal leaders, Standards and Poor and many others.

In addition to bringing home highly educated and experienced Navajo professionals, we also resolved to work together with our Legislative and Judicial Branches of government. Since our oath of office and inauguration two months ago, we have already met twice with our fellow Navajo leaders and agreed to nine priorities from the Nation.
The nine priority areas are water rights, economic development, infrastructure, housing, education, human services, governance, public safety, and natural resources. We will implement these priorities into the four pillars of our administration: Navajo Veterans, Elders and Youth, Infrastructure and Job Creation.

We met with Speaker LoRenzo Bates and acting Chief Justice Eleanor Shirley and said, moving forward, there should be one voice from the Navajo Nation on Capitol Hill and around the globe. The Nation has not had a consistent message from the tribal branches on specific priorities. That played to the advantage of other tribes across Indian Country lobbying against us.

It’s very important that we do not lose sight of these priorities and the fact that the only way to achieve our goals is by working together, not against each other. We appointed highly competent individuals that have the dedication and experience to achieve our Nation’s objectives. Navajo Nation leadership will meet quarterly to ensure the lines of communication remain open between the branches and to provide updates on our progress.

Our tribal government has an opportunity right now to re-evaluate the way our divisions, departments and programs do business. We must embrace the opportunity and ensure our tribal operations maximize efficiency at all levels. We must downsize the central government and give it back to the Navajo people.

The Office of the President and Vice President will soon share our recommendations on how to utilize the Sihasin Fund to the benefit of the Navajo Nation. We must exercise fiduciary responsibility and consider how we could utilize the funds to elevate the Nation to the coveted AAA rating.

By doing so, we would return a lot of confidence back into the Nation by the financial institutions, banks, S&P and others because they would know that we are set to pay our debts. In turn, that would open the door for future bond opportunities to build our infrastructure needs.

We are creating a position within our office to specifically track all external funds coming into the Nation. This individual would track the timeline of when we received the funds, what reports are needed, deadline dates, project management needs and work closely with the grantees. We must ensure that the Office of Management and Budget is communicating with the Office of the Controller.

We said the same thing about creating a position at OPVP for a veterans’ liaison that would work with the Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of our Navajo veterans. We appointed Jamescita Peshlakai for that role in June and she is already working on behalf of our veterans.

This is just a broad overview of our plans for the future. In order for these goals and objectives to be achieved, we must be committed to working together. The Navajo people elected us to work on their behalf and that is where we must remain steadfast in our actions, especially when funding is involved.

We cannot exceed the Undesignated, Unreserved Fund Balance. We must be very strategic on how we spend the Navajo people’s money. In the past, utilizing riders for supplemental appropriation requests was a popular methodology that caused overspending. We do not want to go down that road again.

Please be diligent and work with our office to ensure our Nation does not fall into deficit. All supplemental appropriation requests should be in the form of stand-alone legislation and go through the required five-day comment period to ensure the Navajo people have their input on the funding request.

During our Navajo Nation Leadership meetings, we all agreed to work together and keep open channels of communication between the branches. Let us remain committed to this. We recently were notified of legislation that was introduced to create a police commission. The fact that we were never invited to the table to sit down and
talk about this legislation affecting one of our divisions was disheartening. Instead, we heard about the initiative when the bill was introduced.

That is not an example of working together. Please, we encourage the members of this distinguished body and our counterparts at the Judicial Branch to remain committed to working together for the benefit of the Navajo people. If we are to have a united voice on Capitol Hill and upon the global stage, it must first begin here, at home.

Thank you for the opportunity to report to you on the Navajo Nation Executive Branch. The state of the Navajo Nation is strong and we working together to fortify that strength even further, onto the steps of Capitol Hill and the rest of Indian Country.

Ahe’hee and God bless.
Navajo Head Start, San Juan Chapter sign MOU

“It’s a win-win situation for the community, for Head Start, and especially the children.”
—Rick Nez, president of San Juan Chapter

FRUITLAND, N.M. — The Navajo Head Start Center in the community of San Juan Chapter near Fruitland, N.M. is open once again thanks to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by Navajo Head Start (NHS) officials and the San Juan Chapter.

In February, the nearby Head Start Center in Nenahnezad was closed because of health and safety concerns of an aged facility.

Head Start officials quickly responded and began working with San Juan Chapter to identify a facility to utilize for the upcoming school year. The chapter offered some space to use in their 10,000-square-foot multi-purpose facility that was built in 2008—a facility constructed using funds from the Navajo Nation and the Navajo Abandon Mine Lands (AML).

On July 16, Navajo Head Start officials including Dr. Tommy Lewis, superintendent of the Navajo Department of Diné Education, Sharon Henderson Singer, assistant superintendent, and Dr. Lamont Yazzie, director of Educational Services at NHS, met with San Juan Chapter officials to finalize the signing of the MOU.

Dr. Lewis stressed the importance of early childhood education and development, and the critical need for the Head Start program on the Navajo Nation.
“We have a chance to get these students on the right track,” said Dr. Lewis. “Those students who go through Head Start—the record shows that they graduate on time and their achievement scores are higher than those who don’t get that kind of experience.”

Rick Nez, president of San Juan Chapter, explained the San Juan Chapter is ready and excited to welcome Head Start into their community and they will now maximize their facility’s potential and usage. He also said they plan to open their senior center soon.

“We are very proud of our community and glad that we are going to get started with Head Start. The kids are going to be enjoying school next door to us,” said Nez. “It’s a win-win situation for the community, for Head Start, and especially the children”

“I am happy the agreement was finalized and the plan is coming to fruition,” he added. “I am excited to make the public announcement at our upcoming chapter meeting. It will become a good community effort.”

Singer explained Head Start is not wasting no time preparing for the upcoming school year and said recruitment is their top priority right now.

“Recruit! We need 20 kids in the program and I understand there are 10 on the waiting list,” said Singer. “Our community assessment shows that there are enough kids in the area.”

Singer said NHS will begin the process of creating and advertising job vacancies as well since the MOU has been finalized. NHS is continually recruiting for Head Start teachers, paraprofessionals and bus drivers.

Navajo Head Start thanked San Juan Chapter for their partnership and for sharing their vision.

“You have a beautiful building here,” said Dr. Lewis. “I know these kids will really appreciate what you’ve done for them—even later on. They are going to remember that experience.”

###
WINO ROCK, Ariz.—History was made today.

Before the start of the 2015 summer session, the leaders of the three branches of the tribal government gathered inside the council chamber to sign an agreement outlining the priorities of the Navajo Nation.

“It’s historic,” said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye.

Speaking in Navajo, President Begaye said, “This has never happened before. We’ve been working separately, until now. We never brought our plans together, our priorities, until now.”

The agreement is the first time in the history of Navajo Nation governance that an agreement was reached between the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches on the priorities and needs of the Navajo people.

“By doing this, we’re saying that (the branches) are coming together, that we’re going to pursue these objectives and goals together,” President Begaye said. “We can move the Nation forward by demonstrating that the Navajo Nation government can work together.

“This is just the beginning,” he added.

He thanked the members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council for the opportunity to meet and share their priorities from the committee level and from the individual delegates. He expressed appreciation to the Judicial Branch for also sharing their goals and objectives.

“A true nabiki ‘yatti’ has taken place today. Thank you,” President Begaye said.
Vice President Nez thanked the 24 delegates of the Navajo Nation Council. He said that council delegates expressed the concerns of their respective chapters during negotiations of the priority listing. They deserve to be commended for speaking on your behalf, he added.

Speaking in Navajo, Vice President Nez said, “The delegates spoke on behalf of their relatives, their chapter people on the challenges they face and those needs were written down on paper. All of (the leaders) will have one plan, that’s why we’re here today.”

He said there will now be one voice for the Navajo people, not just on the Navajo Nation, but with the states, the federal government and throughout the world.

Chief Justice Pro Tem Eleanor Shirley spoke almost entirely in Navajo.

She expressed appreciation for the “Navajo Nation Three Branch Chief Agreement” that was signed.

“Yes, we talked it over and came to an agreement. From the Judicial Branch we spoke of the need to strengthen our judicial system because that gives us the strength to work for the Navajo people,” Chief Justice Shirley said.

She said the money flowing off the Navajo Nation must be stopped and that the branches must work together to find a way to keep the funding on the Nation.

People from the outside were watching us to see if our judicial system is strong, she said.

“We have an independent judiciary, an independent dispute resolution,” said Chief Justice Shirley in English. “Let’s give ourselves the confidence to say we have a stable, strong, independent judiciary.”

Generations from now, even beyond our children and grandchildren, the Navajo people of that time will look back and say it was for a good reason, that there was a purpose for this agreement that was reached by our past leaders, she said.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates echoed the sentiment that the signing ceremony was a historic event.

“I want to thank this council for being able to move in that direction to where we are today,” Speaker Bates said.

He said that although there may be differences between the branches but that they will sit down to address the differences to meet the needs of the Navajo people.

“One voice, one nation,” Speaker Bates said.

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**Summary of Unofficial Results** - REFERENDUM pursuant to CMA-06-15

**Election Date:** July 21, 2015

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President Begaye orders flags at half-staff for Navajo Code Talker Kee Etsicitty

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye ordered flags across the Navajo Nation to be flown at half-staff in honor of Navajo Code Talker Kee Etsicitty, who passed on July 21. The Nation is in mourning for the loss of a national hero today, he said. (Courtesy photo)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—The Navajo Nation lost a national hero on July 21, with the passing of Navajo Code Talker Kee Etsicitty.

“The Navajo people are in mourning for the loss of Kee Etsicitty, one of our beloved Navajo Code Talkers and role models for our nation,” said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye.

All flags across the Navajo Nation will be flown at half-staff in honor of Etsicitty, beginning today and ending at sunset on Saturday.

“These defenders of our Navajo way of life demonstrated the strength and power of the Navajo language and utilized it to end World War II,” President Begaye said. “It is only appropriate that we honor Kee Etsicitty’s faithful service with this display of respect across our Nation.

“Our prayers and condolences to his family,” he added.

Vice President Jonathan Nez said there are very few Navajo Code Talkers remaining and that they must be honored and respected.

“If you see a Code Talker, take the time to thank them for their service and shake their hand. They are truly living legends,” Vice President Nez said.

“We lost a living legend yesterday,” he added.

Kurtis Etsicitty said his father lived a very long life and that he was very proud of him for his service as a Navajo Code Talker.

“(My dad) said our Navajo language is very sacred. He told the kids to speak the language because it was handed down to us by the Creator,” Kurtis said.

When participating at book signings, Etsicitty was fond of telling young kids that the Navajo language is in their bloodline and the only way they would learn it is by trying to speak the language, Kurtis recalled.

Etsicitty was well known in his community of Chichiltah, where he was one of six Navajo Code Talkers that lived there. The last living Code Talker from the chapter is Thomas H. Begay.

Etsicitty worked for the Navajo Nation School Board and oversaw 67 tribal schools alongside former vice chairman Ed T. Begay, a term of service he was very proud of.

Kurtis said his father was a good worker and a humble man with a surname that’s common on the Navajo Nation, but a very uncommon spelling.

Etsicitty’s last name was spelled like that because the Marine recruiter didn’t know how to spell it. He took a guess and my dad kept that spelling from there. We’re the only ones from the Navajo Nation that spell our name like that,” Kurtis said.

Etsicitty’s Marine Corps brothers couldn’t pronounce his last name, so they took to calling him “Electricity,” Kurtis said.

From 1943 to 1945, Etsicitty served in the South Pacific as a Navajo Code Talker for a period of two years, two months and two days. He saw combat in the Battles of Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Guam, Saipan, and Iwo Jima.

He was a member of the second group of Navajo Code Talkers after the first 29, the all-Nativo Platoon 297. The 60 troops of Platoon 297 were trained at Camp Pendleton before getting shipped off to war.

Kurtis said his father lied about his age to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps and was actually 16 when he enlisted. Etsicitty volunteered because he wanted to protect the Navajo Nation from foreign invasion and prevent them from “taking away Navajo heritage.”

Etsicitty talked to Kurtis about how he and the other Code Talkers would crave mutton.

“My dad said somebody would run over the hill to a village and steal a sheep. They would bring it back and then butcher it. They even made a sweat lodge out there and had a sweat,” Kurtis said.

Etsicitty was a devout Catholic and often said the only reason why he was able to return home safely was because of prayer.

“In addition to his service as a Navajo Code Talker, Etsicitty was rodeo announcer for more than 50 years. His vision was always for the future of the Navajo people.

“He’d get all choked up when he saw kids playing basketball or rodeoing. He’d say, ‘This is what we fought for – liberty,’” Kurtis said.

An account has been setup for the family for funeral expenses under the name Kurtis Etsicitty at Wells Fargo Bank, just reference account number 1044509014.
The Navajo Nation

Proclamation

In honor and recognition of the late Navajo Code Talker PFC Kee Etsicitty

Whereas, The Navajo Nation is greatly saddened by the loss of the late Kee Etsicitty, who served in the United States Marine Corps; and

Whereas, The late Kee Etsicitty was a Navajo Code Talker who served the United States of America, the Navajo Nation, and U.S. Marine Corps with courage, honor and distinction; serving from 1943 to 1945, when he was honorably discharged; and

Whereas, The late Kee Etsicitty served as a Navajo Code Talker and was stationed in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater from 1943 to 1945, fighting in the Battles of Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Guam, Saipan, and Iwo Jima; and

Whereas, The late Kee Etsicitty also was a Navajo Code Talker who was awarded the Good Conduct Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign and the Congressional Silver Medal; and

Whereas, The Navajo Nation unites and offers prayers for his family and friends during this time of grief;

Now, therefore, I, Russell Begaye, President of the Navajo Nation, do hereby proclaim that all Navajo Nation flags shall be flown at half-staff in honor of the late Navajo Code Talker Private First Class Kee Etsicitty, from sunrise on July 22 to sunset on July 25, 2015.

Ordered this 22nd day of July 2015

Russell Begaye, President

The Navajo Nation
The referendum has been decided.

Now that the referendum on the Navajo fluency requirements for the presidency of the Navajo Nation has been settled, President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez said it is time to move forward and begin the healing process for the Navajo people.

“We appreciate the fact that the people were given the opportunity to vote, even though we were disappointed with the number of people that came out to vote,” President Begaye said.

“In the future, we recommend that referendums be voted on during the general election so we don’t spend more money than we need to.”

Vice President Nez said, “We believe that the Navajo people know the importance and the value of the Navajo language as the foundation of our Navajo Nation.”

The administration has said that as the Navajo Nation moves into the future, there is going to be more referendums put before the people to decide on critical issues like the language debate.

“Our stance was to encourage the people to participate in the voting process and we support the voice of the people,” President Begaye said.

He said the language must be protected to ensure that it is spoken for centuries to come and that it doesn’t become extinct like it has among some tribes.

“As the Nation advances, now, more than ever, there will be a revitalization of the Navajo language in our schools, places of work, and most importantly, in our homes,” said Vice President Nez.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez thank the Navajo people for voting on this important referendum. The fact that both sides from the referendum recognize that the Navajo language is vital to our future is a victory for the Navajo people.

“We appreciate the vote that took place and we’re ready to move forward as a nation,” said President Begaye. “We need to work together, support each other and encourage one another because we are one people, one nation.”
The 23rd Navajo Nation Council unanimously confirmed three cabinet members of the Begaye-Nez administration on July 23. Pictured here are Ethel Branch, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Speaker LoRenzo Bates and Jackson Borssy. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—On July 23, the 23rd Navajo Nation Council confirmed three cabinet members of the Begaye-Nez administration.

The tribal council confirmed Jackson Brossy, Ethel Branch and Jesse Delmar as executive directors of their respective divisions.

“We appreciate the members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council for confirming three of our appointments to Begaye-Nez Cabinet,” said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye.

“Their education, experience and knowledge in their fields of study will be an asset as we execute the four pillars of our administration,” he added.

Vice President Jonathan Nez was in attendance at the council chamber for the confirmations and praised the working relationship between the Executive and Legislative branches.

“Thank you for confirming our appointees. They can now advance and move our divisions toward the priorities we agreed upon for the Navajo Nation,” Vice President Nez said.

He said there are going to be more executive directors to report before the Navajo Nation Council for confirmation very soon.

“We look forward to similar approval for our next group of directors,” Vice President Nez said.

Brossy was confirmed as executive director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office after Legislation No. 0223-15 passed by a vote of 20-0. Honorable Speaker Lorenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T’iistsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) sponsored the bill.

Brossy is a graduate of Harvard University, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in economics, statistics and public policy.

Originally from Red Mesa, Ariz., Brossy is no stranger to Capitol Hill and has plenty of diplomatic connections after serving as a Native American policy advocate and senior associate with Upper Mohawk, Inc. He also worked for the National Congress of American Indians in Washington, D.C.

Branch was confirmed as Navajo Nation Attorney General for the Department of Justice when Legislation No. 0225-15 was passed by a vote of 19-0. Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hard Rock, Pinon, Whippoorwill) was the sponsor.

Branch is a graduate of Harvard Law School with transactional and litigation experience. She also earned her master’s degree in public policy and bachelor’s degree from Harvard.

Born in Tuba City, Ariz., Branch grew up nearby in Leupp on her family’s ranch. She is licensed to practice law on the Navajo Nation, Arizona, Oregon and Washington.

Delmar was confirmed as executive director of the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety after Legislation No. 0227-15 passed by a vote of 16-0. Delegate Otto Tso (Tónaneesdizí) sponsored the legislation.

Delmar is a graduate of Northern Arizona University, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in criminal justice administration with a minor in psychology. He also graduated from the Federal Law Enforcement Academy and FBI National Academy.

Most recently, he served as chief of police for the Ft. McDowell Yavapai Nation. He was also an executive fellow with the FBI Executive Fellowship Program in Washington, D.C. Additionally he served as vice president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and as president of the Indian Country Intelligence of Arizona.

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“‘Their education, experience and knowledge in their fields of study will be an asset as we execute the four pillars of our administration.’
Honor the legacy of Navajo Code Talker Kee Etsicitty and live courageously

GALLUP, N.M.—The bells at Sacred Heart Cathedral Church tolled on the morning of July 24 to honor the life of Navajo Code Talker Kee Etsicitty.

His body was transported to the church for the memorial services and escorted by the members of the Navajo-Hopi Honor Riders, the non-profit organization that volunteered to repair the roof of Etsicitty’s home last October.

A member of the 3rd Marines, 7th Division, Etsicitty saw combat in the Battles of Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Guam, Saipan and Iwo Jima.

Paying respect to a hero

Before he was laid to rest, Etsicitty’s brothers came out to honor him. Navajo Code Talkers Thomas H. Begay, Peter MacDonald, Alfred Neuman and Bill Toledo were in attendance.

The honor guards from the U.S. Marine Corps and the Ira H. Hayes American Legion Post 84 from Sacaton, Ariz. were also on hand to honor Etsicitty.

A number of dignitaries came out to pay their respects, including Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye, Sen. Carlyle Begay (D-Ariz.), and Navajo Nation Council Delegates Seth Damon, Otto Tso and Leonard Tsosie.

Faithful Catholic, honorable American

According to Etsicitty’s son, Kurtis, his father was a devout Catholic and said he wanted his funeral services to be held at Cathedral Church. His wish was granted as hundreds filled
the massive church located atop a hill in downtown Gallup.

Before the services began, the U.S. Marines performed the flag folding ceremony in front of the church and presented the folded flag to Kurtis.

Etsicitty was only 16 when he enlisted, a responsibility he shouldered with the resolve to protect the Navajo Nation homeland from foreign invasion.

Kurtis said his father told him his decision to enlist was to prevent (foreigners) from taking away Navajo heritage.

Appreciation and respect

President Begaye was given an opportunity to speak and began by thanking the U.S. Marines, the Honor Riders and the American Legion members that were in attendance.

However, it was the Navajo Code Talkers in the audience that commanded his attention and respect.

“Chairman Peter MacDonald, Thomas H. Begay, Alfred Neuman and Bill Toledo, it is an honor and a privilege to have these Code Talkers in our midst,” said President Begaye.

Speaking in Navajo, he gave appreciation to the children and grandchildren of Etsicitty and said the Navajo Nation was grateful for his courageous service, as evidenced by the proclamation that was issued to have flags across the Nation flown at half-staff.

He read the proclamation in its entirety.

Live courageously

“I can’t imagine being the son or daughter of a Navajo Code Talker. To know that your father kept within himself a guarded secret of the U.S. military,” President Begaye said. “These national heroes, like Kee Etsicitty, did not fight with guns and bullets and missiles.

“(They fought with) something more powerful and sacred, the Navajo language, given to our people by the great Creator,” he added.

The world is now finally learning of the secret that was protected all these years, he said, from the President of the United States to Congress to tribal nations and nations around the world.

“Learn your language, hold it sacred and protect it,” President Begaye said.

He said the world was saved from itself by the beautiful sound of our Navajo people, Dine’ bizaa’d. Live the legacy of Kee Etsicitty and do things courageously, he said.

“When the battle was raging, when the USS Arizona was at the bottom of the Pacific in the Hawaiian Islands, when the Jews were being incinerated in Europe, Kee Etsicitty signed up (for military service) and shipped out courageously,” said President Begaye.

Navajo Nation flag

“I present the flag of the Navajo Nation with the four directions, the Four Sacred Mountains, the four cycles of life. That’s why our flag is always folded with corners showing,” President Begaye said.

He presented the flag and the signed proclamation to Kurtis and the Etsicitty family.

The Navajo Nation is grateful for the courage and sacrifice Kee Etsicitty displayed as a Navajo Code Talker.

“Live the legacy of Kee Etsicitty by not being afraid of the unknown. Don’t be afraid to step out like he did and embrace the challenges,” President Begaye said.

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Look at the bigger picture.

That was the message Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye told federal officials from the U.S. Department of Education and Bureau of Indian Education recently during their visit to Window Rock.

President Begaye said a holistic approach is needed to solve the educational challenges facing students on the Navajo Nation, rather than focusing only on meeting school standards.

“When our Navajo people signed the Treaty of 1868, this is what those leaders were looking at,” President Begaye said. “That education is about meeting the basic needs of students, teachers and communities.”

During the July 22 meeting, President Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez were joined by the Dine’ Department of Education to discuss the state of the tribal education system.

President Begaye said looking at the bigger picture means taking into consideration the housing situation on the Nation, which affects both teachers and students.

Teachers leave the Nation, often when they meet their commitment to repay federal loans, or when they are unable to find adequate housing. For students, they face housing conditions such as the lack of electricity.

“Our students ability to learn is hampered. One high school student recently told us that he had to study every night with a flashlight,” President Begaye said. “Now, for the first time, he and his siblings can flip on a light and study.

“You have to look at that and ask yourself, ‘What’s the learning environment at the house?’” NAHASDA has opened the door to this kind of thinking,” he added.

The Native American Housing and Self Determination Act was created to construct safe and sanitary housing for tribal nations and their members.

However, as the years progressed, the U.S. Housing and Urban Development
realized unique situations that exist on reservations, which affect the housing effort.

These included the need for infrastructure such as electricity, water and roads. Eventually, other opportunities emerged that allowed NAHASDA funding to be utilized for community centers.

“They invest in more than just housing, now they are building communities. They recently completed a youth center in Shiprock with HUD funding,” President Begaye said.

Before bringing the 32 BIE schools under the Navajo Nation, President Begaye said the tribe must first review the function of the school boards at those schools.

He said the creation of school districts would allow larger schools to assist the smaller schools.

President Begaye said, “We need to focus on the children, rather than who controls the dollars and who has the authority.”

“I am more open to the district approach, where you have schools helping each other. Rather than 66 school boards, you wind up with five to ten school boards that oversee the schools, so we can better manage them,” said President Begaye.

The district approach can also be the framework for establishing Saturday classes, tutoring, and math schools. This effort could provide other opportunities such as bringing in college professors and providing internships for college students to help the schools.

“That can be better managed by a district, than by a single school board at a small community trying to do those things,” President Begaye said.

Vice President Nez said the recent referendum election shed light on the Navajo language and brought it to the forefront of Navajo consciousness.

“There’s going to be a lot more people wanting to learn Navajo and we need to prepare for that. That was the positive thing that came out of this election, people are all in agreement that the Navajo language is vital for our future,” he said.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez challenged Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey to provide more resources for the instruction of Navajo language at public schools.

“The Navajo Nation, as a sovereign nation, should be in the drivers seat for all our young people’s education.” Vice President Nez said. “The Bureau of Education is tasked here to provide technical assistance and partnership.”

Promoting a healthy lifestyle at the tribal schools and stepping away from junk food being served to students is another consideration, he said.

“Students learn better when they’re healthy and when they eat well,” Vice President Nez said.

President Begaye said the goal of their administration is for the Navajo Nation to control its own schools, including the public schools located on Navajo.

He reported that schools with Navajo teachers and a majority leadership of Navajo school board members are outperforming other schools in surrounding communities like Farmington, Aztec and Albuquerque.

“We know that our students are smart and that they can achieve at a very high level,” said President Begaye.

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Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation Proclamation

Vice President Nez joined the runners and participated in the event since the start at White Rock, N.M. on Saturday. He invites the general public to join the run.

Many of the runners are running for a cause, whether it is for child abuse, overcoming health issues, to running for the families and communities. Vice President Nez said he is running for suicide awareness, a taboo Navajo subject that must be addressed to stop the rash of suicides that have occurred across the Nation.

“Our administration is making a stand for healthy living and an active lifestyle. Join us in Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation,” said Vice President Nez.

President Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez issued a proclamation in honor and recognition of the relay run on July 25. The relay run is scheduled from July 25 to August 1, 2015.

The route for the 2015 Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation is a distance of 435 miles and will circle the Navajo Nation, reaching the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah.

According to Eddie Scott Yazzie, public information officer for NNSDP, since 2011, the run focused on reaching the 110 chapters of the Navajo Nation to promote healthy living, diet and exercise to combat diabetes and obesity on the Nation.

“In five years, 95 percent of the chapters have been reached during the relay run,” Yazzie said.

This year, the run will circle through 28 Navajo communities before its conclusion. In previous years, the relay run was from the four cardinal directions of the Navajo Nation.

The communities for this year’s run include White Rock, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Mexican Springs, Twin Lakes, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh, Oak Springs, Pine Springs, Wide Ruins, Greasewood, Steamboat, Cameron, Tuba City, Tuba City, Tsa’ Bi Kin, Naatsis’áán, Dennehotso, Mexican Water, Tse’ Nos Pos, Beclabito, Gads’iiahi, Shiprock, Hogback, San Juan, Nenahnezad, Upper Fruitland and Lake Valley.

President Begaye issued a memorandum on July 27 to the divisions within the Executive Branch to allow tribal employees anywhere from one to four hours off from work to participate in the relay run.

The staff of the NNSDP will track involvement through a form developed to include the date, time and location of the run for participating employees. All runners receive a t-shirt commemorating the relay run for their participation.

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PROCLAIMED THIS 25TH DAY OF JULY 2015
PROVO—The Navajo Nation was designated as the host tribe for the 10th Annual Utah Governor’s Native American Summit today at Utah Valley University.

President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez were in attendance, as more than 600 people, many of them from tribes residing in Utah, gathered for the summit.

Tribal legislators from the 23rd Navajo Nation Council were also in attendance, including Speaker LoRenzo Bates, Davis Filfred, Tom Chee, Nate Brown and Kee Allen Begay.

“Hózhó Speaks – Love, Peace, Beauty and Harmony” was the theme of the summit, which was created by then Lt. Gov. Gary R. Herbert in 2005 and was initially attended by 60 people.

Today, that modest number has increased by tenfold, as tribal leaders, councilmen, native youth and others attended the event. The Utah Division of Indian Affairs and the Navajo Nation hosted the event.

Gov. Herbert and Lt. Gov. Spencer J. Cox expressed appreciation for the tribes in attendance and said their goal was to work with tribes in Utah.

Ready to work hand-in-hand

President Begaye said, “Some of the issues we’re going to be discussing today, Hózhó for our people, is all about economic development, infrastructure and all of the things we need. Like school bus routes and servicing all of our veterans.”

He said the Navajo Nation is awaiting the approval of the Utah Public Service Commission for the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority’s purchase of the Rocky Mountain Power Company. “With their approval, we will be able to provide electricity
to over 300 of our Navajo homes and families on the Utah side. We’re looking forward to that, Governor Herbert,” said President Begaye.

**Navajo Nation water rights**

President Begaye commended the state of Utah for demonstrating to other states across the country that water rights with tribal nations can be negotiated at the table without going to court and the subsequent years of litigation.

“I was really amazed that the governor and legislators here in the state came up with the proclamation, the resolution, where they agreed they would help the Navajo Nation with their water settlement,” he said.

The resolution states that Navajo people will be provided drinking water.

“That is Hózhó,” President Begaye said.

**Awakening of a New Dawn**

Vice President Jonathan Nez said it is truly the awakening of a new dawn on the Navajo Nation. He thanked the governor and lieutenant governor for their advocacy on behalf of native tribes in the state.

“I took time out from a run called Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation. It’s over 500 miles, the run, throughout the Navajo Nation,” Vice President Nez said. “We have always advocated for healthy living, eating right and taking care of yourself.

“So, our message to the young people in the audience, take care of yourself, stay active and be healthy,” he added.

Before leaving the stage, Vice President Nez said the creation of a cabinet level Indian Department in the state is needed. His suggestion drew applause from the crowd.

“We look forward to our continued partnership,” said Vice President Nez.

**Hózhó and the future**

“When talking about Hózhó, we talk about when we signed the Treaty of 1868. It was nation to nation. That was how we were recognized for being a treaty tribe,” said President Begaye.

He said the Navajo Nation must deal with three different policies and procedures when it comes to state services provided by federal funds.

“We ask that the state of Utah support that the Navajo Nation. We want to assume total control, direct funding from the federal government,” President Begaye said. “Navajo Nation is very sophisticated, we have the infrastructure, the capacity to handle those funds.

“The Navajo Nation stands ready to work hand-in-hand with the Office of the Governor to improve the lives of our people. Thank you,” he added.

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Chinle woman found in aftermath of flood, Navajo Police end search

CHINLE, Ariz.—A person who was swept away during flooding in Chinle on August 2 was found.

Jesse Delmar, executive director of Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, said a female individual was swept away while inside her vehicle during flash flooding last night. The body was recovered earlier today.

“The female individual was recovered. We are concluding the search and rescue,” Delmar said. “Please be safe out there, don’t attempt to cross flooded areas.

He thanked division personnel, Arizona Department of Public Safety and community members who helped in the rescue and recovery efforts.

The helicopter crew from ADPS evacuated nine people from Canyon de Chelly, in addition to providing air support for the search and rescue.

More than two inches of hailstorm was reported. Canyon de Chelly and the main community were flooded, including schools and several public buildings.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye urged the public to be careful when traveling through flooded areas.

“The Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety is working with other resources to ensure Navajo residents are safe in the aftermath of the storm,” said President Begaye.

He added, “The nation is being blessed with a lot of moisture, but that also comes with flash floods. The public needs to respect Mother Nature and not take any chances, especially with floods.

Vice President Nez said, “There is still rain in the forecast. Be careful out there, don’t cross flooded washes.”

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 3, 2015

Planning Underway for Grand Daddy of Tribal Fairs

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – A host of coordinators are quietly working behind the scenes to produce the grand daddy of all tribal affairs….the Navajo Nation Fair, which will be held on September 6-13th here in the capital of the Navajo Nation.

And they are looking at launching new events and activities to make the 69th Annual Navajo Nation Fair a cultural celebration to remember.

Navajo Nation Fair Production Director Martin L. Begaye said, “Planning the Navajo Nation Fair takes months of preparation by many different individuals. It takes a dedicated team to produce a cultural celebration of this magnitude.”

The theme for the 69th Annual Navajo Nation Fair is “Nihima Nahasdzaan baa’ ahayago naasgoo bee hiniin a doo,” which means “Protecting Mother Earth for Future Generations.”

Begaye noted, “We are promoting the concept of protecting Mother Earth and we all need to do our part as individuals to protect our environment. We are doing this for the future generation.”
In fact, Begaye said the grand marshal for the Navajo Nation Fair parade is a strong advocate for protecting our environment and educates about climate change – Dr. Karletta Chief.

“The Navajo Nation Fair is the Largest American Indian Fair in North America and is a great venue to showcase the many talents of the Navajo people,” Begaye explained. “Many people from all walks of life look forward to participate in or attend the Navajo Nation Fair. It is definitely an event for visitors from throughout the world to also attend. The Navajo Nation Fair is a great way to experience the unique beauty of the Navajo people.”

The Navajo Nation Fair will kick off with CBR Bull Riding, which will be held on Sunday, September 6th at the Navajo Nation Fairgrounds beginning at 8 p.m. Advance tickets are $30 and $35 the day of the event, which includes a concert by Country Music artist Aaron Watson immediately after the CBR Bull Riding performance. Advance tickets will be sold up to 5 p.m. Saturday, September 5th. Children six and under will be free.

Mark your calendar for September 11th if you’re a country music fan. Popular Country Artist Clay Walker will take center stage on Friday, September 11th at the Navajo Nation Fairgrounds beginning at 9 p.m. The concert will be held after the 7 p.m. Indian rodeo performance. Advance tickets will be $30 and $35 the day of the show – the ticket price includes the Indian rodeo. It will be $15 for children six to 12-years-old. Advance tickets will be sold up until September 7th.
There will be four Indian rodeo performances beginning Thursday, September 10\textsuperscript{th} through September 13\textsuperscript{th}. It will cost $15 for adults to attend the Indian rodeo on September 10\textsuperscript{th} and on September 12\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th}. However, it will cost $30 to attend the Indian rodeo on Friday, September 11\textsuperscript{th} because it will include a Clay Walker Concert, which will be held immediately after the 7 p.m. Indian rodeo.

Cultural Showcase….that’s the name of the Night Performance, which will be held on Saturday, September 12\textsuperscript{th} from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tickets to attend the Cultural Showcase will be $8 for adults – there will be no advance tickets. Attendees at the Cultural Showcase will also have an opportunity to win $1,000 – their entrance tickets will be entered for a drawing at the end of the cultural showcase.

General admission to attend the Navajo Nation Fair will be $5 for adults and $3 for children 12-years and up and $3 for senior citizens 65 years and older. Designated parking will be $5 and no vehicle passes will be sold. Overnight camping will be $20.

Rodeo fans will have a chance to win $500, $1,000 and $1,500, which will be held during the Indian rodeo performances – winners must be present at the Indian rodeo in order to win.
Something new this year will be an opportunity to win $10,000. Tickets for a mega beeso cash raffle will be $20 a chance and purchasers of this mega cash raffle do not have to present to win. Tickets will be on sale at the Navajo Nation Special Events Office in Gorman Hall on the Navajo Nation Fairgrounds beginning August 17th.

Begaye noted, “We have had a cash raffle for the past couple of years and it has created a lot of excitement so it is an activity that will continue. In fact, we want to make it even more exciting for everyone, which is why we want to add a $10,000 cash raffle.”

Individuals interested in participating in the Navajo Nation Fair parade can download the entry form from the Navajo Nation Fair website or pick up an entry form at the Navajo Nation Special Events Office at the Navajo Nation Fairgrounds. General entries are $325 and $1,500 for political entries.

Also new this year, cowboys and cowgirls will no longer be able to enter the rodeo as a walk-in. Entry forms can be downloaded on the Navajo Nation Fair website. Entries will close on Friday, August 14, 2015. Contestants must mail in their entries to: Navajo Nation Special Events Section, P.O. Box 2370, Window Rock, Arizona 86515. The deadline to enter the rodeo is Friday, August 14, 2015.
For more information about the Navajo Nation Fair events, contact the Navajo Nation Fair Special Events staff at (928) 871-7833 or 6647 or via their website at www.navajonationfair.com
President Begaye issues statement regarding U.S. EPA Clean Power Plan ruling

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—
On Aug. 3, 2015, the U.S. EPA released its final Clean Power Plan. This final rule would cut carbon dioxide emissions at a national level by 32 percent from 2005 levels. This would be achieved by 2030.

Included in the plan are carbon reductions for Indian Country, for Indian nations with existing power plants, like the Navajo Nation. The final rule affects both Navajo Generating Station and Four Corners Power Plant.

There are only two other power plants on tribal lands that are also impacted.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye is extremely interested in any federal regulation that impacts these two power plants because of their importance to the tribal economy, and the Navajo families who earn their living working at these power plants.

“The final Clean Power Plan is voluminous and complex. The Navajo Nation is currently reviewing the final rule and a thorough review will take some time,” said President Begaye.

Transitioning to a more balanced energy portfolio, including renewable energy, will not happen overnight. The coal-strengthened economy of the Navajo Nation includes the two power plants and associated mines in place as the economic lifeline of the Navajo people. The economic considerations are paramount, especially when considering the Navajo Nation’s 52 percent unemployment rate, when the national average is 5.8 percent.

In addition to the financial benefits, the skilled jobs at NGS and FCPP must also be taken into account. These jobs are generally high-skilled, high-paying jobs with benefits including health insurance and retirement options.

“These jobs are extremely difficult to obtain on the nation and are almost irreplaceable. Any negative impacts on the power plants and mines will have a severe and direct effect on the tribal economy,” said President Begaye.

The potential end result is a significant decrease in the general funds, which would weaken government services to the Navajo people. Tribal sovereignty is also weakened because the nation will be dependent upon the federal government for additional funding.

An official statement from the Navajo Nation that fully addresses the Clean Power Plan is forthcoming after a thorough review of the rule by Navajo EPA and Department of Justice.

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President Begaye elected vice president for Coalition of Large Tribes

ALBUQUERQUE—The Coalition of Large Tribes, or COLT, convened in Albuquerque on August 4 at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center.

Comprised of members from large Indian tribes throughout Indian Country, the coalition serves as an advocacy group for issues facing American Indian tribes with land bases exceeding 100,000 acres.

These tribes include the Navajo Nation, Crow Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Colville Confederated Tribes, Spokane Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Ceyenne River Sioux Tribe and others.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye was elected as COLT Vice President on Tuesday afternoon.

“I am very excited with the opportunity to serve as vice president for COLT,” said President Begaye. “I appreciate the opportunity to work with other large land base tribes to find solutions for issues from our communities.

“From transportation to law enforcement to housing to economic development, larger tribes have unique challenges that stem from geographic distances,” he added.

President Begaye is also attending the Tribal Interior Budget Council meeting this week in Albuquerque, hosted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Vice President Jonathan Nez was also elected as co-chairman of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry Tribal Advisory Committee.

He was elected during the tribal consultation session in Spokane, Wash. on August 4.

The advisory committee establishes policies and guidelines for tribal consultation, focusing exclusively on tribal sovereignty and government-to-government relations.

“It is a privilege and an honor to serve in this capacity. I look forward to working with my colleagues from across Indian Country on behalf of our respective nations,” Vice President Nez said.

The Navajo Nation provided testimony and recommendations on the budget priorities and formulation process. Vice President Nez advocated for direct funding, overall disease prevention and the wellness of Navajo citizens.

Tribal leadership from around Indian Country respect the newly elected top two leaders of the Navajo Nation and want to work with them nationally.
President Begaye invites Gov. Ducey, Sen. McCain to Navajo Code Talker Day

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Honor the legacy and heroism of the Navajo Code Talkers.
That was the message from Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye to Arizona Governor Doug Ducey and Senator John McCain on Aug. 4, 2015.

President Begaye invited Gov. Ducey and Sen. McCain to Window Rock on Aug. 14 for Navajo Nation Code Talker Day at Window Rock Tribal Park, beginning at 10 a.m.

“Navajo Code Talker Day was initially proclaimed by President Ronald Reagan on July 14, 1982. Since 2006, Navajo Code Talkers Day has been celebrated by the living Navajo Code Talkers and their families in Window Rock, Arizona, Navajo Nation,” President Begaye stated in his letter.

The Navajo Nation Council, during the 2007 winter session, passed a resolution that designated Aug. 14 as a Navajo Nation Holiday. Since that time, Navajo Code Talkers and their families have been celebrating the holiday in Window Rock.

The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President is working with the Navajo Code Talker Day Planning Committee for various events scheduled for Aug. 14, including a parade that begins at 9 a.m. at the Navajo Nation Museum.

The main event will commence at 10 a.m. at the Window Rock Tribal Park.

“You will be given an opportunity to speak to our Navajo heroes and their families,” President Begaye stated.

A private meeting inside the Office of the President and Vice President is also planned later in the day for President Begaye, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Gov. Ducey and Sen. John McCain.

There will be a 5K run to serve as a fundraiser for the Navajo Code Talkers on Saturday. On Aug. 16, the Code Talker 29K run will also take place and will be a part of the Navajo Parks Race Series.

OPVP and Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Program are co-sponsoring the Code Talker 29K.

-30-
President Begay demands U.S. EPA release information on contaminants

immediate release of detailed information on the type of contaminants that is flowing into the river from the Gold King Mine,” President Begaye said. “This is an all too familiar story on the lax oversight responsibility of the U.S. government.

“It is unfortunate that we have to once again tell our people to stay away from the river due to the release of dangerous chemicals into our water,” he added.

Thomas McNamara, emergency management coordinator for La Plata County, said the sheriff ordered closure of the Animas River until further notice.

“The material has made it within about two to three hours of the Durango city limits. Much of the material is dropping out through the slow meanders in the valley. We are waiting for the results of the water tests by the EPA,” McNamara said.

He said that drinking water and the aquatic wildlife are the biggest concern right now.

Vice President Jonathan Nez said farmers along the San Juan River must be cautious.

“The contamination will probably hit Lake Powell soon. And to the community of Mexican Hat, which pumps drinking water from the river, please proceed with caution. We need to monitor the water to ensure it is potable,” Vice President Nez said.

President Begaye has put several tribal programs on standby to monitor the river for the safety of tribal members.

“We have alerted Navajo EPA, Department of Health, and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program to inform our people about the dangers of using contaminated water. Be on alert, take care of your children, pets and livestock near the river,” President Begaye said.

The community hotline for the La Plata County Emergency Operations Center is 970-382-8700.

-30-
PRECAUTIONARY NOTICE

Re: San Juan River

***

MINE WASTE HAS BEEN RELEASED FROM THE GOLD KING MINE (Colorado)
AND IS EXPECTED TO ENTER THE SAN JUAN RIVER

***

AS OF THE MORNING OF AUGUST 7, 2015 DRINKING WATER IS UNAFFECTED
FOR THE COMMUNITIES OF NENAHNEZAD, SAN JUAN, UPPER FRUITLAND,
HOGBACK, SHIPROCK, CUDEII AND BECLABITO.

***

SURFACE WATER SAMPLES ALONG THE RIVER ARE BEING COLLECTED.

UPDATES WILL BE PROVIDED ON AN ONGOING BASIS.

***

AS A PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE THE PUBLIC SHOULD TAKE THE FOLLOWING
STEPS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE:

- PREVENT LIVESTOCK FROM DRINKING FROM THE SAN JUAN RIVER
- AVOID DIVERTING WATER FROM THE SAN JUAN RIVER
- DO NOT ENTER THE RIVER

***

CONTACT NAVAJO NATION INCIDENT COMMAND CENTER
AT (505) 368-1081

Russell Begaye, President of the Navajo Nation

ISSUED: August 7, 2015
President Begaye approves NCDFI operating funds, alcohol tax

On Friday, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye signed two legislations before the close of business. One was for the Navajo Community Development Financial Institution and the other for the alcohol tax. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—With a stroke of his pen, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye approved Resolution No. CJY-35-15.

President Begaye approved $200,000 from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance for the Navajo Community Development Financial Institution.

“The NCDFI was created by the Navajo Nation Council to provide startup monies for Navajo owned businesses. I’m really privileged to be a part of the agreement,” said President Begaye.

The NCDFI is a corporation that provides funding and financial products on favorable terms to Navajo tribal members who have been underserved by mainstream institutions.

“NCDFI required operating funds to deploy capital into the market place. The funds were necessary to employ staff to distribute and administer loans to the community.

Three staff positions for chief executive officer, loan officer and administrative assistant will be funded by the $200,000.

In addition to personnel expenses, the funding will provide for travel, meetings, supplies, lease and rental, communications, utilities, repairs, maintenance, and contract services.

The Navajo Nation Council established the NCDFI on February 8, 2010, as memorialized through Resolution No. CJA-02-10.

NCDFI has capital to lend the community, but required operating funds to employ staff and administer loans to the community.

The goal of NCDFI is to be self-sustaining through acquisition of external funds and interest collection to continue operations after the expenditure of the initial operating funds.

Their mission is to provide capital to tribal members, individually owned businesses, tribally owned entities, local governance agents and chapters to further the economic development interests of the Navajo Nation and its people.

CEO Tom Gordon said, “This will go a long way toward helping Navajo small business people and eventually, we’re hoping to help chapters with capital development projects.”

President Begaye also signed Resolution No. CJY-31-15.

“Today, I signed a legislation that will raise taxes on alcohol consumed on the Navajo Nation,” President Begaye said.

He noted that alcohol consumption has been a huge problem for the tribe, especially with accidents and domestic violence related crimes.

The resolution amended Title 24 of the Navajo Nation Code (taxation), to include the alcohol tax.

The Navajo Tax Commission was charged with the administration of the tax. The office will retain a quarter percent of all gross sales for administrative expenses.

Alcohol beverages include distilled or rectified spirits, potable alcohol, brandy, whiskey, run, gin, aromatic bitters, blended or fermented beverages, beer, cider, wine and more.

The net revenue from the tax will be retained in the Navajo Division of Public Safety Alcohol Tax Fund and will be administered by the executive director of NDPS.

“The tax is going to be used by the Navajo Police to address the alcohol consumption,” President Begaye said.

NDPS will work with the Budget and Finance Committee for development of a fund management plan for the tax.

Until the rate is established, the rate will be 3.25 percent of all alcoholic beverages sold.

This alcohol tax will not be done in conjunction with the Junk Food Tax.

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NDPS will work with the Budget and Finance Committee for development of a fund management plan for the tax.

-30-
President Begaye announces U.S. EPA will be accountable for toxic spill

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye announced that he intends to take legal action against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the massive release of mine waste into the Animas River near Silverton, Colorado.

President Begaye made this announcement Saturday evening at the Shiprock Chapter House, which was packed to capacity with concerned community members living along the San Juan River.

“They are not going to get away with this,” President Begaye said of the destructive impact to natural habitats and ecosystems that traditional Navajo culture relies on.

He said the sludge has migrated into the San Juan River and is wending through the Navajo Nation. The plume is expected to reach Lake Powell by Wednesday.

President Begaye said, “The EPA was right in the middle of the disaster and we intend to make sure the Navajo Nation recovers every dollar it spends cleaning up this mess and every dollar it loses as a result of injuries to our precious Navajo natural resources.”

“I have instructed Navajo Nation Department of Justice to take immediate action against the EPA to the fullest extent of the law to protect Navajo families and resources,” he added.

“The EPA also needs to fund an independent lab onsite for real time monitoring of chemicals that may migrate into our irrigation or public water system,” said President Begaye.

Stories of struggle and survival

The chapter members were very appreciative that President Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez met with them in this moment of crisis as the plume of contamination approached their community.
The community shared their stories of struggle and survival along the river and underscored just how important farming and ranching is to their way of life and the economy of the region.

Shiprock is one of the largest farming communities on the Nation and it relies heavily upon irrigation from the San Juan to supply its many farms with water.

Navajo EPA will be conducting independent tests on the water and sediment quality and the Nation will utilize the data that is gathered for their own investigation on the contamination. The plume is estimated to be traveling at four miles per hour.

Harlan Cleveland of Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management said the contaminated water plume reached Farmington at 8:10 a.m. on August 8 and joined the San Juan River.

The plume is more than 80 miles long.

Several communities have stopped pumping water from the river and San Juan County has issued an emergency declaration and closed the river until further notice.

Rex Koontz, deputy general manager of Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, stated in a press release that NTUA water systems from Farmington to Beclabito are “fed from a different system isolated from the San Juan River.”

The Navajo Nation irrigation systems ceased pulling water from the river earlier this week.

**San Juan River is their Lifeline**

President Begaye said the U.S. EPA must provide affected tribal members water for drinking, irrigation, and livestock. In addition, hay and feed will also be needed for livestock.

“The San Juan River is their lifeline. We want full disclosure on what chemicals were released into the river. We understand cleanup will take decades. We demand cleanup of this water and the sediments of our affected rivers immediately,” President Begaye said.

Navajo farmers pumped water for their cattle, sheep and horses. Others fished the river and explored it recreationally.

“We’re not talking about a small population or area like Farmington. We have Navajo families affected from Upper Fruitland all the way to Lake Powell,” President Begaye said.

The Navajo Nation is larger than 10 U.S. states and is the size of West Virginia. The San Juan River courses through much of the northern region of the Nation and feeds into the Colorado River, which also traverses the vast tribal territory.

**Childhood memories of contamination**

During his childhood, President Begaye lived along the banks of the San Juan River. One year, he remembered the fish were dying and floating to the surface. He jumped into the river with others to investigate further.

“The river smelled for weeks. Fish were dying along the riverbank. No one ever told us what happened, how the fish died or if it would impact our health years later. To this day, nobody told us. That will not happen this time,” President Begaye said.

-30-
Gallup Intertribal Ceremonial Parade provides opportunity to hear Navajo concerns

GALLUP, N.M.—For Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez, walking the Gallup Ceremonial parade route was an opportunity to stay connected with the Navajo people.

Along the route, the President and Vice President shook hands with the crowd while listening to concerns brought forth by the people.

One pillar of the Begaye-Nez administration is to enhance services for Nation Nation veterans. President Begaye said many veterans spoke with him about housing.

“Housing for our veterans is a big request. It’s a consistent concern,” he said. “As a member of the 22nd Council, we did set aside monies to build 75 houses a year. We are going to be aggressive in making sure those houses are built.”

President Begaye said veteran’s health services were a concern as well.

“Veterans aren’t getting the services they deserve. We are going to try and bring services for them by declaring the Navajo Nation a veteran’s service center. Then they can have their own VA.”

The President and Vice President stopped to speak with local radio stations that were broadcasting live from the Ceremonial parade. They also fielded questions from journalists in brief intervals.

Vice President Nez said he heard concerns regarding streamlining the regulations within many Navajo Nation policies.

“Some people mentioned how tedious our home site leasing process is,” he said. “People want homes on the Navajo Nation but our internal process takes a long time.”

Vice President Nez said there needs to be a reevaluation of some of those policies regarding home site leasing.

“People want to build their own homes and they have the resources to do it. Many are just waiting on a home site lease.”

Other concerns included education and the need for more scholarship resources for Navajo college students.

This year’s 94th Annual Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial hosted a night parade, night performances, an INFR Tour Rodeo and a queen pageant among many other events.

Parade attendees were treated to performances by the Fernando Cellicion Traditional Zuni Dancers, The White Mountain Apache Dance Group, the Azteca Dance Group and the Zuni Olla Maidens.

Among the dignitaries and representatives in the Ceremonial parade were New Mexico District 3 Senator John Pinto (D-N.M.) and Navajo Code Talker and Silver Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Thomas H. Begay.

-30-
Navajo Head Start celebrating 50th Anniversary with banquet

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Head Start is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year and will be celebrating during a banquet for its employees scheduled on Wednesday, August 12, 2015, during their School Readiness Summit in Albuquerque, N.M.

The banquet will be attended by Navajo Head Start (NHS) employees, former directors, elected tribal leaders and elected state leaders.

The program was established in 1965 and has benefited the Navajo People with early childhood educational services since. In 1965, NHS opened its doors after being created as part of a much-larger project launched by the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). Then-U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson announced “Project Head Start” in 1964 as an effort to fight poverty in the U.S.

Keynote speaker will be Peter MacDonald Sr., former director of the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity (ONEO) and former chairman of the Navajo Nation. MacDonald is considered the founder of Navajo Head Start.

**WHAT:** Navajo Head Start’s 50th Anniversary Banquet for employees

**WHEN:** 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Wednesday, August 12, 2015

**WHERE:** Crown Plaza Hotel Ball Room, Albuquerque, N.M.

If you plan to attend, please contact Joshua Butler at 928-380-2158.

###

Navajo Head Start is the largest federally-funded grant program in the country. Head Start and Early Head Start services are provided within the geographical area of the Navajo Nation, an area approximately the size of West Virginia that spans more than 27,000-square-miles across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Central Administration offices are located in Window Rock, AZ, capital of the Navajo Nation.
Declaration for State of Emergency

WHEREAS on August 5, 2015 the United States Environmental Protection Agency negligently caused a release of contaminants from the suspended Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado into the Animas River.

WHEREAS on August 8, 2015, the contaminants entered into the San Juan River, south of Farmington and entered into the water system of the Navajo Nation;

WHEREAS the toxic spill will cause a long-lasting and unknown impact to the Navajo Nation’s water system and wells near the San Juan River to Lake Powell and impacting several surrounding Chapters on the Navajo Nation; and

WHEREAS the contaminants release by the mine are toxic, contaminating our water and is causing unknown health risks to our people, and water used by the Navajo people for irrigation, livestock and free roaming animals, disturbing the Navajo way of life.

NOW THEREFORE, I RUSSELL BEGAYE President of the Navajo Nation issue this Executive Order, effective immediately, to respond to the spill caused by the U.S.E.P.A. at the Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

1. The Navajo Nation Divisions specifically the Navajo Environmental Protection Agency, Division of Natural Resources, Division of Public Safety, Emergency Management Department, Office of Attorney General and Department of Health shall coordinate efforts and resources to address the impact to the Navajo Nation by the Gold King Mine spill.

2. The Navajo Nation President may require and direct other Navajo Nation Divisions to assist in these efforts, as needed

IN WITNESS THEREOF, this date August 8, 2015:

Russell Begaye, President

Jonathan Nez, Vice-President

ATTEST:

Ethel Branch, Attorney General
RESOLUTION OF THE
COMMISSION ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

DECLARING A STATE OF EMERGENCY DUE TO AN UNEXPECTED RELEASE OF
CONTAMINATED WASTEWATER FROM THE GOLD KING MINE NEAR SILVERTON,
COLORADO

WHEREAS:

1. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C., §§ 881 and 883 (A) (C), the Navajo Nation Council established the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management to coordinate emergency and disaster relief service by Navajo Nation and non-tribal entities in conjunction with the Department of Emergency Management; and to recommend to the Navajo Nation Council legislation or other appropriate activity regarding natural and man-made emergencies; and

2. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C., § 884 (B) (1), the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management is responsible for declaring a state of emergency with the concurrence of the President of the Navajo Nation; and

3. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C., § 884 (B) (2), the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management will assist in seeking assistance from federal, state, and other tribal governments, local and private agencies to address emergency and disaster related situations; and

4. On August 5, 2015, an unexpected release of contaminants occurred from the Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado and entered the Animas River; and

5. Since August 5, 2015, the contaminants have entered into the San Juan River and the plume of contaminants continues to travel towards the Navajo Nation; and

6. The contaminants are comprised of several potentially harmful chemicals, such as heavy metals, with unknown risks to human health, environment and terrestrial wildlife; and

7. The contaminants from the release of mine wastewater has further caused risks to free roaming livestock, wildlife, irrigation practices and other uses by the Navajo people; and

8. The duration of future impacts to the Navajo Nation are still not fully known and as a result, there is a continued need for an increased level of multi-agency efforts to resolve all issues related to this release; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management declares a State of Emergency due to an Unexpected Release of Contaminated Wastewater from the Gold King Mine Near Silverton, Colorado; and
2. The Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management finds it is necessary for appropriate Navajo Nation entities to continue and/or immediately begin and maintain coordination and collaboration with relevant agencies, e.g., Federal, State, Counties, and Municipalities, for use of resources to meet the needs of the Navajo Nation public. This includes, but not limited to, resources of personnel, equipment, monetary funding, and other resources as may be required to protect natural, cultural, historical natural resources as well as substantial human health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the Navajo Nation; and

3. The Navajo Nation shall activate available emergency resources such as community education, assistance, and other means as determined fit and feasible to restore and sustain vital community infrastructure.

CERTIFICATION

We hereby certify that the foregoing declaration was duly considered by the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management at duly called meeting in Tse Bonito, Navajo Nation, New Mexico, at which a quorum was present that the same was passed by a vote of 4 in favor and 0 opposed and 0 abstained, this 9th day of August 2015.

Herman Shorty, Chairperson
Commission on Emergency Management
Navajo Nation

Motion: Dicky Bain
Second: Eugenia Quintana

CONCURRENCE:

Russell Begaye, President
THE NAVAJO NATION

Jonathan Nez, Vice President
THE NAVAJO NATION
EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 02-2015

ESTABLISHMENT AND EXECUTION OF OPERATION TÓ ŁITSO
(“YELLOW WATER”)

THE NAVAJO NATION
EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 02-2015

August 11, 2015

WHEREAS:

1. The President of the Navajo Nation serves as the Chief Executive Officer for the Executive Branch of the Navajo Nation government with full authority to conduct, supervise, and coordinate personnel and programs of the Navajo Nation. 2 N.N.C. 1005 (A).

2. The President shall have the enumerated power to issue an executive order for the purpose of interpreting, implementing or giving administrative effect to the statutes of the Navajo Nation in the manner set forth in such statutes. 2 N.N.C. 1005 (C)(14).

3. An executive order shall have the force of law upon receipt. Id.

4. On August 5, 2015, the United States Environmental Protection Agency caused the spill of the Gold King Mine, which released over 3 million gallons of toxic waste into the Cement Creek. The contaminants have flowed into the Animas River and have now entered the San Juan River and will soon flow into the Colorado River.

5. The scope of contaminants in the Nation’s waters remain unknown, but U.S. EPA has warned counties, cities, municipalities and the Navajo Nation to stay away from the water and to stop any diversion of the San Juan River.

6. On August 8, 2015, the Navajo Nation President and Vice-President issued an Executive Order to Declare a State of Emergency to immediately pool all the resources of the Navajo Nation Divisions to begin preparing for the impact to the Navajo Nation and to address the immediate needs of the Navajo people.

7. The sludge has now entered the waters of the Navajo Nation, and the Navajo people along the San Juan River now have uncertain access to clean water to drink, water for their sheep and cattle and water to irrigate their fields. The Nation’s public water reserve is quickly depleting and our people will no longer have access to water within a few weeks. The many Navajo people who live along the river no longer know whether their well water is usable, and many are without water because they are abstaining from using their water as a precautionary measure.

8. The Navajo Nation has deployed its Executive Division resources to immediately respond to this disaster. We are patrolling the San Juan River to ensure our people are not entering the water. Navajo Tribal Utility Authority has water tanks deployed and stand ready to ensure our people have access to clean water. Our Emergency Management Department is coordinating
with the U.S. EPA, but as the sludge courses along the 215-mile-long riverbed of the Navajo Nation, the impact will be catastrophic, and thousands of our people will be affected.

9. To effectively address the immediate needs and impact, we must establish an organized and coordinated effort within the Navajo Nation Government so as to utilize our resources efficiently and wisely.

10. The Navajo Nation President will create an Operation Team to coordinate the efforts of all the Divisions, Enterprises and Entities of the Navajo Nation to ensure a chain of command and organized team to do all things necessary to mitigate the impact from the Gold King Mine toxic spill.

NOW THEREFORE,

We, Russell Begaye and Jonathan Nez, by the authority vested in us as President and Vice-President of the Navajo Nation, hereby order:

1. The establishment of Operation Tó lito.

2. Operation Tó lito shall operate pursuant to the Navajo Nation Strategic and Operational Management Chart. (Exhibit “A”).

3. All Divisions, Enterprises and Entities to immediately comply with Operation Tó lito and re-organize within each Division as necessary to be able to carry out its appropriate role within the Strategic and Operational Management Chart. Each Division Director shall make staff available as requested and as necessary to carry out and execute Operation Tó lito.

4. Consistency with law. The provisions of this order shall be implemented consistent with the laws of the Nation and shall consider the highest welfare of the Navajo people.

Executive on this 11th day of August, 2015.

THE NAVAJO NATION:

Russell Begaye, President

Jonathan Nez, Vice-President

ATTEST:

Ethel Branch, Attorney General

THE NAVAJO NATION
August 12, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT : Rick Abasta, Press Officer
Office of the President and Vice President
THE NAVAJO NATION
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Fax: 928-871-4025
Email: rickyabasta@navajo-nsn.gov

U.S. EPA urges Navajo people to waive rights to future reimbursement claims

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye warns tribal members against signing reimbursement claim forms being distributed by the U.S. EPA.

On August 11, the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President received reports that the EPA has actively been distributed Standard Form No. 95, which, if signed will waive future claims for damages or injuries.

“The federal government is asking our people to waive their future rights,” said President Begaye. “They know that without the waiver they will be paying millions to our people.

“It’s simple: they are protecting themselves at the expense of the Navajo people and it is outrageous,” he added.

The form states the following, “I certify that the amount of claim covers only damages and injuries caused by the incident above and agree to accept said amount in full satisfaction and final settlement of this claim.”

President Begaye is especially concerned for Navajo elders, some of whom many not know what they are signing, except for the fact that will receive money.

Navajo Nation Attorney General Ethel Branch said all signors will be limited to the specific claims filed, and any future claims for injuries caused by the Gold King Mine will be waived.

“Form number 95 will settle for current claims and preclude all future claims from the spill,” Branch said.

“The U.S. EPA has admitted they are at fault and stated this disaster will last for decades. This is unacceptable. The damages to our people will be long term and the Navajo Nation will not settle for pennies. I have consistently stated that the Navajo people deserve to be compensated for every penny lost. I will not allow fine print to let U.S. EPA off the hook. The Navajo people deserve better from the federal government,” said President Begaye.
During local public hearings across the Navajo Nation, specifically in Shiprock, Aneth and Olijato, the EPA has distributed the form and urged tribal members to sign.

“We are also concerned for our neighbors and whether this form is being circulated in other communities. Not only is this effort hurting Navajo people, but all those in the Four Corners. Think twice before you sign this form. We must hold U.S. EPA fully accountable for their negligence," said Vice-President Nez.

-30-
President Begaye clarifies and stands against U.S. EPA reimbursements

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz—The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is offering immediate reimbursements for damages from the Gold King Mine water contamination in exchange for waiving rights for future claims.

On August 11, the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President received report that EPA representatives were in the Utah communities of Aneth and Oljato to encourage Navajo people to agree to the reimbursements.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye said, “TheNavajo people need to know that they should not file for reimbursement until the injuries and costs related to the contamination have stopped.”

For individuals who sign the claim, they will not be eligible for claims in the future, if additional injuries or damages arise from the long-term effects of contamination.

On Wednesday, during the 7 a.m. briefing with the executive incident management team, President Begaye said Navajo people must be properly educated on what they are signing, especially the elders.

President Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez will be meeting with U.S. EPA administrator Regina McCarthy on Thursday, who will spend one hour on the Navajo Nation to view the contamination of the water.

“We are also concerned about our neighbors and whether this form is being circulated in their communities. This is not just hurting the Navajo people, but all those in the Four Corners region. Think twice before you sign the form,” Vice President Nez said.

Operation Tó Łitso (Yellow Water)

Operation Tó Łitso, or Yellow Water, is officially underway.

The Navajo Nation is activating the Emergency Operations Center at the Navajo Transportation Complex in Tse Bonito, N.M. later today. The EOC will be the hub for all calls, dispatch of services and other resources as needed.
There will also be regional Incident Command Posts established in Shiprock, Aneth and Oljato. The Shiprock ICP, located at the chapter house, is already in operation. The other two are set to come online in the next few days.

There will be a follow up meeting by OPVP at Aneth Chapter House on Friday at 10 a.m. and at Oljato Chapter House at 3 p.m.

Vice President Nez said, “Leezh litso, or yellow dirt, is the Navajo word for uranium, the cause of another contamination of Navajo water wells and sources decades ago, from which Navajo residents are still suffering repercussions.”

Public Meeting Updates

During the August 10 public information updates in Aneth and Oljato, Navajo citizens voiced their concerns about the water contamination.

This isn’t the first time the government left behind contaminated water sources on the Nation, they said.

Representatives from OPVP, Department of Justice, Navajo EPA, Division of Public Safety and members of the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management joined Vice President Nez to provide updates.

Attorney General Ethel Branch said the Upper Animas Mine District is a 140-square mile area north of Durango, Colorado with 300 mines, all of them abandoned after being mined from the late 1800s to 1991.

She said the Navajo Nation will pursue legal action and that it is important for residents affected by the contamination to begin documenting their damages.

U.S. EPA

Two community involvement representatives from EPA Region 9, David Yogie and Secody Hubbard, provided an update on the spill.

“The EPA is taking this very seriously and it’s working to control this, first and foremost,” Yogie said.

He said two EPA contractors have been sampling the water along the San Juan River with representatives from the Navajo EPA Surface Mining Program. Their focus is from Shiprock to Mexican Hat.

Four additional contractors were dispatched to support two teams doing sampling at the river. There are also 12 on-scene coordinators, two public information officers, two
community health coordinators and 21 employees and contractors from Denver responding to the spill.

**No Apologies**

At the Oljato meeting at the Monument Valley Visitors Center, Dr. Peterson Zah gave some background on the resiliency of the Navajo people, from the Long Walk to the uranium contamination to the disaster of the San Juan River contamination.

“Many years from now, the Navajo people will still be here on our tribal lands,” Zah said in Navajo. “They keep trying to get rid of us, but we’re still here surviving.”

Turning to Yogie, the senior EPA official that reported, Zah said he was no different than all the other Navajo elders in attendance.

“What I was looking for (from the EPA) was an apology. We didn’t even get one. I wanted to hear from the U.S. government that they were sorry,” Zah said. “Maybe you should include that in the first part of your presentation at your next meeting.”

-30-
OPERATION TÓ ŁITSO (YELLOW WATER)

RELI EF FUND

Please direct all donations and contributions for the Navajo Nation to:

NAVAJO UNITED WAY, INC.
Navajo Nation Operation Yellow Water Relief Fund

Wells Fargo Bank
Account No. Ending 3176
Statement By President Begaye Concerning Governor Ducey and Senator McCain’s Visit To Window Rock

“On behalf of the entire Navajo Nation, I want to thank Governor Ducey, Senator McCain, Secretary of State Regan, Arizona Speaker Gowan, Senate President Biggs and Senator Begay for coming to Window Rock to celebrate our Code Talkers as well as to discuss the San Juan River crisis caused by the Gold King Mine. Governor Ducey and Senator McCain are once again demonstrating their commitment to every member of the Navajo Nation by coming here. Today is a national day of celebration and pride for the significant role that our Navajo Code Talkers played during World War II and we are pleased that the Arizona political leadership was here to join us in honoring our Nation’s greatest warriors.

###
August 14, 2015
PRESS ADVISORY

CONTACT : Rick Abasta, Press Officer  
Office of the President and Vice President  
THE NAVAJO NATION  
Phone: 928-871-7925  
Fax: 928-871-4025  
Email: rickyabasta@navajo-nsn.gov

BOTTLED WATER TO BE DELIVERED TO MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES

Window Rock- NTUA is delivering two trucks of bottled water to the chapter houses of Halchita, Aneth, Montezuma Creek.

To report issues, donate supplies or request supplies, please contact Lt. Phillip Joe, Incident Command Center at 505.320.7424
President Begaye Urges Senator John McCain to Appropriate Funding to Construct Navajo Code Talkers Museum

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— Hundreds gathered today to celebrate the beloved Navajo Code Talkers, Navajo warriors and national heroes who created the radio code that could not be broken during World War II.

Several dignitaries joined this year’s parade, including Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Senator Carlyle Begaye (D-Ariz.), Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.), Arizona Governor Doug Ducey, Speaker David Gowan (R-Ariz.), Senate President Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.), Arizona Secretary of State Michele Reagan, and Speaker LoRenzo Bates.

Festivities began with a parade from the Navajo Nation Museum to the Window Rock Tribal Park. Eight years ago, when the parade first began, there were only four floats in the parade.

Today, there were more than 20 entries, with the Navajo Code Talkers sitting on a float to receive the heroes welcome they never had when World War II ended. American flags with placards of names from the Original 29 Navajo Code Talkers lined Morgan Boulevard.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez marched in the parade, shaking hands with spectators, talking with elders and accommodating photo opportunities along the route.

They walked alongside Navajo Code Talker and Iwo Jima survivor Thomas H. Begay, a Congressional Silver Medal recipient from Chichiltah, N.M.

The celebration continued at the Window Rock Park, under the shade of a white tent erected for the festivities. The smell of burning sage filled the air and purified all who entered the tent.

The Ira Hayes American Legion Post No. 84 posted the colors and Miss Northern Navajo Teen, Alexandria Holiday, sang the National Anthem in Navajo.

During the welcome address, President Begaye, speaking in Navajo, said, “Thank you to the Navajo Code Talkers, they bring strength and resiliency to the Navajo people, including the leadership.”

“You made this day! We designated this day for the Code Talkers,” President Begaye said, which was welcomed with cheers and applause.

“How will we remember them? Where is the museum for the Navajo Code Talkers? It hasn’t happened yet and we want a museum for the Navajo Talkers, we want them to see it in their day,” President Begaye said.

Turning toward Sen. McCain, a veteran and formal Naval pilot, President Begaye said the Navajo Nation and the Navajo Code Talkers needed his support to fund construction of the museum.

“I want to give him a proposal from the Navajo Nation for Congress to do an appropriation to build this museum. I have it broken down to the last penny, the last cent,” President Begaye said. “They fought for the United States flag, the United States of America. “It is time for the leaders of this country to put this money forward and build that museum to recognize our Code Talkers. Senator McCain, make it happen, make it happen,” he said.

On July 28, 1982, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed August 14, 1982 as Navajo Code Talkers Day. It was the first time that such a day was designated to honor the proud Navajo Marines that were told to never speak of their service because the code was top secret.

Proclamation 4954 states, “The Navaho Nation, when called upon to serve the United States, contributed a precious commodity never before used in this way. In the midst of the fighting in the Pacific during World War II, a gallant group of men from the Navaho Nation utilized their language in coded form to help speed the Allied victory.

“Equipped with the only foolproof, unbreakable code in the history of warfare, the code talkers confused the enemy with an earful of sounds never before heard by code experts. The dedication and unswerving devotion to duty shown by the men of the Navaho Nation in serving as radio code talkers in the Marine Corps during World War II should serve as a fine example for all Americans.”

The Navajo Code Talkers continue protecting the legacy and strength of Dine’ bizaad, the Navajo language, which ended the war in the pacific more than 70 years ago.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 18, 2015

Country Music and Indian Rodeo
A Winning Genre for the Navajo Nation Fair

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – Country music and Indian rodeo.

There’s nothing like a lot of rockin country music and gang busting broncs and bulls to quicken most anyone’s pulse. Here on the Navajo Nation, rodeo fans show their love for country music and Navajo’s number one sport….rodeo…Navajo style in high-spirited fashion. It has been a winning combination for excitement and success for the Navajo Nation Fair and it will continue for many years to come.

And that is why the 69th Annual Navajo Nation Fair will have two award-winning country music artists making their debut at the Navajo Nation Fair along with Championship Bull Riding (CBR) and an Indian Pro Rodeo. Aaron Watson will take center stage immediately after the CBR on Sunday, September 6th and Country Music Sensation Clay Walker will make his second debut on the Navajo Nation on Friday, September 11th after the Indian Pro Rodeo at 9 p.m.

Cowboys from throughout the country will showcase their skills to make an eight second ride on a 2,000 pound bull on September 6th at 8 p.m. at the Navajo Nation Fairgrounds. The eight seconds of glory is a second stop on the CBR season schedule to qualify and enter the finals in Cheyenne, Wyoming.
Navajo Nation Fair Production Director Martin L. Begaye, stated, “We are very honored to host a CBR) event on the Navajo Nation. We will have professional bull riders from throughout the country here in Window Rock on their way to the finals in Wyoming including the top two bull riders in the CBR. Bull riding has always been very popular on the Navajo Nation. We are also very excited to support our own Navajo cowboys who aspire to become a world champion in the professional rodeo circuit. This CBR event is our way of acknowledging and supporting our Navajo bull riders. We hope one of our own will one day become a world champion. We wish them the best.”

The top four Navajo bull riders from four different Indian rodeo associations have been specifically invited to participate in CBR. They include 24-year-old Justin Granger of Tuba City, Arizona who will represent the Southwest Rodeo Association; 26-year-old Spud Jones of Twin Lakes, New Mexico who will represent the All Indian Rodeo Association; 20-year-old Ty Toadlena of Gallup, New Mexico who will represent the Navajo Nation Rodeo Association and 19-year-old Clay Wagner of Round Rock, Arizona who is the leading Navajo in the PRCA Turquoise Circuit.

There will be 24 bull riders from CBR and four Navajo bull riders totaling 28 bull riders who will kick off the 69th Annual Navajo Nation Fair.

The Navajo Nation Fair Special Events Office will sponsor a presentation to honor the Navajo bull riders followed by an autograph session with World Champion Bull Rider Tuff Hedeman on September 6th at 6 p.m., which will be held at the Navajo Nation Fairgrounds.

Advance tickets are $30 and $35 the day of the CBR event, which includes an Aaron Watson concert. Advance tickets will be sold up to 5 p.m. Saturday, September 5th. Children six and under are free. Tickets will be sold at Gorman Hall on the Navajo Nation Fairgrounds.

For more information about the CBR event, please contact Abe Wilson at (928) 797-2408 or Wanda Nelson at (928) 871-7833.
Begaye added, “There are many people working hard behind the scenes to make this a very exciting and enjoyable event for everyone. The Navajo Nation Fair is a cultural event that many people from throughout the world look forward to attending every year. We hope you are able to share the cultural beauty of the Navajo people.”

In regards to the Indian Pro Rodeo, the entry deadline has been extended to Friday, August 21, 2015 at 6 p.m. Contestants must send in their money order payment by mail. However, the Navajo Nation Fair Special Events Office will accept walk-in entries on Friday, August 21st only. Rodeo entry applications can be downloaded at www.navajonationfair.com

Tickets for the Friday, September 11th Indian Pro Rodeo and Clay Walker Concert will be $30 for advance tickets and $35 the day of the show. The ticket price includes the Indian rodeo and Clay Walker Concert. It will be $15 for children six to 12-years-old. Advance tickets will be available for both events beginning August 24th and sold until September 7th at Gorman Hall.
Kirkpatrick vows to fight for the Navajo Nation

FLAGSTAFF, AZ - President Russell Begaye and Vice-President Jonathan Nez met with Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick on the Gold King Mine spill.

President Begaye told Kirkpatrick that the Navajo Nation needs President Obama to declare the San Juan River a federal disaster area so that federal funds can be immediately released to the area.

“The Navajo people need clean drinking water and hay, feed and water for livestock and agriculture.” said Begaye.

The Navajo Nation and the current federal agencies are depleting in their resources in providing water, hay, equipment and feed.

“Contacting President Obama will be my priority, what is happening to the Navajo People is disheartening.” said Kirkpatrick “Tell me what you need and I will start working on this today.”

Vice-President Nez expressed his appreciation for Kirkpatrick’s support to the Navajo Nation in this time of need and raised the issue of Standard Form 95. USEPA has been distributing Standard Form 95 along the San Juan River to our People, telling the people to sign the form.

“That has been quashed, the EPA was not suppose to issue Standard Form 95, I am glad the Navajo Nation’s leadership immediately notified the people to not sign the forms, because it is pre-mature,” said Kirkpatrick.

President Begaye brought to Kirkpatrick’s attention the General Mining Act of 1872 as outdated and lack of regulation for Mines.
Kirkpatrick agreed and stated she will make contact with Senator Heinrich and Representative Lujan on revamping these outdated laws.

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August 19, 2015

BEGAYE APPLAUDS MCCAIN AND UDALL REQUEST FOR OVERSIGHT HEARING ON EPA SPILL

Window Rock – President Russell Begaye today applauded Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) for requesting that the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs hold an oversight hearing on the impact of the EPA Gold King Mine spill on the Navajo Nation:

“I applaud Senators McCain and Udall for requesting for an oversight hearing on the EPA mine spill and their continued efforts to hold the agency accountable. This is a positive first step towards addressing the devastating impact of this disaster on the Navajo Nation.

“More action is needed and Washington must move quickly to mitigate the dangerous affects of this spill. Congress must appropriate funding to address this crisis and the EPA must set up a response fund to clean up the toxic chemicals in our water. We need a mobile lab for ongoing monitoring and the federal government must designate the mine area as a Super Fund site.

“I appreciate Senator McCain and Senator Udall’s support look forward to working with them to stand up for the best interests of the Navajo Nation.”

Senator McCain’s letter can be found here: http://operationyellowwater.com/?p=248

##
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

President Begaye and Vice President Nez Lauds Council’s Support

WINDOW ROCK, ARIZONA - President Begaye and Vice President Nez applauded delegates for assisting their constituents during the current Gold King Mine contamination crisis.

“Thank you Council Delegates for coming alongside your chapter officials in securing basic human and livestock needs for your communities,” said President Begaye.

Delegate Amber Crotty worked with Gadiiahi Chapter in securing over 300 bales of hay for livestock, numerous water troughs for cattle, and 10,000 gallon tanks to provide water for livestock.

President Begaye and Vice-President Nez launched Operation Tó Łitso over a week ago and presented the Operation to the Division Directors Monday morning. Operation Tó Łitso is the strategic management operation addressing the Gold King Mine contamination spill.

President Begaye and Vice-President Nez invited the Navajo Nation Council to participate in Monday’s update.

Timeline and Announcement of the Operation

President Begaye presented a timeline of events that has occurred since the Gold King Mine spill on Wednesday, August 5, when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) accidentally released upwards of three million gallons of contaminated water into Cement Creek.

President Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez traveled to Silverton on Sunday, August 9, to see the spill firsthand. President Begaye issued a Declaration for State of Emergency addressing
the Gold King Mine spill on August 8 and an Executive Order establishing and ordering execution of Operation Tó Łitso on August 11.

Operation Tó Łitso addresses the immediate impacts of the Gold King Mine toxic spill and addresses the larger contamination issues facing the Nation, such as long-standing uranium contamination.

"It might seem like a simple term but it's a strategic title to raise awareness in addressing broader issues of contamination on the Navajo Nation, including of our over 500 abandoned uranium mines," President Begaye said.

**General Updates**

President Begaye has prioritized the health of the people over any economic benefits that might come from prematurely opening up the San Juan River.

Director of the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (NNEPA), Dr. Donald Benn, told the Council that the Nation is awaiting the results of river sample testing.

Harland Cleveland, Emergency Operations Center Manager, said there are 6 locations along the Nation’s reach of the San Juan River where emergency water tanks have been placed for livestock and irrigation purposes. The water tanks range from 2,000 to 12,000 gallons in size and are the result of the Nation’s coordination with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

###
August 24, 2015

Navajo Nation President Begaye keeps restrictions in place for San Juan River

WINDOW ROCK – Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye has not lifted restrictions on opening the San Juan River for irrigation purposes.

“I am furious that the USEPA has placed the Navajo Nation into this position. Our farms will not last much longer without water and our resources are depleting,” said President Begaye. “These past few days I have visited with the farmers along the San Juan River because they are part of this decision.”

On Thursday, Aug. 20, Office of the President and Vice-President (OPVP) held a public meeting for the impacted chapters to give farmers and chapter officials a forum to express their concerns. During the meeting, five of seven San Juan River area chapter officials spoke against opening the river for irrigation.

The farmers were overwhelmingly concerned about contaminating their fields and crops.

“It was heartbreaking to hear farmer after farmer tell us they have said goodbye to their crops and made peace,” said Vice-President Jonathan Nez.

President Begaye asked community members to put a resolution before their respective chapters to vote on whether or not they want to open the river for irrigation.

On Friday, Aug. 21, through resolution, Shiprock Chapter voted 104 in favor, 0 opposed and 9 abstaining to keep the canals closed for a period of one year. Shiprock area farmers utilize the Hogback pump, which affects Tse Dah K’aan, Shiprock and Gadii’ahi chapters.
During this meeting a concerned farmer said he was against opening the irrigation. The farmer said he would instead save as many crops as he could by hauling water. Most of the crops on his 33 acres have not matured.

Having been raised a farmer himself, President Begaye realizes the impacts that keeping the water shut off will have to area farmers as they depend on crops for subsistence and income.

The Shiprock vote against opening the canals represents the community’s concern to use precaution and not risk possible contamination to irrigation canals and crops.

The Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (NNEPA) has reported that initial data from their water samples concurs with data from neighboring jurisdictions in supporting that water from the San Juan River is safe for irrigation purposes.

The USEPA has given initial reports on the soil, but the Navajo Nation will rely on the NNEPA for final test results. These soil samples are critical in identifying levels of metals that have settled along the river banks.

“I’m glad the water samples indicate the water is safe for irrigation use but I remain concerned over the soil and sediment that lines our river bank,” said President Begaye. “Every time a heavy storm hits or the soil is disturbed it can recontaminate the water.”

The NNEPA will have final results from their soil samples this week.

“The health of our Navajo people will always come first. As such, we must be diligent and cautious in making this decision,” said Vice-President Nez.

President Begaye and Vice-President Nez remain firm in holding the USEPA accountable for releasing contaminants into the Animas and San Juan Rivers during the Gold King Mine spill.

While the river remains closed, the Navajo Nation will continue to work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to provide water for irrigation, livestock and drinking purposes.

-30-
President Begaye opens irrigation to Upper Fruitland, San Juan and Nenahnezad Chapters

NENAHNEZAD - Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye has lifted restrictions on the San Juan River for irrigation purposes for the Chapters of Upper Fruitland, San Juan and Nenahnezad.

President Begaye informed farmers during a meeting at the Nenahnezad Chapter House on Thursday, Aug. 27. His announcement was met with applause from local farmers who have been under significant duress as a result of the Gold King Mine disaster.

"I wanted to hear directly from the farmers that they are comfortable using the water from the San Juan River for irrigation purposes," President Begaye said.

District 13 Council leaders put forth a resolution asking that the declaration of emergency be lifted for irrigation purposes in an effort to address, in part, the devastating economic impacts of the contamination of the San Juan River.

Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (NNEPA) Director Dr. Donald Benn has determined that water from the San Juan River meets the Nation's water quality standards for the limited use of irrigation. This conclusion is based in part on NNEPA's test results, which are consistent with those of other agencies testing the river. The NNEPA intends to continue testing and monitoring the water quality.

After receiving the Resolution from District 13 Council, President Begaye signed a directive to the Division of Natural Resources (DNR), ordering DNR to immediately flush the irrigation canals. After hearing from the farmers, President Begaye opened the canals for irrigation purposes for Upper Fruitland, San Juan and Nenahnezad Chapters. Restrictions are not lifted for
livestock. Vice-President Jonathan Nez said that these steps must be taken to protect the farmer’s livelihood but it is unjust that the Nation has been put in this situation.

According to Marlin Saggboy, Irrigation Supervisor for the Department of Water Resources, the canal system is flushed it should reach San Juan by sundown.

At Thursday's meeting Upper Fruitland Chapter President, Hubert Harwood, talked about the urgency of lifting the restrictions.

“The drier things get, the harder it is to bring things back,” he said. "What we need to do is turn the water on and save what we have left. Everybody is shooting for time here.”

Moving forward, President Begaye said the NNEPA will continue to monitor the water from the San Juan River and test soil along the canal banks and river beds.

##
ATTORNEY GENERAL BRANCH SELECTS HUESTON HENNIGAN LLP TO REPRESENT NAVAJO NATION IN GOLD KING MINE SPILL LAWSUIT

Window Rock - Navajo Nation Attorney General Ethel Branch announced today that she has selected the law firm of Hueston Hennigan LLP to represent the Navajo Nation in its claims relating to the release of hazardous substances from the Gold King Mine north of Silverton, Colorado. The initial release of approximately three million gallons of water contaminated by acid mine waste, including arsenic, lead, and cadmium, created a plume that traveled 215 miles through the San Juan River, one of the Navajo Nation’s primary water sources.

“Mr. Hueston and his team of skilled litigators will work tirelessly to secure justice and equity for the Navajo Nation and the Navajo people as we address the aftermath of the disastrous Gold King Mine spill. The impact has been devastating to our culture and economy, as well as to the peace of mind of our people. With unknown amounts of this fine sediment in our water we now face the risk of reliving this nightmare with every major increased water flow event affecting the river,” said Attorney General Branch.

The litigation team at Hueston Hennigan LLP will be led by John Hueston, who is most well-known for his role as lead prosecutor in the Enron trial against Ken Lay and Jeff Skilling. Most recently he represented the Navajo Nation and a number of other governments in securing the $5.15 billion Tronox settlement, the largest environmental recovery settlement in United States history.

“My firm is fully committed to this case, and we will make this matter a number one priority. Working alongside the Attorney General of the Navajo Nation, our team will be relentless in our efforts to secure justice and fair treatment for the Navajo people,” said Mr. Hueston.
Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye announced shortly after the Gold King Mine spill that the Nation would sue the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other potentially responsible parties. The Navajo Nation Department of Justice conducted a nationwide search of top litigation and environmental law firms and ultimately selected Hueston Hennigan LLP out of a group of five highly qualified finalists.

Navajo farmers and ranchers and the Navajo community in Northern Navajo have been significantly impacted by the mine spill that has shut down the San Juan River for the past three weeks. Farmers have had to abandon large portions of their fields in the hopes of salvaging limited plots, and livestock has become dehydrated due to lack of water. Many of these Navajo farms are organic farms and grow heirloom fruits and vegetables. Many Navajo families along the River also grow corn pollen and special types of corn for ceremonial purposes, but many of those crops have already dried up.

Meanwhile the over 300 abandoned hard rock mines from the Upper Animas Mining District continue to pose a threat to the Nation’s water source, and contaminated water from the Gold King Mine continues to spew forth at a rate of 610 gallons per minute—thus taking the aggregate spill amount to over 22 million gallons.

##
September 1, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESIDENT BEGAYE REQUESTS APPOINTMENT OF FEMA DISASTER RECOVERY COORDINATOR

Window Rock – President Russell Begaye has officially requested the appointment of a Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator (FDRC) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to assist the Navajo Nation as it recovers from the Gold KingMine spill.

“The appointment of an FDRC by FEMA at this stage of the Nation’s response to this toxic chemical spill would greatly benefit the Nation. An FDRC could assist the Nation to effectively assess the short- and long-term impact of the disaster, determine priorities, and activate a recovery support strategy. As the primary, secondary, and tertiary impacts of the toxic chemical spill are already affecting crucial areas of the Nation’s land, waters, crop production, livestock raising, and economic resources, the authority of an FDRC to coordinate assistance from other federal agencies would enable a focus of federal resources and seamless coordination to effectively respond to this disaster,” wrote President Begaye in a letter to FEMA Administrator W. Craig Fugate.

Although the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been appointed as the lead federal agency responding to the disaster, FEMA is best positioned and structured to coordinate all available assistance, long term planning, assessment of impacted communities and developing a recovery support strategy.

President Begaye’s full letter to FEMA Administrator Fugate is below:

William Craig Fugate, Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 C Street SW
Dear Mr. Fugate:

The Navajo Nation (“the Nation”) respectfully requests the appointment of a Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator (“FDRC”) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) to assist the Nation as it responds to the August 5, 2015 toxic chemical spill into the Animas River and which has expanded into Navajo lands. This expansion into Navajo lands via the San Juan River has critically impacted the River and its dependent ecosystems including wildlife, fish populations, and the land base adjacent to the River. The nature of this toxic chemical spill will acutely and chronically impact the River and dependent ecosystem if immediate and effective corrective actions and remedies are not taken. The Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management declared the toxic chemical spill a disaster on August 9, 2015, CEM 15-08-09, see attached.

The contamination of the San Juan River has affected not only the dependent ecosystem generally but specifically the crops and livestock of the Nation’s farmers and ranchers whose produce support families and communities. The River, when its waters are not contaminated, is critical in providing water resources to wildlife, fish, livestock and crops. Water is also an important element in Navajo traditional Lifeways and ceremonies.

The appointment of an FDRC by FEMA at this stage of the Nation’s response to this toxic chemical spill would greatly benefit the Nation. An FDRC could assist the Nation to effectively assess the short- and long-term impact of the disaster, determine priorities, and activate a recovery support strategy. As the primary, secondary, and tertiary impacts of the toxic chemical spill are already affecting crucial areas of the Nation’s land, waters, crop production, livestock raising, and economic resources, the authority of an FDRC to coordinate assistance from other federal agencies would enable a focus of federal resources and seamless coordination to effectively respond to this disaster. Furthermore, the additional resource of a team of recovery specialists that would accompany the FDRC would enable a simultaneous application of necessary skills and expertise to assist the Nation in effectively responding to this disaster.

For the above reasons, the Nation respectfully requests that FEMA appoint an FDRC to assist us in this time of our great need. Please contact Ms. Roselita Whitehair, who is the Director of the Nation’s Department of Emergency Management.

Sincerely,

Russell Begaye

President, the Navajo Nation

#
September 2, 2015

Navajo Nation Thanks Donors for Support

WINDOW ROCK – Reaching out to help the Navajo Nation.

That’s what individuals, tribes and entities are doing to assist Navajo chapters who have been impacted by the Gold King Mine contamination spill along the San Juan River.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye stated, “On behalf of the Navajo Nation, we are very appreciative for the outpouring of love and support for our people who have been impacted by this recent incident on the northern portion of our reservation. It’s times like these when we all need to come together and help each other. We are honored and say a humbling ‘thank you’ from the Navajo Nation for your generous support to help our people who are in need of resources to sustain themselves.”

Some of the individuals, entities and tribes include the Cherokee Nation of North Carolina who will deliver a diesel truck full of hay to the Navajo Nation. A Water is Life Walk/Run was held on August 29th in Tempe, Arizona, which was sponsored by Waylon Pahona who is Hopi/Tewa and founder of Healthy Active Natives. Participants in the Walk/Run donated 10 pallets of bottled water, which will be delivered to the Navajo Nation Emergency Operation Center (NNEOC) on Friday, Aug. 4. Digital Air Strike of Phoenix delivered approximately six pallets of bottled water to Shiprock Chapter. The Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) will issue one relief convoy to donate 22-25 tons of hay for Navajo ranchers and they will also donate bottled water.

Begaye added, “I would like to say a special thank you to the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) for notifying the Navajo Nation that they will help provide relief for our Navajo farmers and livestock owners. This will be the second time in Navajo history that CRIT will truck hay from Parker, Arizona. As tribes we have much in common, which includes precious natural resources. It is with great gratitude that we accept the blessing of other tribes.”
CRIT Tribal Treasurer Valerie Welsh explained, “At a recent Five-Tribe Colorado River Coalition meeting, the CRIT Tribes all wanted to provide some relief to assist the Navajo Nation. We have a farm as do other tribes along the Colorado River and we are currently working on what we can provide. As tribal nations banning together, we could provide so much more. We may not meet everyone’s need, but as five tribes, we cannot sit idly by and do nothing. We are Pipah AhaMakaav, People of the River, and wish to share blessings received because of it, the Colorado River.”

NNEOC Director Rose Whitehair is encouraging the chapters and the public to work directly with NNEOC regarding the donation of water tanks, delivery of livestock water, hay and bottled water.

“We are requesting that everyone work directly with NNEOC to help us communicate and coordinate assistance to the affected chapters in an efficient manner and to alleviate any confusion,” said Whitehair. “We also don’t want the public at large to donate to entities that may not be legitimate. If you have any questions regarding whether a donation source is legitimate or not, please contact the NNEOC.”

More than a dozen chapters in New Mexico, Utah and Arizona are directly impacted by the spill. Individuals, tribes and entities who are interested in donating bottled water, hay or livestock water need to contact the Navajo Nation Emergency Operation Center in Tse Bonito, New Mexico at (505) 371-8414 or 8408. For monetary donations, go to any Wells Fargo Bank and make your donation to the attention of Navajo United Way: Operation Yellow Water with the account ending in 3176. You can also donate online at www.operationyellowwater.com/donate/
MEMORANDUM

TO

ALL DIVISION DIRECTORS, DEPARTMENT MANAGERS AND PROGRAM SUPERVISORS

NAVAJO NATION GOVERNMENT

FROM

Laverne Lee, Program Supervisor
Workers' Compensation Program

DATE

September 2, 2015

SUBJECT

Workers' Compensation Coverage for Special Assignments (69th Annual Navajo Nation Fair)

This is in response to a memorandum dated August 31, 2015 from the Navajo Nation President Russell Begay and Vice-President Jonathan Nez. The memorandum pertains to workers' compensation insurance coverage for employees of the Navajo Nation Government, its departments and programs to continue their tour of duty during the 69th Annual Navajo Nation Fair (Fair) from September 6 through September 13, 2015.

Upon review of the memorandum, here is our recommendation unless if a Department Manager wishes to identify an alternative method but it has to remain within policies: Complete a "Special Assignment" memorandum for the employees within the department/program who agree to work during the Fair. The memorandum should identify a list of the employees' names, work assignment/duties, date and time including temporary change in worksite to Window Rock if needed. It would help if the work is identified for example: carpentry to build floats, booths, float representative to distribute goodies and clean-up crew to name a few. The Special Assignment memorandum should come from the Department Manager and acknowledged by the employees' immediate supervisor and please submit a copy to my office. Ensure that a sign-in/sign-out sheet is available for the employees on Special Assignment. The special assignment memorandum will serve as acknowledgement of workers' compensation coverage availability during the course and scope of the assigned employees.

General Volunteers can be covered by workers' compensation insurance provided that the department/program completes a Personnel Action Form with a current Employment Application and submits the forms to Department of Personnel Management for approval and a premium fee will be assessed and invoiced thereafter.

The Workers' Compensation Act (Act) provides coverage for employees of the Navajo Nation government, its enterprises and political subdivisions, elected officials and volunteer as identified in 15 N.N.C. § 1002 (A)(12). The Navajo Nation Workers' Compensation Program is charged with managing the self-funded and self-administered workers' compensation and no other state jurisdiction is applicable to injuries sustained by insured members.

Please contact me at 871-6389 or email at lavernehlee@navajo-nsn.gov if you have any questions or Marsha Joe at email mje_wcp@ymail.com.
Greetings from the Office of the President and Vice-President,

It is again time for the Navajo people to come together and celebrate our progress and accomplishments for the past year at the 69th Annual Navajo Nation Fair. It takes months of planning and cooperation and coordination internally in the tribal government as well as with outside entities to put together a Fair that the people will remember and carry with them into the future. In order to do this I am directing the tribal programs, divisions and departments to do all they can to assist in the successful undertaking of this event and provide financial support and in-kind services. Tribal employees will be authorized to serve as coordinators, workers, volunteers as a part of their employment and shall be provided insurance coverage since it is the Navajo Nation that is putting on the Fair for the benefit and enjoyment of the Navajo people. We would like to iterate that providing service to the Navajo people is a general duty and obligation of all tribal employees.

Lastly, the Vice-President and I want to thank each employee of the Navajo Nation for their continued dedication and service to the Navajo Nation and people. Let us make this 69th Annual Navajo Nation Fair a safe and enjoyable gathering for all.

Russell Begaye, President
THE NAVAJO NATION

Jonathan Nez, Vice-President
THE NAVAJO NATION
September 3, 2015

President Begaye Updates Senator Tom Udall on San Juan River Contamination

Asks For Continued Support From Bureau of Indian Affairs

SHIPROCK—Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez met with Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) today and spoke about the aftermath of the Gold King Mine breach that occurred on August 5.

Attorney General Ethel Branch, Speaker LoRenzo Bates, Delegates Tom Chee and Amber Crotty, and chapter officials Duane Yazzie and Gilbert Harrison were also in attendance.

President Begaye expressed that the immediate concern was the demobilization of water tanks owned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Navajo Region. The tanks are in use at affected chapters to provide water for livestock and irrigation. BIA crews and equipment are scheduled to leave the area by Saturday.

“We still need the BIA support and their water tanks. We are very concerned about the loss of the water tanks, as our canals are still closed. Hence, we have requested FEMA to intervene and help us in our time of crisis,” said President Begaye.

Upstream, the San Juan River has been reopened for irrigation at Nenanezad, San Juan, Gadii'ahi and Upper Fruitland. Downstream, the river remains closed for both the Hogback and Shiprock chapters. Gaadii’ahi voted to reopen the river for irrigation and currently using electric pumps to draw water into the canal.
Senator Udall said that he has placed his field representative, Cal Curley, on the ground working since the mine spill occurred.

“We’ve done a number of things: scheduling the hearings and getting Administrator McCarthy out here immediately. She was out here within a week,” Udall said. “The spiritual and emotional toll is very important. The agencies, instead of being bureaucratic, need to be understanding,”

Vice President Nez said there is still no word from the White House since the spill occurred last month.

“President Obama and FEMA need to be more proactive and declare this as a disaster area,” Vice President Nez said. “The Navajo Nation should have the affected tribal lands designated as its own EPA region. There would be less confusion this way.”

President Begaye will testify and attend several Congressional hearings in Washington, D.C. to advocate for the Navajo farmers and ranchers impacted by the spill.

###
September 3, 2015

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATE ERIN BROCKOVICH TO TOUR NAVAJO NATION WITH PRESIDENT BEGAYE

Prominent Activist To Help Raise Awareness Of Devastation Caused By Mine Spill

Window Rock – President Russell Begaye today announced that prominent consumer advocate and environment activist Erin Brockovich will visit the Navajo Nation on September 8th. President Begaye and Ms. Brockovich will tour areas that have been devastated by the Gold King Mine spill that polluted the San Juan River.

“The Navajo Nation has been culturally and economically devastated by the impact of the Gold King Mine Spill and we need help to address this crisis,” said President Begaye. “We appreciate Ms. Brockovich’s willingness to visit our Nation to witness the damage first hand and help raise awareness about the plight of our people.”

Erin Brockovich stated "I am deeply concerned with the actions of the U.S. EPA and I stand by the Navajo Nation. Over 20 million gallons of contaminated water have poured out and are continuing to pour out from the Gold King Mine. This needs to stop, and the U.S. government needs to clean up the mess they caused."

As a legal clerk in the early 1990s, Ms. Brockovich helped investigate elevated illness in the town of Hinckley, California that was tied to the pollutant hexavalent chromium in their groundwater. Residents later settled a case against Pacific Gas and Electric for $333 million, the largest settlement in a direct action lawsuit at the time.
Ms. Brockvoich’s efforts served as the inspiration for the blockbuster 2000 film *Erin Brockovich* starring Julia Roberts.

Schedule details regarding President Begaye and Ms. Brockovich’s tour will be released in the coming days.

##
Statement by President Begaye regarding FEMA denying assistance for Gold King Mine Spill

"We are extremely frustrated with the news that both FEMA and the U.S. EPA have declined our urgent requests to continue assistance to the Navajo Nation. U.S. EPA caused this entire disaster, they have harmed the people, the water and the land. I appreciated the fact U.S. EPA took responsibility and I was hoping for the U.S. EPA to prove to the Navajo Nation they are willing to hold themselves accountable. This action clearly shows otherwise. For years, we have consistently been at the receiving end of toxic spills and contamination with no adequate relief as the United States Government and Private Companies became wealthy off of the natural resources of the Navajo Nation.

This is not the end but the beginning as I will continue to fight for my people."
ERIN BROCKOVICH TO SPEAK AT THREE NAVAJO NATION HIGH SCHOOLS ON TUESDAY

Window Rock – Prominent consumer advocate and environment activist Erin Brockovich is set to speak at three Navajo Nation high schools during her visit on Tuesday, Sept. 8.

Ms. Brockovich will speak at Shiprock High School Chieftain Pit, Shiprock, N.M. at 12 p.m. MST; White Horse High School Auditorium, Montezuma Creek, Utah at 3:00 p.m. MST; and at Monument Valley High School Auditorium, Kayenta, Ariz., at 5:30 p.m. MST.

The high school speaking engagements will be streamed live on the Operation Yellow Water Ustream.tv channel.

“We appreciate Ms. Brockovich’s willingness to visit our Nation to witness the damage first hand and help raise awareness about the plight of our people,” said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye.

Erin Brokovich stated "The continuing situation resulting from the Gold King Mine spill is unacceptable. The EPA's actions and response reflect an organization that is drastically underfunded, understaffed and in need of overhaul. I stand with the Navajo Nation and call upon the U.S. Government to do what is right and clean up this mess."

As a legal clerk in the early 1990s, Ms. Brockovich helped investigate elevated illness in the town of Hinckley, California that was tied to the pollutant hexavalent chromium in their groundwater. Residents later settled a case against Pacific Gas and Electric for $333 million, the largest settlement in a direct action lawsuit at the time.

Attending media are encouraged to get in contact for a lengthier schedule of the day’s events.

###
SEPTEMBER 9, 2015

PRESIDENT BEGAYE: PLACE UPPER ANIMAS MINING DISTRICT ON “SUPERFUND” NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST

Window Rock – In a letter sent to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy and Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, President Russell Begaye requested that the Upper Animas Mining District be listed as a “Superfund Site” pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CECLA). This designation on the National Priorities List will make EPA funding and resources available to remove and contain the long-standing risks to human health and the environment posed by the historic mining activities in the area. As the Gold King Mine spill demonstrated, the over 300 abandoned hard rock mines pose a serious public health threat.

“IT is well past time for the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to step in and remediate the site in a meaningful manner to protect downstream communities,” wrote President Begaye. “The first step in this process is to list the Upper Animas Mining District on the NPL. This will provide much needed funding and technical assistance to responsibly address the threats posed by the District.”

In addition to the Gold King Mine spill, President Begaye also pointed out that in the 1990s the EPA and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment conducted a Superfund Site Assessment of the District and determined that “water quality standards were not achieved.” In 2008 the EPA performed another NPL assessment on the Upper Cement Creek area and confirmed, “that the area would qualify for inclusion.”

“The chemicals found in the District pose a significant human health risk,” said President Begaye. “The health and well-being of the region should be of primary importance to the EPA. The time has come for the Upper Animas Mining District to be given NPL status.”

President Begaye’s Full Letter is Attached

##
September 7, 2015

Gina McCarthy, Administrator
United States Environmental Protection Agency
Office of the Administrator, Mail Code: 1101A
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

John W. Hickenlooper, Governor
State of Colorado
200 E. Colfax Ave., #136
Denver, CO 80203

Re: Request to Place Upper Animas Mining District on National Priorities List

Dear Administrator McCarthy and Governor Hickenlooper:

We request your attention to the important and urgent matter of protecting the Navajo Nation from upstream threats of contamination coming from the 140-square-mile Upper Animas Mining District (District). Specifically, we request that you immediately place the District on the CERCLA National Priorities List (NPL) so that prompt action may be taken to address and contain the long-standing risks to human health and the environment posed by the historic mining and processing activities in the District. As the Gold King Mine (GKM) spill demonstrated, the District and its over 300 abandoned hard rock mines\(^2\) pose a looming threat to us downstream communities, and it is a threat that is far beyond the control of the local community. It is well past time for the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to step in and remediate the site in a meaningful manner to protect downstream communities. The first step in that process is to list the Upper Animas Mining District on the NPL. This will provide the much needed funding and technical assistance to responsibly address the threats posed by the District.

On August 5, 2015, the EPA and other potentially responsible parties caused millions of gallons of acid mine drainage—containing toxic substances such as aluminum, lead, zinc, arsenic, cadmium, manganese, iron, vanadium, and copper—to spill from the Gold King Mine outside of Silverton, Colorado into Cement Creek, which flows into the Animas River and ultimately reaches the San Juan River. In a flash the GKM spill illuminated the significant risk that District mines

\(^1\) [http://www2.epa.gov/region8/upper-animas-mining-district](http://www2.epa.gov/region8/upper-animas-mining-district)

\(^2\) *Id.*
Letter to: Administrator McCarthy and Governor Hickenlooper

Re: Request to Place Upper Animas Mining District on National Priorities List

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present to the people, animals, culture, ecosystem and economy of the Four Corners region. Despite the very real and significant risk posed by the District, it is not currently NPL-listed. The current system of management of the hazardous substances in the District does not protect the people or the environment of the rest of the Four Corners region. The health and well-being of the region should be of primary importance to the EPA. The time has come for the Upper Animas Mining District to be given NPL status.

In the 1990s, “EPA and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) conducted a Superfund Site Assessment of the [District].” The assessment concluded “that water quality standards were not achieved” in the District—which includes private, federal, and state lands, and the town of Silverton—and identified the District’s “severe impacts to aquatic life in the Upper Animas and its tributaries.” Despite the serious harm being caused by the District, EPA postponed listing the District on the NPL because the local community asked for a “community-based collaborative effort” that would allow local cleanup and mitigation efforts to proceed “as long as progress was being made to improve the water quality of the Animas River.” In 2005, the “water quality had declined significantly” in the area despite the combined efforts of the local community and EPA.

In 2008, EPA performed another NPL assessment, this time on the Upper Cement Creek alone, and the study again confirmed “that the area would qualify for inclusion” on the NPL. Despite the carve-out of Silverton from the area of study and the additional confirmation that the GKM area should be listed on the NPL, “EPA [again] postponed efforts to include the area on the National Priorities List,” “after receiving additional community input.” Yet the City of Durango, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the State of New Mexico, the Navajo Nation, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, the State of Utah, and the State of Arizona are all downstream interested parties whose input matters with respect to toxic releases and the threat thereof from GKM and the District. Our input and concerns should matter to you as you contemplate listing the District on the NPL.

The chemicals found in the District pose significant human health risk, such as cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal and reproductive systems. One early post-incident report from the EPA indicated that “arsenic levels in the Durango area of the Animas River were, at their

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4 Id.
5 http://www2.epa.gov/region8/upper-animas-mining-district.
7 Id.
8 Id.
9 Id.
10 Id.
peak, 300 times the normal level, and lead was 3,500 times the normal level.” Another report of EPA data indicated that “lead was found below Silverton’s 14th Street bridge at more than 200 times higher than the acute exposure limit for aquatic life, and 3,580 times higher than federal standards for human drinking water. Levels of arsenic were more than 24 times the exposure limit for fish and 823 times the level for human ingestion. Cadmium was found at more than six times the aquatic limit, 33 times that for humans.”

The GKM spill in the Animas and San Juan rivers has imposed an unmitigated crisis upon the Navajo Nation. Coursing through 215 miles of the Navajo Nation, the San Juan River is a critical water source and significant spiritual icon for the Navajo Nation. EPA’s determination that they “do not anticipate adverse health effects from exposure to the metals detected in the river” is premature because “[t]he effects of lead may not be seen right away or may not be noticed for many years,” and is indeed contradictory to the EPA’s statements to the Navajo Nation made immediately after the spill that we will be dealing with these effects “for decades.” The Navajo Nation is gravely concerned with the spill’s yet unknown impacts to river sediment and adjacent waterways, and is especially concerned about the ongoing releases from the District that U.S. Geological Survey measures to be at a rate of 610 gallons per minute. Due to the long-term risk that these chemicals present, as well as the continued significant releases coming from the GKM and the District, estimated to now exceed a total release of over 27 million gallons, an NPL listing is well warranted.

The threats posed by the District are felt by the many people connected to the District through the San Juan River watershed, a significant singular surface water supply to the Four Corners region. As one of the impacted jurisdictions, the Navajo Nation’s impacts are felt most significantly by our farmers and ranchers, and our traditional people. Many Navajo people rely on the San Juan River to sustain life through irrigating our farmed goods and watering our livestock. Our families then consume these fruits of their labor. The San Juan River also sustains our culture by watering the many unique species of Navajo corn plants that are critical to our prayers and ceremonies. Our traditions and culture are also kept alive by our San Juan River valley farmers’ growing of heirloom Navajo fruits and vegetables from seed strains steadily refined by our people since time immemorial. The River is also an important male deity to our people. Its contamination by the GKM has been a significant spiritual blow.

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12 http://m.startribune.com/nation/32157301.html
13 http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine/frequent-questions-related-gold-king-mine-response EPA frequently asked questions
15 Telephone Call with Joan Card, Senior Policy Advisor for USEPA Region 8, and Shaun McGrath, Administrator for USEPA Region 8 (Aug. 7, 2015).
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Contamination of the River is also a blow to our economy. The Nation faces a daunting unemployment rate of 42 percent.\(^\text{17}\) Yet along the San Juan River, many of our people are able to make a life for themselves and support their families through farming and ranching. According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture there are approximately 1,500 farms in the Shiprock Agency alone. The Bureau of Indian Affairs estimates that there are about 1,175 grazing permit holders in the region. Many of our farmers create additional economic value for themselves by carefully growing profitable organic crops. Some of our ranchers produce grass-fed and organic beef product. Their livelihoods have been significantly disrupted by the GKM spill.

The River has always been of the upmost import to our people. Indeed, when our leaders negotiated our release from internment by the federal government at Fort Sumner in the Treaty of 1868, they were certain to include the San Juan River and its adjacent rich farmlands within our Nation’s boundary. The reliance of our people on the River and the significance of the River to our people cannot be overstated.

The waste from the mines in the Upper Animas Mining District is also harmful to wildlife found in the Animas River below Cement Creek. In April, EPA released a *Draft Baseline Ecological Risk Assessment Upper Animas Mining District*, which documented the harmful impacts from the combination of mining and naturally occurring hazardous substances.\(^\text{18}\) Among the various wildlife that are impacted, the report found that “[m]etal concentrations in the Animas River below Mineral Creek have eliminated virtually all fish down to Elk Creek and all cutthroat and rainbow trout down to Cascade Creek, where only a small community of brook and brown trout exist.”\(^\text{19}\) Further, the study found “that the benthic invertebrate community is impaired in most sections of the Animas River, Cement Creek and Mineral Creek.”\(^\text{20}\) The Upper Animas Mining District is causing portions of the Animas River to be uninhabitable for certain wildlife—and the generally negative impacts on wildlife are even broader. The Upper Animas Mining District should be a candidate for listing on the NPL due to its impacts on wildlife alone.

The danger of a spill in the Upper Animas Mining District will continue to exist under the current management scheme, and the spill on August 5 was not an isolated incident. In fact, there were two previous releases of hazardous mine waste from the area in 1975 and 1978. In 1975, “50,000 tons of heavy-metal-loaded tailings” were dumped into the Animas River.\(^\text{21}\) And in 1978, “500 million gallons” of water contaminated with “tailings and sludge” spilled into the Animas

\(^{17}\) [http://navajobusiness.com/fastFacts/Overview.htm](http://navajobusiness.com/fastFacts/Overview.htm)

at 1

\(^{19}\) *Id.* at 1.

\(^{20}\) *Id.* at 2.

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River. The damage caused by the Upper Animas Mining District has gone on far too long, and the health and well-being of our people cannot endure a repeat of the GKM spill. Please, do the right thing for us downstream communities. List the Upper Animas Mining District on the NPL. The current approach is inadequate to protect our people and environment. The delay in listing the site can only cause harm to our region. Please contact Jackson Brossy, Executive Director, Navajo Nation Washington Office, 202-682-7390 or jbrossy@nnwo.org.

Respectfully,

THE NAVAJO NATION

Russell Begaye, President

Jonathan Nez, Vice-President

Cc: Mayor Christine M. Tookey, City of Silverton, Colorado
Chairman Ernest Kuhlman, Board of County Commissioners of San Juan County, Colorado
Mayor Sweetie Marbury, City of Durango, Colorado
Chairman Clement Frost, Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Governor Susana Martinez, State of New Mexico
Chairman Manuel Heart, Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe
Governor Gary Herbert, State of Utah
Governor Doug Ducey, State of Arizona
U.S. Senator Tom Udall
U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich
U.S. Senator John McCain
U.S. Senator Jeff Flake
U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch
U.S. Senator Mike Lee
U.S. Senator John Barrasso
U.S. Senator John Tester
U.S. Representative Ann Kirkpatrick
U.S. Representative Paul Gosar
U.S. Representative Rob Bishop
U.S. Representative Jason Chaffetz
U.S. Representative Don Young

\textsuperscript{22} id.
SEPTEMBER 9, 2015

NAVAJO EPA DIRECTOR TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS ON GOLD KING MINE SPILL

**Washington, DC** – Navajo Nation Environment Protection Administration (NNEPA) Executive Director Dr. Donald Benn today testified before the United States House Committee on Science, Space and Technology on the Gold King Mine Spill. Dr. Benn discussed the devastating effects of the chemical spill on the Navajo Nation and called for greater support from the Federal Government to address the crisis.

“The Navajo Nation’s impacts are felt most in the disruption of our cultural principle of *hozho*, which encompasses beauty, order, and harmony, and expresses the idea of striving to maintain balance in the Navajo universe,” testified Dr. Benn. “The impairment of the River and the adverse impacts to our farmers and ranchers, and our community as a whole, will mark a moment of community trauma that will be remembered for years to come. This modernized trauma will compound our already significant historical trauma.”

He also highlighted the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s (USEPA) failed response to the spill.

“A good and close working relationship with USEPA has always been critical to the success of the NNEPA. However, recent events relating to this spill have led to a complete shift in that relationship as USEPA has sought to quiet our legitimate concerns, and has made repeated missteps in their response efforts relating to the incident triggered by their own actions,” testified Dr. Benn. “From day one, USEPA has assumed a posture of mitigating losses even while taking the lead on the incident investigation and emergency response. We have grave concerns about the strong conflict of interest USEPA has with respect to this investigation and the emergency response.”
Dr. Benn made the following specific requests of the Committee:

- Resources to address the immediate emergency.
- Resources to study and address the long-term environmental and health impacts of the spill.
- FEMA coordination.
- A critical, independent examination of the existing USEPA (defined below) organization with respect to coordination with the Navajo Nation, with serious consideration given to the creation of a Navajo USEPA Region or devolution of USEPA authority and funding directly to Navajo Nation’s own Environmental Protection Agency to assume USEPA’s responsibilities for the Navajo people.
- A fair and independent assessment of the role USEPA played in the events leading up to the chemical spill from the Gold King Mine.

This was the first of four Congressional hearings scheduled this month on the Gold King Mine Spill. Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye is scheduled to travel to Washington, DC and testify before the US Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on September 16th and before a joint hearing of the US House Natural Resources Committee and Oversight Committee on September 17th.


##
Chavez John
Appointed as
DCD Acting
Division Director

Effective Monday, June 1, 2015, President Begaye appointed Mr. Chavez John to be the Acting Division Director for the Division of Community Development. Mr. John replaces outgoing Executive Director, Carl Smith who was appointed under the Shelly-Jim administration.

Mr. John previously was the Department Manager for the Community Housing & Infrastructure Department. Mr. John has also previously served as division director for DCD, so the division is in capable hands until a permanent Director is appointed by the Office of the President/Vice-President.

Mr. John will be ensuring that all current projects and activities that DCD is responsible for, continue to fruition.
ASU Offers Training to ASC Planners

During the two weeks from June 15-26, 2015, Arizona State University provided some much needed training to ASC planners and other DCD and chapter staff at the ASU Campus in Tempe, AZ. The ASC office coordinated with ASU’s Dr. David Pijawka to host the training. This was based on an earlier project to study existing Navajo Chapter land use plans to determine what the problems are and how to improve them. The two-week training was very intensive and included lectures from prominent ASU professors.

The training will be followed up with additional trainings on the Navajo Nation and the project will culminate with the release of a land use planning guidebook for chapters.
Navajo Nation Addressing Authority

The Navajo Nation Addressing Authority is a program currently operating under the Division of Community Development Administration Department. Previously, it was a program under the Navajo Nation Telecommunications & Utilities Department as the E9-1-1 Office within the Division of General Services.

Based on the research results from previous attempts at rural addressing and the criteria for success agreed to with the State of New Mexico, it was determined that the Navajo Nation must establish a permanent organization and institutionalize the necessary processes to maintain the integrity and accuracy of Navajo Nation addressing data.

As a result, the Navajo Nation Addressing Authority (NNAA) was established in FY10 and transitioned to Division of Community Development. A Plan of Operation was developed to establish the roles and responsibilities of the organization, position descriptions were developed, personnel budgets approved, and staffing of those positions commenced in July 2008. The NNAA organization is administratively overseen by a Rural Addressing/GIS Coordinator who leads the rural addressing staff.

The NNAA was established to provide the overall program management and to develop consistency and continuity of processes for the rural addressing initiative Navajo Nation-wide in support of enhanced 9-1-1.

The NNAA is responsible for establishing the method of road naming and/or numbering and the standards for number assignment and works with the Local Rural Addressing Committees from each Chapter.
Open Positions within DCD

Administrative Service Center Accountants:
Region 2, Crownpoint, New Mexico
Region 8, Ganado, Arizona
Region 9, Birdsprings, Arizona
Region 12, Dennehotso, Arizona
Region 15, Shiprock, New Mexico
Region 16, Shiprock New Mexico

Administrative Service Center Planners:
Region 4, Baca, New Mexico
Region 9, Birdsprings, Arizona
Region 10, Tuba City, Arizona
Region 11, Shonto, Arizona
Region 12, Dennehotso, Arizona
Region 14, Chinle, Arizona

Administrative Service Center Attorneys:
Window Rock, Arizona

Chapter Coordinators:
Nahodishgish, New Mexico
Shiprock, New Mexico
Tohatchi, New Mexico
Whippoorwill, Arizona

Chapter Accounts Maintenance Specialists:
Navajo Mountain, Arizona
Tolani Lake, Arizona
Tsayatoh, New Mexico
Tse' Alnaozt'ii (Sanostee), New Mexico
Whippoorwill, Arizona
Fire And Water Makes Progress For Some LRACs

By: M. C. Baldwin

Since January 2015, NNAA (Navajo Nation Addressing Authority) has been working with AmeriCorps. The focus of the project was to conduct field work for Chapters who have not begun their FDC (field data collection) process yet based on information provided to the Navajo Nation Addressing Authority. Fieldwork included the task of identifying “addressable structures” and recording attributes (information) about that structure. Each structure visited was then captured spatially with the FDC Mapping Tool, an on-line web-resource mapping tool launched by Division of Community Development’s WIND System team under Mr. Arbin Mitchell’s directorship at Division of Community Development.

The pie chart indicates that more than half of the structures visited for Fort Defiance and Saint Michaels including Window Rock area are single family homes (SFH = 1871). With this type of information, NNAA can anticipate on establishing physical addresses for about 3,196 structures within Fort Defiance and Saint Michaels area including Window Rock. This would amount to an estimated sign material cost of $86,292 without the over-head costs (each address point

![Structure Type by Percentage](chart.png)
is $27; delineator post is $10 each.

The first group (Fire2) came into Fort Defiance in January to February. Fieldwork for this Troop included both Fort Defiance and Saint Michaels community with Window Rock and Tse Bonito area. Their term ended when they started on the north side of Oak Springs Chapter service area. While Fire2 was stationed in Fort Defiance, they got to witness the council delegate inauguration, visit Canyon DeChelly, play a Navajo shoe game, see Painted Desert, watch Super Bowl 49, participate in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day event, and attend a Hopi dance in Shipaulovi village on Valentine’s Day. While installing driveway posts by US-64 in Beclabito Chapter, the Troops visited the Four Corners Monument with melting snow near the San Juan River.

The second group (Fire6) came into Fort Defiance the weekend after Fire2 left in mid-February and stayed until the beginning of April. After the initial training, the Troop began their fieldwork from where Fire2 left off and moved into Oak Springs/Pine Springs community. The Troop moved into Kinlichii', Ganado, Lower Greasewood, the route along HWY-191 to I-40, Nazlini, and half of Chinle. Fire 6 got to hike in Canyon DeChelly and conducted some fieldwork inside the Monument Valley park on a Saturday while the presidential election date kept moving back.

After Fire6 left town, there was a two-week break before the third group (Water 1) came in to become Window Rockians between April and July. Unlike the Fire Units, the Water Unit team stayed for the entire round. In twelve weeks after their initial training, the Troop began with where Fire6 left off in Chinle and moved into Rough Rock
with remote lodging at the Chapter House as they collected residential information that included businesses, schools, and other structures. Water 1 also stopped in Jeddito near Hopi with remote lodging at the Chapter House before returning to Rough Rock Chapter House to tackle Chilchinbii’toh and covering the N-59 route to HWY-160 in Kayenta Chapter service area. The Troop returned to Chinle area to cover the route along N-64 into Tsali community. With remote lodging at Cove Chapter House, the Troop covered remote regions of the Chuska Mountain foothills back toward Red Valley Chapter service area before taking a break to join in on the Partnership for Rural Addressing Summit in Crownpoint. After the summit, the Troop covered Nahat’adziil, Tsali/Wheatfields, and finished up with Tiis Nos Bos with remote lodging at Beclabito Chapter House.

While stationed in Window Rock, the Troops planted cucumbers, leeks, corn, squash, sunflowers and bachelor buttons for the United Methodist Church. As Fire2 experienced, Water1 witnessed the inauguration Navajo Nation-style. They all walked away with bright orange long-sleeve shirts by participating in the JustMoveIt event in Blue Canyon in addition to another long-sleeve shirt from the DCD staff picnic event. There was one weekend where the Troops helped with construction work as part of the Habitat for Humanity of Gallup project in addition to other work with local non-profit organizations.

This project was made possible with the Apache County Recorder’s Office partnership and Division of Community Development with NN Addressing Authority. With this project, the NCCC (National Community Civilian Corps) members engaged with community members of different background, culture and personality and allowed them to develop communication skills and professionalism. They even learned two-step
and skip dance at Apache County sponsored Song & Dance event. The nature of the work provided them with aerial map interpretation, map orientation for navigation, data entry, and public speaking skills. Members from Fire2 visited the Navajo Nation Office of Broadcast Services for audio broadcast recording and interviewed by Navajo Times in the field. Water Team Leader even had an opportunity to speak on KTNN during the live remote broadcast from the rural addressing summit.

Based on feedback from each group, the main challenge arose with lack of available field support staff and consistent schedules. Every morning, the teams had to structure the amount of groups or amount of team members in each group in order to accommodate the field work assignments. NN Addressing Authority was unsuccessful in coordinating with LRAC (local rural addressing committee) for the region that was schedule. Another challenge centered on the availability or reliability of wireless Internet access. Wireless access was crucial for data entry and the Troops also discovered the unpredictable and often bad phone service in many areas throughout the assigned field work region.

Next step for LRAC who have been visited would be to identify the existing road/street network that serve these “addressable structures” so that those that do not have official names can be given names with Chapter resolution process. This is where local Chapters can take ownership of their rural addressing project and make it their own product. This phase alone can enhance their land use planning document to the next level. The next level could be economic opportunities by way of updating their land use plan product as supporting documents for seeking funds. The structures (business, homes, schools, etc.) that need physical addresses need to have roads and streets with official names based on the NNRAID (Navajo Nation Rural Addressing Implementation Document) standards. nnaa.nndcd.org All Chapters that were visited will be encouraged to proceed with the next phase now that the labor-intensive portion of their rural addressing project has been completed by individuals who came to Navajoland from places like Kentucky, Louisiana, Virginia, Missouri, Ohio, California, New York, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Florida, Connecticut, and New Jersey.

Overall, this was noted by all parties involved to be very successful. With the support of Division of Community Development and the encouragement of Apache County Recorder’s Office, NN Addressing Authority hope that this project will continue to move forward and provide this important service to not only Apache County residence but to the rest of Navajo Nation.
Make a typo in your email? Forget to add a recipient? Change your mind about sending a message?

Take back a message you just sent by enabling the Undo Send feature.

**INSTRUCTIONS** (from Google's support page):

1. In Gmail, click ⚙ and select Settings.
2. Select the General tab.
3. Scroll to Undo Send and click Enable.
4. At the bottom, click Save Changes.

Then, if you send a message you want to take back, just click Undo at the top of the page.

**Note:** To give you time to undo, Gmail delays sending the message for a few seconds. So if you don't select "Undo" within the time limit, your message will be sent. "Undo send" may not work if you experience connection issues.

In Gmail, you will see the following after you've sent an email. Clicking "Undo" will allow you to take back your email.
Seven Ways to Spot a Phishing Email

In a recent ZoneAlarm article, titled "Seven Ways to Spot a Phishing Email," the author provided some great tips for identifying fraudulent emails called "phishing emails".

"Phishing emails are designed to look like legitimate messages from actual banks, businesses, and other organizations. In reality, though, criminals created the message, usually in an effort to steal your money, identity, or both. They want you to click links that will take you to a website that looks authentic but is really just there to capture your credit card or other personal information or perhaps to distribute malware.

Here are some ways to spot phishing emails, and what you can do to protect yourself.

1. **The email has improper spelling or grammar**

   This is one of the most common signs that an email isn't legitimate. Sometimes, the mistake is easy to spot, such as ‘Dear eBay Costumer’ instead of ‘Dear eBay Customer.’

   Others might be more difficult to spot, so make sure to look at the email in closer detail. For example, the subject line or the email itself might say “Health coverage for the unemployeed.” The word unemployed isn't exactly difficult to spell. And any legitimate organizations would have editors who review their marketing emails carefully before sending it out. So when in doubt, check the email closely for misspellings and improper grammar.

2. **The hyperlinked URL is different from the one shown**

   The hypertext link in a phishing email may include, say, the name of a legitimate bank. But when you hover the mouse over the link (without clicking it), you may discover in a small pop-up window that the actual URL differs from the one displayed and doesn't contain the bank's name. (You should be aware that not all email software would show the actual URL in a pop-up window; however). Similarly, you can hover your mouse over the address in the ‘from’ field to see if the website domain matches that of the organization the email is supposed to have been sent from.

3. **The email urges you to take immediate action**

   Often, a phishing email tries to trick you into clicking a link by claiming that your account has been closed or put on hold, or that there’s been fraudulent activity requiring your immediate attention. Of course, it’s possible you may receive a legitimate message informing you to take action on your account. To be safe, though, don’t click the link in the email, no matter how authentic it appears to be. Instead, log into the account in question directly by visiting the appropriate website, then check your account status.
4. The email requests for personal information

Reputable organizations don’t ask their customers for personal information via email. If you have a checking account, your bank already knows your account number.

5. The email says you’ve won a contest you haven’t entered

A common phishing scam is to send an email informing recipients they’ve won a lottery or some other prize. All they have to do is click the link and enter their personal information online. Chances are, if you’ve never bought a lottery ticket or entered to win a prize, the email is a scam.

6. The email asks you to make a donation

As unbelievable as it may seem, scam artists often send out phishing emails inviting recipients to donate to a worthy cause after a natural or other tragedy. For example, after Hurricane Katrina, the American Red Cross reported more than 15 fraudulent websites were designed to look like legitimate Red Cross appeals for relief efforts. Potential victims received phishing emails asking them to donate to the Red Cross, with links to malicious sites that stole their credit card numbers. If you’d like to make a donation to a charity, do so by visiting their website directly.

7. The email includes suspicious attachments

It would be highly unusual for a legitimate organization to send you an email with an attachment, unless it’s a document you’ve requested. As always, if you receive an email that looks in any way suspicious, never click to download the attachment, as it could be malware.”

WHAT TO DO?

* Adjust your email settings to only allow email from senders that you trust

* Make sure that you have antivirus software installed and that it is up to date.

* Do not open any emails that you are not expecting.

* Do not click on any links, documents, or photos in emails that look suspicious.

To read the full story, visit: http://www.zonealarm.com/blog/2014/07/7-ways-to-spot-a-phishing-scam/
Annual Division Employee Appreciation Day Gets Rained Out

The Division of Community Development held their annual Employee Appreciation Day at the Narbona Pass Picnic Ground on Tuesday, July 14, 2015. The DCD employee event started out well. A public address system was set up with a generator. Several grills were brought in for cooking the food. The majority of DCD departments were present including the AmeriCorps Water 1 team.

Each department gave a short overview of their programs and updated the crowd on what the department was doing. The lunch had just started when heavy rain began falling. People stood under tents or fled to their cars. Umbrellas were deployed. Luckily, most people were able to get their food before the rain started. After the rain subsided to a steady drizzle, the rest of the scheduled events were carried out while people were huddled under tents and other shelter.
On Monday, May 28, 2015, the Tse Daa K’aan Chapter celebrated the completion of their chapter parking lot project. Sharon Clahchischilliage, New Mexico State Representative District 4, was instrumental in helping the chapter to secure the funding for the project and was present as a guest speaker. The project was funded with New Mexico Capital Outlay funds.

The new parking lot is able to accommodate approximately 77 spaces and covers the area from the Senior Center to east of the Chapter. This is a welcome solution for community members who have to deal with the seasonal problem of mud in the parking area. This will also be very helpful for disabled people, elderly, and others who have special needs to get better access inside the Chapter House.
EPA Funding for Navajo Nation Homes

The Navajo Nation Community Housing and Infrastructure Department, partnering with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, are building homes for Navajo families. CHID is managing the construction of the homes and currently is constructing a hogan (pictured above) in Sweetwater, Arizona.

The hogan project is over 70% completed and projected to be completed soon. The project oversight is provided by Region IX San Francisco, Cal. Randy Nattis. The CHID Supervisor is Stanley Jones.

In the past EPA was using private contractors out of Albuquerque but they were not satisfied with the quality of work. EPA approached CHID to partner with them and construct these homes since they were already on Navajo Nation land. CHID built nine (9) homes in the Haystack area and EPA was so satisfied with the quality of work and adherence to the time schedules that they continued the partnership and agreed to fund additional projects.
New Mexico Project Receives funds from New Mexico Tribal Infrastructure Fund (TIF) and New Mexico Capital Outlay

In May 2015, eleven Navajo Nation projects were presented to the TIF Board at the TIF Board Meeting at the New Mexico Capitol in Santa Fe. The projects including three planning projects—Red Rock, Chichiltah, and Mariano Lake Chapters; four design projects—Tohajiilee, Ramah, Shiprock, and Newcomb Chapters; and four construction projects—Red Rock, Twin Lakes, and Littlewater Chapters and the Navajo Nation Crownpoint wellness center. All these projects were awarded funds. Congratulations!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Mexico Tribal Infrastructure Funds</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red Rock (Tse’ Lichii)</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Red Rock Senior Center Building</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chichiltah</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Drill Water Well/Chichiltah-Vanderwagen W/L</td>
<td>$268,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariano Lake</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Mariano Lake Powerline Project</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tohajiilee</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Tohajiilee Water System Improvements</td>
<td>$600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramah</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Section 21 Water Well Evaluation &amp; Design</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiprock</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Emerg. Response Incident Command Center</td>
<td>$600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcomb</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Waterline Extension</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Rock (Tse’ Lichii)</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Upgrade Sewer Line/sewer Lagoon</td>
<td>$680,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twin Lake (Bahastl’ ah’)</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Johnson Road Improvements</td>
<td>$800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Littlewater</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Heart Butte Electrical Power Line Extension</td>
<td>$259,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo Nation</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Crownpoint Wellness Center</td>
<td>$2,200,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Navajo Nation also receive New Mexico Capital Outlay Funds From the New Mexico Legislative Special Session held on June 18, 2015. The funds are for 30 Chapter Projects, a Dine’ College Project, a Navajo Technical University Project, a Navajo Division of Transportation Project for US Highway 491, and a Red Lake Charter School Project. Congratulations to the projects that received funds. The New Mexico Funds from both TIF and Capital Outlay will need to be accepted by the 164 Process of the Navajo Nation which will be handled by the Capital Improvement Office.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Mexico Capital Outlay</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baahaali Chaper</td>
<td>Senior Center - Equip</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baahaali Chapter</td>
<td>Bathroom Additions</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baahaali Chapter</td>
<td>Powerlines Extend</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baca/Prewitt Chapter</td>
<td>Powerline Extend Seawald Area</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chichiltah Chapter</td>
<td>Chapter House Construction</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coyote Canyon Chapter</td>
<td>Senior Center-Construction</td>
<td>$520,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coyote Canyon Chapter</td>
<td>Senior CTR Meals Equip</td>
<td>$36,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Chapter</td>
<td>Parking Lot</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Chapter</td>
<td>Water Tank &amp; Fire Pump</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Springs Chapter</td>
<td>Deer Springs Rd Improvements</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dine College</td>
<td>Access Lanes &amp; Sidewalks</td>
<td>$700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadii’Ahi/To’Koi Chapter</td>
<td>Chapter Cmty Services CTRS</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Valley Chapter</td>
<td>Chapter House</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Littlewater Chapter</td>
<td>Electrical Powerlines</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariano Lake Chapter</td>
<td>Utility Line Connect</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Springs Chapter</td>
<td>Multi-Purpose Center</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nageezi Chapter</td>
<td>Powerline Extend</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naschitti Chapter</td>
<td>Cemetery Expand/Improvements</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo Tech Univ</td>
<td>Health/Security/Safety Improve</td>
<td>$535,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinedale Chapter</td>
<td>Veterans Modular BLDG</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pueblo Pintado Chapter</td>
<td>Senior Center-Construction</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Lake Chapter</td>
<td>Charter School</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Rock Chapter</td>
<td>Chapter House</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Springs Chapter</td>
<td>Admin Office Extension</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiprock Chapter</td>
<td>Wellness Center</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoreau Chapter</td>
<td>Veterans Service Center</td>
<td>$275,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toadlena/Two Grey Hills Chapter</td>
<td>Community Cemeteries</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tooh Haltsooi Chapter</td>
<td>Bldgs Demolition &amp; Diposal</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Navajo Nation Division of Community Development
U. S. Social Security Administration Offers Computer Grants to Navajo Nation Communities

The U.S. Social Security Administration is offering 100 additional computers to Navajo Nation communities. In the first grant, the Social Security Administration donated 1 computer to each of 12 Chapters. The computers are meant to be used by the Navajo public to access Internet resources such as the Social Security Administration’s own online services via its website.

DCD sent out email notifications to chapters and asked for additional information if they wanted to participate in the program. There are 2 main requirements: 1) That there is adequate space for the computers to be set up in a publicly-accessible location; and 2) that the chapter have enough broadband capacity to share with the public computer.

DCD has already received plenty of responses from chapters wishing to participate. DCD is in the process of finalizing the process with the Social Security Administration. Once finalized, installations will begin at identified locations to deliver and set up computers.

Tohatchi Chapter Gets Connected to NTUA Fiber Optic Line for High Speed Broadband Access

On Monday, June 29, 2015, Tohatchi Chapter began receiving high-speed broadband access from NTUA Wireless using NTUA’s fiber optic network. NTUA’s fiber optic network was constructed in 2012 using a combination of funding from the U.S. Recovery Act and NTUA’s own funds in a $42 Million project. Tohatchi Chapter is subscribing to a 5Mb/s broadband connection and now has the capability to tap into Internet services that their old connection would not fully support, such as video-conferencing or online cloud service and cloud storage.

Tohatchi intends to make good use of the new resource and look at creating a shared network with other chapters in the region and begin building some services that all chapters can benefit from.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Mexico Capital Outlay</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Torreon/Star Lake Chapter</td>
<td>EMS BLDG</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsayatoh &amp; Manuelito Chapters</td>
<td>Multi-Purpose CTR</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsayatoh Chapter</td>
<td>Chapter House Improvements</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tse’ii’ahi Chapter</td>
<td>Vehicles &amp; Equipment</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanostee Chapter</td>
<td>US Highway 491 Safety &amp; Bridge Design</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Rock</td>
<td>Veterans Admin CTR Addition</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$4,402,600</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Local Governance Certified Chapters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>LGA Cert. Date</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>LGA Cert. Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Nahata Drip</td>
<td>Ft. Defiance</td>
<td>8/16/02</td>
<td>1 Newcomb</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>6/18/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Steamboat</td>
<td>Ft. Defiance</td>
<td>5/30/03</td>
<td>2 San Juan</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>3/7/07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Cornfields</td>
<td>Ft. Defiance</td>
<td>7/14/10</td>
<td>3 Tie/Das/Nav</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>6/21/07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Naschitti</td>
<td>Ft. Defiance</td>
<td>11/22/10</td>
<td>4 Sheepsprings</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>8/24/07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Lupton</td>
<td>Ft. Defiance</td>
<td>11/24/10</td>
<td>5 Tollkan</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>11/20/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Dilkon</td>
<td>Ft. Defiance</td>
<td>12/21/10</td>
<td>6 Toadlena/Two Grey Hills</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>1/10/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Greasewood Springs</td>
<td>Ft. Defiance</td>
<td>12/21/10</td>
<td>7 Burnham</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>7/11/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Kinlichee</td>
<td>Ft. Defiance</td>
<td>12/29/10</td>
<td>8 Beclabito</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>1/10/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Teesto</td>
<td>Ft. Defiance</td>
<td>7/11/11</td>
<td>9 Mexican Water</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>2/7/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Ganado</td>
<td>Ft. Defiance</td>
<td>12/2/14</td>
<td>10 Upper Fruita</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>2/28/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Houck</td>
<td>Ft. Defiance</td>
<td>12/2/14</td>
<td>11 Aneth</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>3/31/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 Cove</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>4/5/15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL: 11**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>LGA Cert. Date</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>LGA Cert. Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Shonto</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>9/22/99</td>
<td>1 Chinle</td>
<td>Chinle</td>
<td>12/21/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tuba City</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>12/27/04</td>
<td>2 Pinon</td>
<td>Chinle</td>
<td>2/21/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Kayenta</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>8/6/10</td>
<td>3 Whippoorwill Springs</td>
<td>Chinle</td>
<td>12/2/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Bodaway/Gap</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>12/21/10</td>
<td>4 Nazlin</td>
<td>Chinle</td>
<td>2/17/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Birdsprings</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>7/11/11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Chilchinico</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>7/11/11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Leupp</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>7/11/11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 LeChue</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>1/31/12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Dennehosito</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>2/14/12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Tonalea</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>12/2/14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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**TOTAL: 10**

**TOTAL CERTIFICATION: 43**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>LGA Cert. Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Littlewater</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>11/15/07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Baahasali</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>12/24/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 WhiteRock</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>12/21/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Ojo Enchino</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>3/6/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Baca/Prewit</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>12/22/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Casamero Lake</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>4/15/15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL: 6**
OperationYellowWater

ATTENTION:
If you are interested in volunteering or donating to assist Navajo communities who have been impacted by the August Gold Mine spill on the San Juan River:

VOLUNTEER
www.OperationYellowWater.com (505) 371-8408

DONATE
www.gofund.me/OperationYellowh20

Visit any Wells Fargo and donate to Operation Yellow Water with the account ending in 3176
Navajo Nation Honors Lives Lost During 9/11 with Moment of Silence

Window Rock – Fourteen years ago today the United States came under attack in what has become known as 9/11. It was during this attack that two passenger airliners were hijacked and flown into the North and South Towers of the World Trade Center complex in New York City.

Nationally, citizens across the United States watched in horror as the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center collapsed.

“Today we, the Navajo Nation, are in remembrance of the tragedy that happened on that day,” Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye said.

At 10:45 a.m. today, the Navajo Nation and the United States will take a moment of silence to remember those who lost their lives that day. President Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez would also like to remember all the Navajo Nation firefighters and law enforcement officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

“Approximately 3,000 people lost their lives that day. Out of that number, 343 were firefighters which is the largest loss of firefighters in history. Law enforcement lost 72 officers.” President Begaye said. “We honor them today for putting their lives on the line.”

The President and Vice President are asking for continued prayers for those who had lost their lives on 9/11 and those who continue to defend the Navajo Nation and the United States.

“During 9/11, the United States was involved in a war in the Middle East. As always our Navajo people have enlisted and accepted the call to serve their country,” said Vice President Jonathan Nez. “We continue to pray for our children who have been to war and are still out protecting the United States and the Navajo Nation within our Four Sacred Mountains.”
President Begaye, HUD Assistant Secretary Lourdes Castro-Ramirez Meet With Navajo Veterans on Housing Issue

FT. DEFIANCE, Ariz. September 11, 2015—Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez remain committed to addressing the housing need of Navajo veterans and to that end, they brought together tribal and federal resources to find solutions to the housing crisis.

On Friday, Navajo veterans, Office of the President and Vice President, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Navajo Housing Authority, Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs, and the Southwest Office of Native American Programs met to discuss the homeless veterans issue.

President Begaye introduced Lourdes Castro-Ramirez, assistant secretary for HUD. “We wanted to provide you an opportunity to hear from her on where she stands on bringing HUD monies into the VA and on helping our veterans,” he said.

Speaking in Navajo, Vice President Nez said, “We appreciate our veterans and we remember you. We met with leaders in Washington, D.C. and told them our Navajo veterans and their families want homes.”

He said veterans are not shy about reminding the Begaye-Nez administration that Navajo veterans are number one on the four pillars of the administration.

“That’s the reason why we invited HUD. We look forward to your support for the Navajo Nation Veterans Act for approval by the Navajo Nation Council and getting it signed into law by President Begaye,” said Vice President Nez.

Castro-Ramirez reaffirmed that HUD is committed to ending veteran homelessness. In 2010, the Obama administration launched Opening Doors, a comprehensive federal strategy to prevent and end homelessness.

“As we saw today, the funds allocated for affordable housing opportunities can be used to strengthen the community, like a new youth center, creation of a veterans home or a facility that is accessible by the community,” Castro-Ramirez said.

Since 2011, statistics indicate that numbers have decreased and veterans’ homelessness is down by 33 percent, she said. In 2014, Congress appropriated $4 million for Tribal HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

The partnership is a pilot project between HUD and the VA.

“Tribal HUD VASH is our first attempt at proving housing opportunities to veterans in Indian Country. It’s a pilot project with only $4 million but it’s a start and we expect 600 veterans to be served,” Castro-Ramirez said.

HUD is allocated $650 million for Native American programs, she said, which is not enough to address the need that exists. The funding amount has remained the same for the past 14 years.

The agency veteran commanders spoke about issues they faced with housing. A common thread throughout was the trust land status of the Navajo Nation and the reluctance by banks to approve home loans on the reservation.

The commanders also raised the need for infrastructure and appliances for the homes, rather than just providing shells that must be completed by the veterans occupying the houses. The quality of the housing material was also questioned.

Aneva Yazzie, chief executive officer for NHA, said NAHASDA funding has strict eligibility guidelines with regard to income that must be complied with by applicants.

“The need is so much greater in Indian Country and that’s even more so with Navajo being the largest tribal land base,” Yazzie said.

“We look forward to working with President Begaye and NHA. We look forward to rolling out the Tribal HUD VASH in the next few months. We commend you all on keeping the focus on this important effort,” Castro-Ramirez said.
President Begaye, HUD Assistant Secretary Lourdes Castro-Ramirez Open Ft. Defiance Multi-Purpose Youth Center

FT. DEFIANCE, Ariz.—The ribbon has been cut and the new Ft. Defiance Multi-Purpose Youth Center is open to provide local and regional Navajo youth an opportunity for healthy activities in a safe atmosphere.

The 17,000 square foot facility was designed by Dyron Murphy Architects, P.C. and was constructed by Arviso Construction. The team broke ground for the $6.7 million project on March 11, 2013. The Ft. Defiance youth complex features the new multi-purpose center, a skate park, playground, three baseball fields and the building for the Office of Dine’ Youth on 23 acres of land located east of Tsehootsoi Middle School.

The price tag for entire complex is just under $10 million.

On Sept. 11, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez joined Navajo Housing Authority, visiting officials from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and others to celebrate the new facility.

Navajo Nation Council delegates Ben Bennett and Amber Kanazbah Crotty were also in attendance to celebrate area youth.

Alisha Damon, a staff member of Ft. Defiance ODY, provided the welcome address. She said the new building is going to allow the office to do a lot more work to empower youth and emphasize physical fitness and living a healthy lifestyle.

“We try to implement a variety of programs to the youth to grow. As they develop, our mission is to help them strive forward in the right direction,” said Damon.

Ashley Mitchell, former basketball standout for Window Rock High School, gave the youth perspective on ODY and the services provided to Navajo kids.

“When I see this building, I see a place where children can go, a safe place. I grew up on the reservation and I see this, I see the kids enjoying it,” said Mitchell.

The ribbon has been cut to the $6.7 million Office of Dine’ Youth Multi-Purpose Youth Center on Friday morning. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
up around the people from the Office of Dine’ Youth. It’s a place where I felt safe and I felt wanted,” Mitchell said.

“I encourage the students to take advantage of this building and make the best of it. Be thankful you have someplace to go,” she added.

Guest speaker Harold Wauneka gave a community outlook on the youth complex and how the puzzle came together one piece at a time in interests of area kids.

He said during his tenure on the Navajo Nation Council, ODY did not have a place to go and they approached the Ft. Defiance Chapter in search of a building. Eventually the BIA was invited to the table and the group asked about the land.

“We had to start from scratch,” Wauneka said, adding that the 23-acre tract was surveyed, including archaeological and biological clearances.

The Navajo Nation Council provided $800,000 for the clearances. Next, Wauneka returned to the tribal council for the second phase: the design of the office building and the skate park, funded at $2.4 million.

To this day, we got another allocation of $6.7 million from NAHASDA, he said.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez introduced Lourdes Castro-Ramirez, assistant secretary at HUD. They presented her with a shawl and thanked her for traveling to the Navajo Nation to celebrate the new center and see the housing crisis firsthand.

Vice President Nez said the new building is going to empower the future leaders of the Navajo Nation.

“Take care of it, be sure your parents tell your kids and grandkids. Take care of it and it will last 50 years. We don’t want any graffiti. We don’t want any broken glass here. This is yours,” Vice President Nez said.

“We’re really honored to have Lourdes Castro-Ramirez with us,” President Begaye said, adding that she oversees more than 1,300 employees and $26 billion in housing funds.

He said the main request from Navajo people is housing and that the Begaye-Nez administration is looking forward to working with HUD and NAHASDA to address those needs.

Castro-Ramirez said HUD is committed to expanding opportunities and working with partners.

“Community projects, community facilities, the Ft. Defiance Youth Center are essential in lifting up youth and families,” Castro-Ramirez said. “We know that safe, affordable housing and economic opportunities are core necessities in every community and Indian Country is no exception.

“We work with 567 federally recognized tribes to support their efforts to preserve and expand the supply of housing for low income families and to develop community development projects like this youth center,” she added.

The commitment by the Obama administration to improve the quality of life in Indian Country will continue and focus on three areas, she said.

“Preparing the youth for the higher education and the workforce, creating and supporting native communities and expanding economic opportunities,” Castro-Ramirez said.
September 15, 2015

President Begaye Asks Secretary Burwell’s Tribal Advisory Committee for Cancer and Mental Health Facilities

WASHINGTON—Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye called for the establishment of cancer treatment and mental health facilities on the Navajo Nation in a tribal caucus held today by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Secretary’s Tribal Advisory Committee (STAC).

“With 330,000 Navajo people, we could save money and provide our own immediate treatment,” he said. “For services, many Navajo people go off reservation. We don’t need to farm these services out.”

President Begaye told the tribal caucus that cancer is the second highest cause of death on the Navajo Nation which emphasizes the Nation’s need for cancer treatment facilities.

He noted that in-patient mental health facilities are needed to serve veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and the Nation’s high suicide rate.

“We’ve recently had three suicides in communities that were affected by the Gold King Mine spill,” he said. “It has created great concern for people in these areas.”

President Begaye then addressed concerns the Nation has faced in dealing with the consequences of the recent Gold King Mine contamination spill.

“The next five generations will still be dealing with the effects of the river spill on our water and food systems,” he said. “Our rivers and lands are contaminated. Even now we are feeling the impacts on our health.”
President Begaye noted that he has sent a letter to Robert McSwain from Indian Health Services (IHS) asking for assistance in drilling wells in areas affected by the Gold King Mine spill. The letter also requested assistance with well water testing, the construction of a water treatment facility and a 90-day reservoir.

According to the president, McSwain has yet to respond.

“We have asked McSwain for help and he has given us a verbal affirmative but he hasn’t acted on it. We want a letter from him.”

President Begaye also expressed concern over how the Navajo Nation Health and Social Service programs are funded.

“We should not be in the category of discretionary funding as if we were a program within the Federal Government,” he said. “These funds should be provided to the Nation because we signed a treaty. It is the trust responsibility of the government and we should not be treated as a program.”

Tribal leaders convened at the tribal caucus to discuss budget updates, IHS issues and outreach efforts. The day’s session also saw updates from the Administration for Children and Families on the Indian Child Welfare Act, the National Institute of Health on the Precision Medicine Initiative and the Center of Disease Control on the work of CDC’s Tribal Advisory Committee.

###
WASHINGTON-President Russell Begaye today called for increased support from the Federal Government to address the recent Gold King Mine spill in testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. President Begaye also discussed the failed response from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to the crisis.

“In light of the devastating impacts from this spill, both known and yet unknown, we need to act quickly and thoughtfully to protect our Navajo citizens, our natural resources, the Navajo way of life, and most importantly our future generations,” testified President Begaye. “We need assistance from the responsible parties to address the short- and long-term impacts, to make us whole, and to return the beauty and hozho to our River and our people. In addition to oversight and national attention, Congress can provide forward-thinking legislative solutions to some of these issues.”

To address the serious impacts of this spill and the continued threat to the Navajo people from future contamination, President Begaye made the following requests of Congress:

- Resources from USEPA, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to address the immediate emergency;

- Assurances that USEPA will fairly and timely compensate the affected farmers and livestock owners for their damages, both in the near term and long term.

- Resources to conduct our own water, sediment, and soil monitoring, and recognized authority for the Navajo Nation EPA to do the necessary work.

- That the USEPA address all the contamination that is flowing into the River.
- Resources to address near- and intermediate-term environmental and health impacts;

- Resources to study and address the long-term environmental and health impacts of the spill, and to restore the River to a safe and healthy state; and

- A fair and independent assessment of the role USEPA, and others, played in the events leading up to the Gold King Mine spill, and the establishment of a different lead agency.

President Begaye strongly criticized USEPA’s response to the spill and its complete lack of transparency.

“It took the USEPA almost two full days to notify us of the spill. We view this as a violation of the government-to-government relationship between the federal government and the Navajo Nation,” testified President Begaye.

Tomorrow, President Begaye will testify before a joint hearing of the U.S. House Natural Resources and Oversight and Government Reform Committees.

CLICK HERE FOR FULL TESTIMONY


###
WASHINGTON – President Russell Begaye today testified before a joint session of the House Committees on Oversight and Government Reform and Natural Resources on the Gold King Mine Spill. President Begaye asked the committees for more Federal support to cope with the disaster.

“Today we come to ask for your help. The White House is silent. FEMA, DOI and other federal agencies are being told by the USEPA to not use their own resources to help us,” testified President Begaye. “USEPA has made promises but we have not seen any of these promises fulfilled. The promises remain empty. They are like the thunder we hear over our land but with no rain.”

In his opening statements, Chairman Rob Bishop (R-UT) told USEPA Administrator Gina McCarthy that making sure USEPA was held accountable was the primary cause and reason for the hearing.

“We want to find out what happened, how to solve it and to make sure it doesn’t happen again,” he said. “We want to find out why EPA was so slow to notify downstream users of what was happening. I’m very proud of the tribes in the area that were effective with the resources that they had.”

Congressman Stephen F. Lynch (D-MASS) told the joint committee that he used to live in Farmington, N.M. He said he knows the Navajo people are intensely invested spiritually in their land.

“What are we going to do to make things right with the Navajo?” he asked Administrator McCarthy. “They are a sovereign nation and we have a huge responsibility to rectify this situation.”
Representative Paul A. Gosar (R-AZ) asked President Begaye if he felt the EPA’s coordination was adequate in notifying the Navajo Nation.

“If coordination is waiting a day before notification happens, I don’t think that is coordination at all,” President Begaye answered.

Congressman Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM) asked that a memo from EPA be added to the record in which the EPA itself stated that they waited 24 hours before notifying their very own agency in Region 8 about the spill. This was before the EPA had ever notified any of the surrounding states or the tribes.

President Begaye outlined the following requests for Congress:

- First and foremost is compensation. The farmers and ranchers cannot wait months before they are compensated for their damages. Have the EPA setup an Emergency Compensation Fund and provide ongoing repayment of losses as they are submitted.
- Alternative water source for drinking, for livestock and for irrigating farms. We need wells to be drilled, a reservoir built and water piped from the Navajo Dam.
- USEPA must build a laboratory on the Navajo Nation so we can continuously test our water, soil, plants, and livestock.
- The Committee should tell President Obama to declare the San Juan River a disaster area. Only then will other federal agencies beside EPA provide services we need. This will allow FEMA, USDA, DOI and other federal agencies to provide resources we need now.
- The Committee should hold a follow up hearing 6 months from now to keep USEPA accountable for this crisis.

President Begaye also testified yesterday before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

President Begaye's full testimony is enclosed:

###
Good Morning. Chairman Chaffetz (Oversight and Government Reform) Chairman Rob Bishop (House Committee on Natural Resources) and ranking members of the committees.

My Name is RUSSELL BEGAYE of the KINLICHIINII and BITAHNI clan and I am the PRESIDENT of the NAVAJO NATION.

I was born and raised along the San Juan River in Shiprock, NM. Years ago, when I was a little boy, we saw hundreds of dead fish floating down the river. As boys we jump in the river catching the dying fish. I have been wondering for years, what happened and why were those fish were dead.

Just a month ago, I finally got an answer. On August 13 when Administrator McCarthy came to visit our Nation, I learned 1.5 million gallons of radium 226 spilled from the Uranium Mill Site located by the bridge in Shiprock. We not only swam in that radioactive water but my brothers, my community ate the contaminated fish. USEPA did not warn the people when that spill occurred or helped the community recover, instead kept quiet.

I am asking members of these two committees to not allow history to repeat itself. Hold the EPA accountable for the toxic spill that occur on August 5th about a month and half ago. Don't let them get away with their negligence.

My people are suffering. Much of the organic crops have been lost. Our livestock are penned up. Our farmers and ranchers are exhausted from hauling water. Our children are afraid of the river. We have been told by the EPA that clean up will take decades. This is what we will have to live with for years to come.

So, today we come to ask for your help. The White House is silent. FEMA, DOI and other federal agencies are being told to not use their own resources to help us by the USEPA.

USEPA has made promises but we have not seen any of these promises fulfilled. The promises remain empty. They are like the thunder we hear over our land but with no rain.

Our people need...

1. First and foremost is compensation now. The farmers and ranchers cannot wait months before they are compensated for their damages. I know this year bills will not be paid, clothing for children will not be bought, and food will be scarce. Have the EPA setup an Emergency Compensation Fund and provide ongoing repayment of losses as they are submitted. Don't be a party to this injustice by having our farmers waive future claims after they get their first compensation checks.
2. We need an alternative water source for drinking, for our livestock and for irrigating our farms. We are asking that wells be drilled, a reservoir built and water be piped from the Navajo Dam.

3. We want the EPA to build us a laboratory on the Navajo Nation so we can continuously test our water, soil, plants, and livestock.

5. We are asking this Committee to tell President Obama to declare the San Juan river a disaster area. Only then will other federal agencies beside EPA provide services we need. This will allow FEMA, USDA, DOI and other federal agencies to provide resources we need now.

6. We are asking this Committee to hold a follow up hearing 6 months from now because we do not want this to become old news a week from now.

The Navajo Nation will not let any and all negligent parties to get away with this disaster. We will stand our ground until our River and river beds are safe once again for our children to play in and our people to use as a drinking source.

The Navajo Nation will no longer stand back when these types of atrocities are done to our people, our land, and our water for WATER IS LIFE.

I thank you for your time and attention and we will look to your leadership to right this injustice. Ahehee.
Begay-Nez Administration Promotes Suicide Prevention

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—On Sept. 16, by a vote of 4-0, the Health, Education and Human Services Committee of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council unanimously agreed to accept the report by the Utah Navajo Health Systems, Inc. UNHS Board of Directors declared a state of emergency after the recent spate of suicides that gripped the community. The organization is located in Montezuma Creek, Utah.

“The rash of suicides has shaken the communities that we serve. The emotional toll on everyone has been significant,” said Robert Whitehorse, board chairman.

September is National Suicide Prevention Month and a call to action by the UNHS to work with the Navajo Nation on creating a safety net against the effects of suicide.

“We will work with other agencies to increase awareness, provide additional educational tools, de-stigmatize the illnesses and treatments, network with healthcare and mental health professionals and increase our presence with primary and secondary schools,” Whitehorse said.

The root causes of suicide include poverty, depression, bullying, alcoholism, drug abuse and other social conditions.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez have raised awareness on suicide prevention since taking office in May.

Vice President Nez spoke of a young Navajo male, set to graduate from high school in May, but instead took his own life.

“Suicide is just not a problem on Navajo; it’s a problem throughout Indian Country,” he said.

Vice President Nez said the declaration of emergency issued by the UNHS was proactive.

He encouraged the HEHSC to submit a letter of support to OPVP requesting an emergency declaration to release funding to UNHS for suicide prevention efforts. OPVP will begin the emergency declaration process.

In June, Vice President Nez reported before the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell and provided suggestions on fighting suicide, namely the establishment of a national workgroup to begin planning.

He recommended that the workgroup not just be comprised of bureaucrats, but include tribal leaders from around Indian Country. The appointments to the workgroup are forthcoming, he added, and encouraged a member of the HEHSC to join.

Suicide is an unacceptable subject matter for Navajo people, but the discussion must take place, Vice President Nez said.

“Everywhere I go, I try to bring up suicide prevention for our young people. It’s mostly our young Navajo men that are taking their own lives,” he said.

“How do we address that?”

He said intergenerational teaching between the elders and youth is the answer.

“Many of us were probably raised by our grandparents talking to us in Navajo, letting us know that this is how life is to be. But now, our younger generation does not understand the language and there’s a gap,” Vice President Nez said.

“Language is the foundation.”

The next interdisciplinary team meeting on suicide response and post intervention will take place on Sept. 22 at the Division of Dine’ Education Center.
Vice President Nez Celebrates Dine’ College Housing, SUB

TSAILE, Ariz.—Students at the main campus of Dine’ College now have new housing.

On Sept. 18, college faculty, administration, special guests and the general public celebrated 32 new housing units and the newly renovated Student Union Building.

A Title III grant from the U.S. Department of Education funded the new housing units and building renovations, at a cost of more than $15 million. The housing units totaled $13 million and the SUB renovations were completed at a cost of $2.1 million.

The housing complex incorporated Navajo cultural elements and are a mix of two and three-bedroom units with a full service kitchen, bathroom, washer, dryer, microwave, refrigerator and stove.

Additionally, each unit will have wireless Internet access for students to work on their studies. Perimeter fencing around the complex was included for child safety and security.

Dr. Maggie George, Dine’ College President, said the SUB was constructed in 1972 and a lot of work went into making it shiny and new. The college utilized the “one stop shop” concept and the SUB now houses student services, admissions, financial aid, registrar, and student advisors.

“It’s still a work in progress. We have some monies that we will be putting into the auditorium and we’re hoping to have that done by December,” George said.

She reported that Dine’ College received another $16 million grant from DOE three weeks ago, which will be split and used for student success and programming focused on access to higher education, retention, persistence and graduation rates.

The other $8 million will go to building renovations and for fiber optic connection from the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority last mile project.

Additionally, Dine’ College received word earlier in the week about their selection for a $2.5 million grant for a STEM initiative from the National Science Foundation.

Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez provided the keynote address.

“On behalf of my náá, President Russell Begaye, we congratulate you on this milestone for the college. Take care of your renovated student union building and family housing units,” said Vice President Nez.

The new housing units are going to provide Navajo families an opportunity to return to school and reach their educational goals, an admirable goal in step with self-determination and self-reliance, he noted.

The one stop concept should be replicated throughout the Nation, he said, adding that Navajo youth and senior citizens need to come together in a centralized location for intergenerational opportunities,” he said.

Vice President Nez attended Dine’ College as a student and as an adjunct faculty member, teaching classes in history and government.

A ribbon cutting ceremony, barbecue luncheon and a tour of the housing units concluded the celebration.

###
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NATIONAL INDIAN HEALTH BOARD 32ND ANNUAL CONSUMER CONFERENCE UNITES TRIBES FOR POLICY, ADVOCACY, HEALTH

WASHINGTON, D.C. September 23, 2015—This week, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez attended the National Indian Health Board 32nd Annual Consumer Conference and spoke on issues important to the Navajo Nation.

In particular, they took the opportunity to advance the need for suicide prevention awareness on tribal nations, especially on the Navajo Nation. Based on the 2006 to 2009 Navajo Nation Mortality Report, the suicide rate is 17.48 persons per 100,000.

There is an average of 29 suicides per year. The Navajo Nation Epidemiology Center is working on implementation of a suicide surveillance system to address the issue. Most recently, an interdisciplinary team for suicide prevention, response and postvention has been established.

The mission of NIHB is to provide one voice affirming and empowering American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples to protect and improve health and reduce health disparities.

Various tribal leaders from Indian Country united to speak on issues ranging from suicide, drug addiction, alcoholism, domestic violence, post-traumatic stress syndrome and other social maladies afflicting American Indians.

On Sept. 20, Vice President Nez attended the board meeting and magnified the need for suicide awareness, especially after four suicides in Montezuma Creek gripped the Navajo Nation recently.

“This suicide epidemic isn’t just on Navajo, it’s across Indian Country,” he said. “We had four suicides in the Utah portion of the Navajo Nation in the past few weeks, an area affected by the Gold King Mine spill.

“The San Juan River is a vital lifeline to the Navajo people and we do not know if the water contamination was responsible for them taking their lives, our young people,” he added.

Robert McSwain, director of Indian Health Services, provided an update on the budget and possible government shutdown. He spoke at length about the
IHS FY 2016 reprogramming of funds, in particular, the use of $1.8 million to purchase modular buildings for Rapid City Indian Hospital to establish outpatient therapy for at-risk individuals. In the past six months, Pine Ridge Reservation had 19 suicides.

The current federal budget discussions are another major concern, he said.

“IHS has gone into preparation mode. We’ve made numerous calls to tribal leadership and programs across the country because we wanted people to understand the mechanics of a possible shutdown,” said McSwain.

IHS discussions on the 2018 budget are set to begin in November and McSwain said his staff is reaching out to other federal agencies like the U.S. Department of Health and Urban Development, Department of Interior and Department of Education to assist with addressing the suicide issue throughout Indian Country.

On Sept. 21, President Begaye and Vice President Nez participated in the IHS listening session and spoke of the need to retain funding for Gallup Indian Medical Center and additional funding to address the suicide issue on Navajo.

“We would like to be considered for the suicide funds from the White House and their emphasis on Generation Indigenous. We had four suicides in the last few weeks and I know the area where they occurred do not have facilities,” said President Begaye.

He added that Navajo is in need of a similar facility as the Rapid City modular building to address the mental health need on the Nation.

Vice President Nez said he didn’t know if there was a correlation between the four suicides and the Gold King Mine spill, especially since Montezuma Creek is located along the San Juan River.

“We need to have inter-agency, inter-department discussions on the epidemic of suicides in Indian Country,” he said.

On Sept. 22, President Begaye spoke to Native American youth during the 5th Annual Youth Film Festival. A number of Navajo youth were also in attendance to showcase their films.

“Stay true to who you are, follow your vision, you dreams,” said President Begaye.

The films were three to five minutes at length and focused on various health issues in tribal communities. More than 30 films were screened.

Vice President Nez addressed the NIHB members on Sept. 23 and said the intergenerational connection between elders and youth needs to be explored to end the suicide epidemic across the nation.
He touched on issues such as home healthcare services and emergency medical transport companies, often operated by non-Navajo organizations, proliferating throughout the Navajo Nation and need for regulations.

“We really need to exercise our sovereignty as a nation and begin to promote more Navajo business owners on our tribal lands,” Vice President Nez said.

The conference ends on Sept. 24.

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He added that Navajo is in need of a similar facility as the Rapid City modular building to address the mental health need on the Nation.

Vice President Nez said there is potentially a correlation between the four suicides and the Gold King Mine spill, especially since Montezuma Creek is located along the San Juan River.

He noted that IHS needs to fund a long-range study of the impacts from the spill, something like the Navajo Birth Cohort Study for uranium contamination.

“We need to have inter-agency, inter-department discussions on the epidemic of suicides in Indian Country,” he said.

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“We really need to exercise our sovereignty as a nation and begin to promote more Navajo business owners on our tribal lands,” Vice President Nez said.

The conference ends on Sept. 24.
Vice President Nez Shares Message of Empowerment at COPE Symposium

Vice President Jonathan Nez said families need to get back to basic concepts like sitting down together at the dinner table to have a meal and discuss the events of the day. He said this is especially important now, during a time of suicides across Indian Country.

According to statistics from Partners in Health, there are more than 26,000 Navajos with diabetes living on the Nation, amounting to 22 percent of the 176,604 people who live on the reservation.

Vice President Nez said the Healthy Dine’ Nation Act was an unprecedented initiative for a sovereign government. The two percent sales tax on unhealthy foods across the board was a response to diabetes, he said.

Foods like vegetables and fruit are not subject to any tax, including standard sales tax.

“These tax dollars go directly to the communities for projects like running trails, wellness centers and other healthy initiatives,” Vice President Nez said. “This was a grassroots community effort and I appreciate the Council for passing the Healthy Dine’ Nation Act.”

During their tenure on the 22nd Navajo Nation Council, President Begaye and Vice President Nez both supported the Healthy Dine’ Nation Act and voted for its passage.

The food distribution program by the U.S. Department of Agriculture is another area the Navajo Nation is exploring to grow food sovereignty.

“President Begaye and I challenged the USDA to consider Navajo Beef for their products, it’s the livestock from our Navajo ranchers. It’s also time that we utilize Navajo Agricultural Products Industry to provide the food distribution program produce from their farms,” Vice President Nez said.

By utilizing products from NAPI for the food distribution program and canning these foods for distribution is going to create new jobs, he added.

“We grew up with our own foods from our farms and livestock. There was no diabetes until processed foods were introduced. We need to reconnect people with the land,” he said.

The preparation of food and its consumption by families is another important component Navajo people must return to strengthen relations.

“We need to cook and eat as a family. It brings a sense of community to those we invite to the table. We need to return back to eating together at the table and having conversations with our young people,” said Vice President Nez.

He spoke of the four suicides in Utah recently and said young people are losing hope. We need to have this dialogue and address the suicide epidemic that is happening across Indian Country.

“I am hopeful and I have faith in each of you. The bottom line is really empowering our people. It’s a generational thing. It might not happen in our lifetime but the next generation. We need to re-educate our people to self-sufficiency and self-reliance,” he said.

###
Vice President Nez Joins Council to Hear Concerns of Bennett Freeze Residents

TUBA CITY, Ariz.—Wólí bęę ádahtį́. We are trying really hard is what residents of the former Bennett Freeze area told tribal leaders recently.

The people affected by the former Bennett Freeze area want homes that are resistant to the elements and have the modern day conveniences like walk-in closets.

This was revealed during the Naabik’iyati’ meeting in Tuba City on Sept. 24 at the Grey Hills Academy Auditorium. Hundreds filled the facility to listen to the discussions from the Office of the President and Vice President, 23rd Navajo Nation Council, and residents directly impacted by the freeze.

Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez attended the meeting and began by thanking the tribal council for passing the FY 2016 budget.

With the former Bennett Freeze area development, Vice President Nez said the Executive and Legislative branches are again working together to address a black eye on the face of the Nation’s history for more than 40 years.

“It’s time we sit down, listen, strategize and begin developing a plan of action to address the Bennett Freeze,” Vice President Nez said.

He said the countless studies on the area need to be dusted off and consolidated into one document.

“Then we’ll put it on the table and discuss the development. President Begaye and I directed our staff to get those plans ready to present before the Council. That’s the purpose of our meeting today,” he said.

Don Yellowman, a representative from the Forgotten People, began discussions with an outline of the Declaration of the Foundation of Dine’ Law.

“This is who we are as a people, the foundation,” he said.

Joe Ellis, a 90-year-old Navajo resident of Coalmine said he did not understand what the officials meant when they told him the land was “frozen.”

“It seems that our past leaders had no idea, no interest or understanding on what we were talking about. We are holy earth people with our roots planted here,” said Ellis in Navajo.

Tribal leaders and officials need to understand how these families in the affected areas think, he said, adding that he has hope in the new tribal leadership.

“I believe with all my heart, that these new leaders we selected will be the ones to handle the Bennett Freeze. I know you can do the job because you have a bilingual education,” Ellis said.

His wife, Rena, spoke next and gave her account primarily in Navajo.
“There are elders here that are barely surviving. I’m speaking on their behalf and for the Navajo women. We want homes that won’t be blown over in the wind. We don’t want trailers, we want good homes,” she said.

Rena walked before all of the leaders seated in horseshoe pattern on the auditorium floor. Families with meager means pay out of pocket to build a one-bedroom structure one cinder block at a time, she said. Their kids are moving away to look for work, she added.

“I’ve been through hunger, poverty and walked along the road trying to get somewhere. We are poor. We want quality homes with a walk-in closet, where you can see your clothes and valuables stored inside. That’s what we want,” Rena said.

Eighty-year-old Cecilia Joe from Coalmine agreed with Rena and spoke of living inside tents to survive.

“We’re survivors, Joe said, we were born here and were raised sleeping on sheepskin.

“I went through hunger, thirst and walking without shoes. I was raised with spankings and punishment. That’s how we were raised here. We are survivors,” Joe said in Navajo.

She said her children slept outdoors in campers or under a shade house. They woke up in morning and went straight to school and eventually, upon graduation they left Coalmine to look for employment across the country.

“Today, I’m thinking my kids will finally have a home, a good home, just like Rena said. We want you to provide employment opportunity for our kids too, she said.

The Nabik’iyati’ Committee outlined a plan of action for the Bennett Freeze development and listed 33 items to begin bringing the needed infrastructure and housing to the Forgotten People after more than 40 years of struggle.

OPVP is developing a Bennett Freeze working group comprised of elected leaders from Executive and Legislative branches, local officials and affected residents to begin consolidating the Bennett Freeze studies and execution of the plan of action.

###

Navajo resident Cecilia Joe said the residents of the former Bennett Freeze area are survivors of the highest caliber. She said her kids slept outside in a camper or under a shade house and upon waking up, went straight to school. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

Vice President Nez walked throughout the auditorium and spoke to residents one-on-one to gain a better perspective of what they faced with the development crisis and the resources they needed for development. Housing was the number one request. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

Wenona Benally, executive director of the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Office, spoke about the need for Executive Branch divisions, departments and programs to come together to unite their resources and efforts on behalf of former Bennett Freeze area residents. (Photo by Rick Abasta)
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 30, 2015
Window Rock, Arizona

DELEGATE SHEPHERD PETITIONS HIS COLLEAGUES FOR A SPECIAL SESSION
TO ADDRESS LEGISLATION 0284-15, RATIFYING RESTATED FEDERAL CHARTER FOR THE
NAVAJO NATION OIL AND GAS COMPANY

Window Rock, Arizona – On September 30, 2015, Honorable Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd, (Cornfields, Ganado, Steamboat, Kin Dah Lichii and Jeddito) who serves as Chair of the Resources & Development Committee, introduced a petition to the 23rd Navajo Nation Council for Monday, October 5, 2015 to have the Navajo Nation Council convene and conduct a Special Session at 10:00 a.m., in the Navajo Nation Council Chambers, Window Rock, Navajo Nation (AZ), pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §162(B).

This legislation will ratify the current Navajo Nation Oil and Gas Company (NNOGC) Federal Charter. Delegate Shepherd stated, “I realize this is a politically influenced matter that will have the current NNOGC Board of Directors to lobby against the legislation, BUT I know this corporation has the potential to be a One Billion Dollar Company, do we maintain status quo or do we bring change and accountability."

The 22nd Navajo Nation Council established the Navajo Transitional Energy Company (NTEC), which is structured of limiting politics from business on the Navajo Nation. The approval of this legislation does not impugn the countless efforts of prior leadership, but rather negates the political influences and provides compliance outlined in the federal charter for NNOGC.

Delegate Shepherd is thankful and appreciates his colleagues’ signatures to petition for a Special Session. This is a very important matter that is in the best interest of the Navajo Nation to promote accountability, streamline, and checks & balances.

The agenda will be forthcoming, as of September 30, 2015 at 3:10 p.m. delegate Shepherd was able to secure the necessary signatures of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council for a special session of the Navajo Nation Council.
BEGAYE REQUESTS FEMA PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

Window Rock – President Russell Begaye yesterday formally requested a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in response to the Gold King Mine spill. A Preliminary Damage Assessment is the first step in the application process for public assistance for recovery from a disaster for eligible applicants.

“The spill caused damage to the water quality of the San Juan River to such a massive extent that a state of emergency was declared by the Navajo Nation,” wrote President Begaye in a letter to EPA Associate Administrator Elizabeth Zimmerman. “All of the economic, health, cultural and other impacts to the Navajo people are not yet known. Given the significance of the San Juan River to the health, welfare economy, and culture of our Nation and people, the Navajo Nation, as a federally recognized Indian tribe, officially and specifically requests a mission assignment for Technical Assistance to complete a Preliminary Damage Assessment for damages as sustained as a result of the Gold King Mine spill.”

Last month, FEMA rejected the Navajo Nation’s request for the appointment of a disaster-recovery coordinator to direct the federal government’s response to the crisis. During his testimony before Congress following the decision, President Begaye called on the federal government, and specially FEMA, to provide greater support to address the disaster caused by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) spill.

CLICK HERE FOR FULL LETTER TO FEMA

##
October 01, 2015

Elizabeth A. Zimmerman
Associate Administrator
Office of Response and Recovery
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Through: Robert J. Fenton
Regional Administrator
Region IX
1100 Broadway, Suite 1200
Oakland, CA 94607.

Subject: REQUEST FOR PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

Dear Ms. Zimmerman,

On Wednesday, August 5, 2015, the United States Environmental Protection Agency was conducting work at the Gold King Mine in Silverton, Colorado that led to a rupture resulting in the release of an estimated 3 million gallons of toxic mine waste into Cement Creek and its tributaries, the Animas River and the San Juan River (the “River”). The River runs along approximately 250 miles of the northern border of the Navajo Nation.

The spill caused damage to the water quality of the River to such a massive extent that a state of emergency was declared by the Navajo Nation on Saturday, August 8, 2015, a mere day after the Nation learned of the spill and a day after the President established an Incident Command to respond to the spill; Declaration of Emergency, Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice-President. See Enclosure A. The Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management also declared a state of emergency on Sunday, August 9, 2015; Declaration of Emergency, Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management. See Enclosure B. The Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management within the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety activated the Navajo Emergency Operation Center that same day (August 9).
FEMA
RE: Request for a Preliminary Damage Assessment
October 02, 2015
Page 2

The primary uses of the San Juan River by the Navajo Nation include water for human use, irrigation for farms, water for livestock, and recreational uses, among others. Farming and ranching are the backbone of our culture and economy, and are both heavily dependent on the San Juan River. Indeed, in our arid region with little water distribution infrastructure in place, our farmers rely heavily on the San Juan River and ditch irrigation practices to keep their fields hydrated and their crops growing. Our farmers mostly live on their farmlands and consume their crops as a matter of subsistence. These families have lost a significant portion of a full growing season’s worth of work. The Navajo Nation already faces a daunting unemployment rate of 42 percent. Along the San Juan River, many of our people have been able to make a life for themselves and support their families through farming and ranching. Their livelihoods as well as their growing cycles and field rotations have been disrupted. Farmers who are used to producing their own farm goods will now need to buy fruits and vegetables for themselves, and hay and alfalfa for their livestock, to replace what was lost. Our farmers will also lose income from the expected sales that did not or will not occur. Even farmers who have been able to salvage their farm goods now face a stigma developing with respect to fruits and vegetables grown along the San Juan River.

We also have significant concerns regarding the health impacts of the spill. Heavy metals like lead, arsenic and others that were discharged during the spill are known to be dangerous to humans, animals, and plants. These metals persist in the environment and are particularly harmful to fetuses and children. To provide a sense of the magnitude of exposure to these harmful metals just from the spill, one report of EPA data indicated that lead was found near the Cement Creek/Animas River confluence “at more than 200 times higher than the acute exposure limit for aquatic life, and 3,580 times higher than federal standards for human drinking water.” And arsenic was found “more than 24 times the exposure limit for fish and 823 times the level for human ingestion.”1 Human consumption of farm products and livestock raised on contaminated water is therefore of grave concern. Although USEPA has stated that surface water has returned to its previous condition, we are concerned that many of the contaminants have merely settled to the bed of the River, and will be resuspended in our San Juan River water later, such as during storm events.

The Nation’s impacts are felt most pointedly in the disruption of our cultural principle of hozho, which encompasses beauty, order, and harmony, and expresses the idea of striving to maintain balance in the Navajo universe. We connect to our land, our water, and each other through ceremonies and gatherings. We grow four types of corn, each used for a specific purpose in our ceremonies, and those seeds are protected by the strong culture of farming that has persisted in the San Juan River Basin. Navajo cornhusks are mixed with tobacco to create ceremonial smoke,

1 http://m.startribune.com/nation/321518301.html
and our corn pollen is used as an essential element in all Navajo ceremonies. One of our corn seed strains is utilized in our critical kinaalda ceremonies (the coming of age ceremonies for our women). We also grow an array of heirloom fruits and vegetables that our people eagerly anticipate selling and purchasing during our popular fair season each fall. Those fruits and vegetables are shared over family tables, and are a part of the cultural glue that keeps our families and way of life intact. Families travel for hours across the Nation to the San Juan River Basin to access these ingredients for our ceremonies and celebrations. But the spill destroyed many of these crops so critical to our prayers, ceremonies, and our way of life.

The impairment of the River and the adverse impacts to our farmers and ranchers, and our community as a whole, will mark a moment of community trauma that will be endured for years to come. This new trauma will compound our already significant historical trauma, and raises new and troubling public health concerns. Already four suicides have occurred in affected communities along the River. Our Department of Health is researching the connection of the suicides to the spill, and we are concerned that these might be the first of a larger cluster. Indeed, two additional suicides have occurred in an area south of the affected area, resulting in a total of six post-spill suicides on the Nation. This tragedy affects all of our Nation because so many of us have relatives in Northern Navajo. We will be dealing with the effects of this spill for decades and rebuilding the shattered sense of self so many of our people are experiencing as a result of this disaster.

All of the economic, health, cultural, and other impacts to the Navajo people are not yet known. Given the significance of the San Juan River to the health, welfare, economy, and culture of our Nation and people, the Navajo Nation, as a federally recognized Indian tribe, officially and specifically requests a mission assignment for Technical Assistance to complete a Preliminary Damage Assessment for damages sustained as a direct result of the Gold King Mine spill.

If you have any further questions or need clarification regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Rosalita Whitehair at our Emergency Operations Center at (505) 371-8415/8416/8417. We look forward to your favorable decision.

Sincerely,

THE NAVAJO NATION

Russell Begaye, President
Enclosures:

Enclosure A  Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice-President Declaration of Emergency as it relates to the Gold King Mine Spill.

Enclosure B  Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management Declaration of Emergency as it relates to the Gold King Mine Spill.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
press@operationyellowwater.com  
October 5, 2015  

ATTORNEY GENERAL BRANCH ASKS EPA TO ASSURE FAIR SATISFACTION OF MINE SPILL CLAIMS  

Window Rock – On Friday, Navajo Attorney General Ethel Branch formally requested that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) assure full and fair satisfaction of all claims, known and unknown, against the agency following the Gold King Mine spill.

“The USEPA has repeatedly expressed that it accepts responsibility for the spill, and that it will compensate people for the harms caused by the spill. Yet the process that the USEPA has set up to resolve claims appears to jeopardize the rights of the Navajo People,” said Attorney General Branch. “This puts our people in a precarious position because they need immediate recovery from known damages.”

Days after President Russell Begaye announced that the Navajo Nation intended to sue the USEPA, the organization sent staff to encourage the Navajo people to sign forms to expedite the settlement of their claims. The forms contained a significant limiting clause that, despite assurances from the USEPA, could limit or waive the future rights of claimants.

In a letter sent to USEPA General Counsel Avi Garbow on Friday, Attorney General Branch made the following requests of the embattled agency:

An interim claims process be implemented that will allow members of the Navajo Nation to seek ongoing compensation for approximated and realized damages during the two-year limitation period under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA).

Claims asserted by the Navajo people are promptly processed and paid on a rolling basis.

The office of the USEPA General Counsel of the US Department of Justice issue guidance that makes clear that accepting monetary recovery under the FTCA does not constitute a release of claims for damages not yet known to the claimant.

“We need to assure our people, who are concerned for their futures, that their injuries will not go ignored. To that end, the Navajo Nation asks the US Department of Justice to issue guidance confirming that acceptance of a settlement for asserted damages during the two-year period after the spill does not constitute a release of claims under the FTCA for any injuries and damages not yet known,” wrote Attorney General Branch.

##
VIA EMAIL: Garbo.Avi@epa.gov

October 02, 2015

Mr. Avi Garbow
General Counsel
United States Environmental Protection Agency
Office of the General Counsel
Mail Code: 2310A
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Mr. Garbow:

I write on behalf of the Navajo Nation and its people to assure full and fair satisfaction of all claims against the USEPA related to the Gold King Mine spill—both known and yet unknown. In order to address the magnitude of the harms experienced by the Navajo from the unprecedented Gold King Mine spill, I am writing to request that:

1.) an interim claims process be implemented that will allow members of the Navajo Nation to seek ongoing compensation for approximated and realized damages during the two-year limitations period under the Federal Tort Claims Act (“FTCA”);

2.) claims asserted by the Navajo people are promptly processed and paid on a rolling basis; and

3.) you or the U.S. Department of Justice issue guidance that makes clear that accepting monetary recovery under the FTCA does not constitute a release of claims for damages not yet known to the claimant.

On August 5, 2015, the USEPA and other responsible parties caused a massive spill of contaminated water from the Gold King Mine into the Animas and San Juan rivers. This disaster has already had a devastating impact on the Navajo Nation because the San Juan River is so fundamental to our way of life. Many of our farmers and ranchers lost their sole source of income. Crops were destroyed and livestock put at risk. But the extent of the damage is largely unknown at this point, and it is expected that the impacts from this incident—economic, health, cultural, and spiritual impacts—will be felt on the Nation for years to come.

The USEPA has repeatedly expressed that it accepts responsibility for the spill, and that it will compensate people for the harms caused by the spill. Yet the process that the USEPA has set up to resolve claims appears to jeopardize the rights of the Nation’s people. Notably, just days after President Begaye announced that the Nation intended to sue the USEPA, the USEPA
mobilized staff at the Navajo Nation to hand out Standard Form 95 and encourage people to fill out the forms to expedite settlement of their claims pursuant to the FTCA. These forms contain a significant limiting clause, which immediately precedes the signature block, as follows:

I CERTIFY THAT THE AMOUNT OF CLAIM COVERS ONLY DAMAGES AND INJURIES CAUSED BY THE INCIDENT ABOVE AND ACCEPT SAID AMOUNT IN FULL SATISFACTION AND FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THIS CLAIM.

The USEPA claims on its website that this language does not limit or waive future rights of the claimants.

This puts our people in a precarious position because they need immediate recovery for known damages. Individuals have lost their sources of income and are struggling to provide for their families. Thus, many are eager to make their claims to secure immediate funds to address pressing financial stress. However, they do not want to assert claims if they risk forgoing future, more comprehensive recovery.

To address this problem, we believe that an interim claims process must be set up that will allow for ongoing claims and quick remuneration as approximate damages are realized, but which will not prevent future claims as further damages become known and quantified. I understand from Sylvia Quazi, Regional Counsel for the Pacific Southwest at the USEPA, that this sort of ongoing recovery process has been implemented before.

The Navajo Nation also needs assurance that the USEPA, having accepted responsibility for the spill, will compensate the Nation and its people for long-term, future damages. Indeed, the long-term health and economic impacts of the spill, among other impacts, are not yet known and not yet quantifiable. We believe under the law that the two-year limitations period on these unknown claims would not be triggered until the actual injury is discovered. But we need to assure our people, who are concerned for their futures, that their injuries will not go ignored. To that end, the Navajo Nation asks the USDOJ to issue guidance confirming that acceptance of a settlement for asserted damages during the two-year period after the spill does not constitute a release of claims under the FTCA for any injuries and damages not yet known.

To help facilitate the interim claims process, I enclose a proposed claim form based on Standard Form 95 that has been approved by the Navajo Nation Department of Justice to clarify and ensure that the Nation’s people will not waive their rights to make future claims. We look forward to working together to assure complete and fair recovery to the Navajo Nation and its people.

Very truly yours,

Ethel Branch, Attorney General

Enclosure
October 8, 2015

BEGAYE APPLAUDS MCCAiN AND FLAKE CALL FOR SWIFT REVIEW OF NAVAJO EMERGENCY DECLARATION REQUEST

WINDOW ROCK – President Russell Begaye today applauded Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) for asking the White House to acknowledge the Navajo Nation’s formal request for an Emergency Declaration due to the Gold King Mine spill. In a letter sent to President Barack Obama yesterday, the senators urged the president to swiftly review and respond to the Navajo Nation’s request. President Obama has not commented on the devastating impact of the Gold King Mine spill and the White House has not responded to the numerous requests for Federal support to address this crisis.

“I applaud Senators McCain and Flake for urging President Obama to swiftly review and respond to our request for an Emergency Declaration due to the Gold King Mine Spill caused by the actions of the United States Department of Environmental Affairs. This disaster has culturally and economically devastated our Nation and inflicted an enormous amount of pain and suffering on our people.

“President Obama has not only been slow to respond to our request for additional assistance, he has not acknowledged the damage that the U.S. EPA and other responsible parties have caused to the Navajo Nation. We need greater support from the Obama Administration to help our people recover from this crisis, and I thank Senators McCain and Flake for championing our cause.”

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BEGAYE APPLAUDS NEW MEXICO DELEGATION CALL FOR PROMPT ACTION ON 
NAVAJO EMERGENCY DECLARATION REQUEST

WINDOW ROCK – President Russell Begaye today applauded members of the New Mexico congressional delegation for asking the White House to act on the Navajo Nation’s formal request for an Emergency Declaration due to the Gold King Mine spill. In a letter sent to President Barack Obama yesterday, Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, and Representatives Steve Pearce, Ben Ray Lujan and Michelle Lujan Grisham urged the president to take prompt action on the Navajo Nation’s request.

“I applaud Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, and Representatives Steve Pearce, Ben Ray Lujan and Michelle Lujan Grisham for calling for prompt action on our request for an Emergency Declaration due to the Gold King Mine Spill. This disaster has culturally and economically devastated our Nation and inflicted an enormous amount of pain and suffering on our people.

“We need greater support from the Obama Administration to address the crisis and protect the livelihood of our farmers. We hope that President Obama will listen to the bipartisan calls from members of the Arizona and New Mexico delegations to act quickly on our Emergency Declaration request.”

Earlier this week, Arizona Senators John McCain and Jeff Flake sent a separate letter to President Obama asking for a swift review of the Navajo Nation’s request.

#
October 8, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We respectfully request that you take prompt action on Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye’s request for an emergency declaration as a result of the Gold King Mine spill accident that occurred on August 5, 2015.

The mine spill released more than three million gallons of toxic waste that flowed into the Animas and San Juan Rivers. The San Juan River runs along the northern border of the Navajo Nation for approximately 250 miles. The toxic contaminants directly impacted 13 Navajo Chapters and serious concerns remain about the long-term public health and economic challenges caused by this extremely serious spill.

Recovering from this incident will require a full and coordinated approach. Given the complexity of this disaster, we request a thorough response to the Navajo Nation’s request for a Presidential emergency declaration. We would further request that the Federal Emergency Management Agency provide adequate technical assistance for tribal officials to identify all available federal assistance to effectively respond to this emergency and to protect the Navajo Nation’s public health and safety.

Native communities deserve full and complete protection of their water, land, and livelihoods. Thank you for your attention to and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Tom Udall
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Steve Pearce
United States Representative

Ben Ray Luján
United States Representative

Michelle Lujan Grisham
United States Representative
October 9, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

President Begaye and Vice President Nez offer Condolences for Student Killed in NAU Shooting

“The Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) is deeply saddened by news of a Northern Arizona University (NAU) student killed in a shooting incident that took place on NAU campus early Friday morning. All life is sacred and the loss of any life is tragic. Both Vice President Jonathan Nez and I are offering prayers for all those involved and affected by this terrible tragedy,” said President Russell Begaye.

“We want to thank the NAU Police Department and Flagstaff Police Department for responding in a rapid manner. We also want to encourage any students or faculty who have suffered trauma because of the shooting to seek counseling services as they see fit,” said Vice President Nez. “In this time of tragedy, the Navajo Nation stands by the university and mourns the tragic loss of an NAU student.”

President Begaye noted that many Navajo students attend NAU and both he and Vice President Nez are concerned about their safety and protection.

“In light of this shooting, OPVP would ask NAU to heighten security measures to further protect the lives of all students attending the university,” he said.

NAUPD responded to a call of shots fired at 1:20 a.m. The isolated incident took place in a parking lot on the northeast end of the NAU campus. One person was killed and three others were injured. A suspect has been apprehended and is currently in custody with the Flagstaff Police Department.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez will visit NAU on Sunday, Oct. 11 at 6 p.m. MST at the NAU Native American Cultural Center, Building 14, to meet with Native students and faculty. For more information contact Kathleen Frank at (928) 523-6229.

###
October 11, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Indian Gaming is critical to upholding Statewide Programs and Services says President Begaye

AK CHIN INDIAN COMMUNITY - Through revenue sharing, Arizona gaming tribes directly impact statewide programs and services, said President Russell Begaye at the Arizona Indian Gaming Association Tribal Leaders Meeting held at Harrah’s Ak-Chin Casino on Friday, Oct. 9.

“Revenue sharing from gaming tribes in Arizona continues to support education statewide. The revenue we share contributes to increasing teacher’s salaries,” President Begaye said. “We provide funds to help students stay in school and not drop out. Our gaming dollars go toward improving instruction in Arizona school classrooms.”

When state voters passed Proposition 202, gaming tribes in Arizona agreed to volunteer a portion of shared gaming revenues with the state of Arizona and local governments to support specific state and local programs.

Twelve percent of the total monies is directed to city, town and county governments for government services benefitting the general public. An additional 9% funds the State’s regulatory expenses.

The remainder is contributed to the Arizona Benefits Fund. Of that fund, 56% of the shared revenues is directed to educational programs and needs; 28% funds emergency services and trauma centers; 7% funds wildlife and habitat conservation; 7% funds statewide tourism promotion; and 2% supports the education, prevention and treatment of problem gambling.

Since 2002, Tribal Gaming has contributed over $1 billion in total revenues to Arizona.

“We should be proud of this and people across the state need to remember this. They need to know that Indian tribes are supporting their programs, services, schools and hospitals,” President Begaye said.

During the Tribal Leaders Meeting, discussion focused on the Tohono O’odham Nation’s proposed Glendale Casino. Tribes spoke on both sides of the issue with consideration toward how the outcome will affect Indian gaming in the state.

“Tribes themselves benefit from Indian gaming, even those without casinos. Through Indian gaming, tribes have more money than they had before Proposition 202 came about,” President Begaye said. “Sometimes we lose focus and start to look inward at what we might lose rather than how we can increase revenue to share with the state. This revenue is critical to promoting economic development, employment and contributing to statewide programs and services.”

Through gaming, tribes have been able to provide, or supplement, funding toward their own programs and services. Within tribal lands, gaming money benefits tribal education, health programs, housing, public safety and employment among many other services.

###
October 11, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

President Begaye encouraged by House action on Native energy bill

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye applauded House passage of HR 538, the Native American Energy Act, introduced by Rep. Don Young, (R-Alaska). The bill streamlines federal regulations surrounding energy development requirements on Native lands. President Begaye urged the Senate to take swift action to pass a tribal energy bill that would increase economic development, create jobs and give tribes the flexibility they require to best meet the needs of their communities.

“This bill will help our people regain governance over resources on our own lands. In particular, Section 8 of the bill authorizes the Nation to negotiate and enter into mineral leases without the time, monetary, and sovereignty cost of review and approval by the Interior secretary for actions on our own lands. The current leasing approval process is rife with delays and can serve as a major and unnecessary impediment for energy and job growth in Indian Country,” said President Begaye.

Navajo Nation Reps. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), Ann Kirkpatrick (D-Ariz.), and Steve Pearce (R-N.M.), voted for the bill, while Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.), and Michelle Grisham-Lujan, (D-N.M.,) voted against the bill.

The White House opposed the bill saying it would “undermine public participation and transparency of review of projects on Indian lands under the National Environmental Policy Act.” The White House also noted, “the bill’s changes to mineral leasing laws applicable to the Navajo Nation lands may adversely affect energy development on those lands.” Despite this concern, the Navajo Oil and Gas Company has come out in support of the Navajo leasing amendments.

On June 15, the Government Accountability Office issued a report that found the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ management shortcomings has hindered Indian energy development. The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs will hold an oversight hearing on Oct. 21, 2015 on the report and Indian energy development. President Begaye looks forward to this hearing and urges the White House to consider support for this bill, which is aligned with the administration’s historic support for tribal self-governance and sovereignty.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Nation and the National Congress of American Indians also strongly support the bill.

###
October 12, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

President Begaye and Vice President Nez tell NAU Students to maintain focus

FLAGSTAFF-Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez told Northern Arizona University (NAU) students to maintain their focus and take care of themselves in these days after a tragic campus shooting left one NAU student dead and three injured.

“Campus is usually a family and NAU is no different. You are family and it’s good that you came together tonight.” President Begaye told the students and faculty. “When tragic things happen in your life, you have to remember to take care of yourself, first and foremost.”

In recollecting on teachings his family has passed along, President Begaye said it’s important to “keep your thoughts holy”.

“There is purpose for your continued education and that is to grow your thoughts, knowledge and philosophy on life,” he said. “Think positively and don’t put bad thoughts into your mind.”

Students and faculty gathered on Oct. 12 at the Native American Cultural Center, Building 17, on NAU campus to meet with President Begaye and Vice President Nez. The meeting focused on reinforcing morale with the students and consoling those who were affected by the shooting.

“As an alumni of NAU, this event really shocked me,” Vice President Nez said. “This tragedy really hit home having happened at my alma mater. It’s heartbreaking.”

With Monday, Oct. 12, starting a new week of classes post-tragedy, Vice President Nez said he and President Begaye wanted to let the students know that they are not alone. They are a part of a larger family in all NAU students and alumni.

“There is a lot of wisdom in the alumni here. If there is anything you’re going through, whether it stems from this tragedy or not, you should talk with them,” he said. “We all know it’s tough going through college. Persevere and don’t give up.”

President Begaye and Vice President Nez were joined at the meeting by NAU President Rita Cheng and Advisor to the President Dr. Joe Martin. The meeting was organized by Kathleen Frank of the Native American Cultural Center and was filled to capacity with students and faculty.

The President and Vice President would like to extend their gratitude to the students, faculty and NAU President Cheng for welcoming them to the university.
October 13, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

President Begaye Supports Congressman Grijalva’s Bill to put a Moratorium on Uranium Mining in Grand Canyon

FLAGSTAFF—“I support the Greater Grand Canyon Heritage National Monument Act for one simple reason: it prevents uranium mining on the lands selected to be part of the Monument,” President Russell Begaye said during a press conference introducing the bill.


A significant focus of the bill is to put a permanent moratorium on new uranium mining claims in the Grand Canyon region. The bill would stop lawsuits that try to overturn a temporary moratorium.

The bill also promotes a collaborative relationship between the tribes involved in the development, implementation and oversight of a management plan for a national monument.

“Sometimes when proclamations are made under the Antiquities Act regarding something as large as the Grand Canyon, tribes are put in the backseat,” said Congressman Grijalva. “This bill promotes a collaborative working relationship and brings the Antiquities Act back to front and center with Native tribes.”

President Begaye said that uranium mining on the Navajo Nation has left devastating impacts on the Navajo people and their lands. The history of uranium mining on the Nation is long and its effects are often untold or neglected. The Navajo people are left to deal with the legacy of chronic and critical illnesses.

A birth cohort study is occurring on the Nation to look at the effects of uranium mining, President Begaye said. Preliminary results of the study indicate that birth defects and other health issues are related to exposure to radioactive material.

“On the Navajo Nation, our people are dying from various forms of cancer. We believe many are directly related to the uranium mining of the 1940s through the 80s, and the leftover tailings from the uranium mill processing sites,” President Begaye said. “The effects from uranium mining are real and must be prevented.”

In 2005, the Navajo Nation Council passed the Dine Natural Resources Protection Act, which is a moratorium on uranium mining on Navajo Indian Country. Representative Grijalva’s proposed Monument bill is a furtherance of the work begun by the Navajo Nation.

“The ban on uranium claims and mining have motivated me to support this effort,” he said. “Our intention is that no one else will have to suffer from the effects of uranium mining and that everyone remembers that the Nation is still cleaning up from the cold war motivated uranium mining.”

###
October 14, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Talk is over and action is needed now on the Former Bennett Freeze Area says President Begaye

WINDOW ROCK-President Russell Begaye said it’s time for action in developing the Former Bennett Freeze Area for Navajo residents.

The Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) and division directors will tour the area on Thursday and Friday, Oct. 15 and 16.

“Over the years there have been numerous studies done on the Former Bennett Freeze Area. Departments and programs have talked about putting infrastructure in place, putting housing up for residents or providing electricity and water,” President Begaye said. “However, nothing has really taken place. Up until this point it’s all been talk and no action.”

Vice President Jonathan Nez agreed and said it’s time to stop studying the area and start acting.

Realizing concerns of Former Bennett Freeze Area residents in a completely tangible way is a priority of the Begaye-Nez administration.

“Our motivation is to hear directly from the impacted people. Their cries have gone on for far too long,” President Begaye said.

The Bennett Freeze was enacted by Robert L. Bennett in 1966 to address an ongoing land dispute between the Navajo and Hopi Tribes. In 2009, President Obama repealed the law that created the freeze. The period in between left the area stagnant to development with residents in homes or make-shift housing without water or electricity.

“Our people’s homes and corrals have needed upgrades but the freeze prohibited it. For 40 years, our people had to secretly make repairs to their homes. There were no improvements for electricity, plumbing, or clean drinking water,” Vice President Nez said. “Our people have been forced to live in 1966 for 40 years.”

Bringing leadership to the table with residents is a way of empowering the people to have immediate involvement in the process.

“Family needs to be involved. Community needs to be involved,” he said. “We need to build families and reinstitute the old way of life where we support one another. It’s nothing new, it’s a Native concept. We need to return to that way of life.”

President Begaye has committed his entire executive branch to focus on the area.

“Too many promises have been made over the last forty-nine years and I think our people are beginning not to believe what they hear,” he said. “We want to let our people know that we are going to do something that should have been done years ago.”

The tour of the Former Bennett Freeze Area and consultation with residents will depart from the Tolani Lake Chapter House on Thursday, Oct. 15 at 9:30 a.m.

###
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 20, 2015

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – A safe and fun event for the youth.

That’s what the Navajo Nation Zoo Boo is about.

Navajo Nation Zoo Department Manager David Mikesic, stated, “We want to invite everyone to our annual ZOO BOO event, which was an event that we created especially for the youth. We created this event as our way to engage the youth and provide a safe place for them to enjoy Halloween, but more importantly to teach them about the cultural importance and significance of animals and various species that are native to the Navajo reservation.”

The Seventh Annual Navajo Nation ZOO BOO event will be held at the Navajo Nation Zoo on Saturday, October 24th. The free event will include a costume contest and other Halloween activities for the youth. For more information contact the Navajo Nation Zoo at (928) 871-6574.
President Begaye and Vice President Nez deliver State of the Navajo Nation Address

WINDOW ROCK-Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez recapped accomplishments of their first five months in office when they delivered the State of the Navajo Nation Address at the start of the 2015 Navajo Nation Council Fall Session.

Both leaders thanked Speaker Lorenzo Bates and members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council for allowing them the time to deliver the State of the Navajo Nation address.

“Vice President Jonathan Nez and I are five months into our administration and already we are making significant strides tribally, regionally and nationally,” President Begaye said.

Three new cabinet members were introduced. They all will be coming before Council for final confirmation during this 2015 Fall Council Session.

Dr. Donald Benn has been selected for the position of Executive Director for the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency. Dr. Benn earned his doctoral degree in Chemistry from New Mexico State University. Previously, he worked as Director of the Native American Research Laboratory at the University of Montana in Missoula.

Mrs. Bidtah Becker has been selected to serve in the capacity of Executive Director for the Division of Natural Resources. Mrs. Becker has served as the Assistant Attorney General for the Navajo Nation Department of Justice leading the Natural Resources Unit. Mrs. Becker earned her Juris Doctorate from the University of New Mexico School of Law.

Mrs. Terrelene G. Massey has been chosen to lead the Division of Social Services as their Executive Director. Mrs. Massey is from Pinon. She graduated from the University of New Mexico School of Law and is a licensed attorney in the State of New Mexico and the Navajo Nation. She earned her master’s degree in Public Affairs from the University of Texas at Austin.

One significant milestone of the Begaye-Nez administration thus far has been the Gold King Mine spill, which occurred on August 5, 2015. At the hands of a USEPA contract worker, the spill expelled upwards of 3 million gallons of contaminated water into the Animas River which a tributary of the San Juan River.

Hundreds of Navajo farmers and ranchers depend on the San Juan River for their crops and livestock. The spill had devastating impacts to the region.

Resulting from the USEPA’s self-acknowledged responsibility in the Gold King Mine spill, Administrator Jared Blumenfeld visited the Navajo Nation last week to discuss remediation of the river. Discussion topics included a 5-year plan to address the cleanup of abandoned uranium mines on the Navajo Nation, the Clean Air Act, and a preliminary long-range plan for the clean-up of the Gold King Mine spill.

A cooperative agreement is also in the process of being developed to reimburse the Navajo Nation for associated response costs.

“Relations between the USEPA and the Navajo Nation remain cordial and we are both very interested in reaching an agreement that benefits the Navajo Nation and our Navajo people,” said President Begaye.

Vice President Nez said that one of the most pressing issues facing the Nation is youth suicide, which has reached epidemic proportions within the Navajo Nation.

“The number of suicides since August 2015 has increased to eight within the Navajo Nation,” he said.

In response, the Navajo Nation Division of Health is working to build an interdisciplinary team to address this epidemic. The Vice President said he urged Sylvia Burwell, US Department of Health and Human Services Secretary, to bring the issue to the White House Council on Native American Affairs so that all necessary departments are involved in bringing an end to native youth suicide.

Navajo veterans remain a top priority as one of the four pillars of the administration. As such, all divisions under the Executive Branch have been directed to include Navajo veterans in their division strategy, whether for employment, training or other forms of assistance.

“Our Navajo veterans have served as protectors of the United
States and the Navajo Nation. It’s our duty to honor their service," President Begaye said. “Our administration has met with members of Congress and the Senate to discuss veteran issues, which include housing, employment, health care and mental health counseling services for post-traumatic stress disorder.”

President Begaye also discussed a recent visit to residents of the Former Bennett Freeze Area in which members of his cabinet addressed concerns of housing, infrastructure and roads. The area has been without development for nearly fifty years as a result of the Navajo-Hopi land dispute.

“A Promise Zone application highlighting this development project will be created and submitted to the United States Department of Agriculture for consideration for the one award designated for a tribe,” he said. “A Promise Zone award will help increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, leverage private investment and enhance public health.”

Other highlights included: the Navajo Nation assuming control of three San Juan County fire stations along with associated assets; the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project in which Congress has passed technical amendments that will facilitate a process for the Nation and the Federal Government to deliver water from the project; and the Ramah Chapter winning a 25-year long legal dispute with the United States government which resulted in a $58 million victory for the Navajo Nation.

In conclusion, President Begaye told the Council, “This is just a broad overview of the efforts we have worked diligently to put forth. In order for these goals and objectives to be achieved, we must commit to working together.”

###
President Begaye Proclaims Third Week of October as Navajo Nation Disability Awareness Week

WINDOW ROCK—Today, President Russell Begaye signed a proclamation declaring the third week of October to be Navajo Nation Disability Awareness Week.

“Despite their contributions to our society, people with disabilities face discrimination and limited access,” President Begaye declared in the proclamation. “This Administration will work to strengthen protections against disability-based discriminations. Our people should not fear discrimination in disclosing one’s disability.”

Supporters and advocates for disability awareness set out on a march this morning from the Navajo Shopping Center in Window Rock to the Navajo Nation Council Chambers.

Upon arrival at the Council Chambers, marchers were greeted by staff from the Office of the President and Vice President and members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council.

The Navajo Nation has enacted laws to protect the disabled. The Vulnerable Adult Protection Act, passed two years ago, says that any Navajo with a disability should not be abused, neglected, abandoned or exploited.

The Vulnerable Adult Protection Act, also known as the Doris Act, is named after Doris Dennison who faced disability injustices after being injured in a car accident that left her wheelchair bound.

Losing her ability to walk opened her eyes to the challenges that disabled people face on a daily basis. As an advocate for disability rights, Dennison has served as the Board President of Assist to Independence.

“The work isn’t done. Since I’ve been advocating for accessibility, the main issue I want to see is the reconsideration of the Navajo Nation Vocational Rehabilitation and Opportunities for the Handicapped Act,” Dennison said.

The law, which was passed in 1984, requires that both public and private entities provide reasonable accommodations for the special needs of persons with a disability.

“Some of the things this act addresses are the accessibility to buildings and employment,” she said. “We want this act to be reconsidered and for the whole Navajo Nation to comply with it.”

The number of disabled Navajos is significant said Hoskie Benally Jr., President of the Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disabilities.

The Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disabilities is established under Title 13 within the Navajo Nation Code. “We are within the government to advocate for those with disabilities,” Benally Jr., said.

The Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disabilities is established to advocate for individuals with disabilities to ensure equal access to employment, education, housing, public safety, communications, recreation, medical treatment, and socialization opportunities.

“We are stronger as a Nation when we work together,” President Begaye said. “We must work to remove obstacles so every Navajo and person has the opportunity to fully utilize their talents and skills in the workplace and communities.”
OCTOBER 22, 2015

PRESIDENT BEGAYE STATEMENT ON FEMA DENYING REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DECLARATION

Window Rock – President Russell Begaye issued the following statement today on the Federal Emergency Management Agency denying the Navajo Nation's request for an Emergency Declaration in response to the Gold King Mine spill:

"The Gold King Mine spill culturally and economically devastated the Navajo Nation, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's decision to decline our request for an emergency declaration is disappointing and wrong. Our people have suffered due to the reckless actions of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the federal government's failed response to this crisis has only added insult to injury. The Obama Administration has turned down virtually every request we have made for greater assistance, each time referring us back to the EPA – the same agency that caused the problem in the first place.

"Its time for President Obama to take action to fix the disaster that was caused by his EPA. The President needs to respond to bipartisan calls to issue an emergency declaration and instruct all federal agencies to assist the Navajo Nation instead of sending our requests back to the EPA.

"The Navajo Nation will appeal FEMA's ill-advised decision and fight for every resource possible to address the damage caused by the Gold King Mine spill. As President, I will not rest until our people have been made whole and fairly compensated for their losses.”

##
BEGAYE STATEMENT ON US DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR REPORT BLAMING EPA FOR GOLD KING MINE SPILL

Window Rock – President Russell Begaye today released the following statement on the United States Department of Interior report on the Gold King Mine Spill. According to the Associated Press, which received an advanced copy of the report prior to its public release, the Interior Department found that “an EPA cleanup crew rushed its work and failed to consider the complex engineering involved” and triggered “the very blowout it hoped to avoid.” The Interior report directly refutes the EPA’s assertion that the blowout was “likely inevitable.”

“We applaud the Department of Interior for thoroughly investigating the Gold King Mine Spill and refuting the Environmental Protection Agency’s flawed contention that the blowout was inevitable. This report exposes the EPA’s gross negligence that triggered a disaster that has culturally and economically devastated the Navajo Nation.

“The Department of the Interior’s report calls into question the competency of the EPA and demonstrates why this embattled bureaucracy is the wrong federal agency to manage the response to the crisis it created. It’s time for President Obama to respond to bipartisan calls to issue an emergency declaration and instruct all federal agencies to assist the Navajo Nation instead of sending our requests back to the EPA.”

##
SAN DIEGO- Before the 72nd Annual Convention of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye delivered a speech reinforcing the inherent sovereignty of Native American nations.

“When it comes to minorities in this country, national leaders need to know that we are not just another minority group. We are Native nations. We have been established as nations. Treat us as nations,” President Begaye said to the gathered tribal leaders.

President Begaye said it’s both critical and urgent that the Federal Government affords water and mineral rights to tribes rather than opposing them.

“The Federal Government believes we are not capable of overseeing our coal and our minerals. We need full rights,” he said. “The government knows that water belongs to Indian nations; it’s our ancestral right. The Winters Doctrine establishes this.”

President Begaye reinforced the jurisdiction of tribal law on tribal lands without exception to a criminal’s ethnicity or nationality.

“When crimes are committed on Indian land, our jurisdiction allows us to impose our Indian laws,” he said. “If you commit a crime on tribal land, you should go to a tribal jail.”

He also called for President Obama to appoint a Native American leader to sit on the White House Council on Native American Affairs.

“How many Native American leaders sit on that council?” he asked. “Zero. Yet these are our futures they determine. We are capable of standing up for ourselves.”

Although the Navajo Nation is not a member of NCAI, the Congress extended an invitation for President Begaye to speak at the convention. President Begaye supported NCAI’s purpose and advocacy on behalf of Native American rights and issues that affect tribal sovereignty.

President Begaye’s speech was met with resounding applause at several points and upon conclusion it warranted a standing ovation.

“Indian people need to work together. We need to stand by our culture and our prayers for the purposes of our precious resources and land,” he said. “We need our voices to be heard at the White House level. Let’s not work against each other, we need to work together.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 22, 2015

Council approves supplemental funding for special education program

WINDOW ROCK – On Wednesday during the Fall Council Session, members voted unanimously to approve Legislation No. 0201-15, which would allocate approximately $2.4 million to the St. Michaels Association for Special Education, Inc., if signed into law by President Russell Begaye.

For over 40 years, the SMASE, Inc. program has been a non-profit organization that provides educational, residential, medical, and therapeutic services to Navajo children and adults with mental and physical developmental disabilities.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) said that the supplemental funding would go towards restoration of their transportation services, educational programs, renovation of dilapidated buildings that do not meet code standards, reinstate staff back to full-time, continue the transitional program for adult disabled clients, and other services related to caring for special needs individuals.

“This entity has never been here [to ask for help], as long as I’ve been on Council. This opportunity came up and [SMASE, Inc.] approached me and asked for help,” said Delegate Hale. “These individuals are precious and we need to meet their needs in the best way possible.”

According to the legislation, the SMASE, Inc. receives funding from the Bureau of Indian Education, Arizona Public Schools, Arizona State DDD, Navajo Nation Division of Family Services, Navajo Nation Growing in Beauty, and public donations.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé alnáoz’t’l’i) said the legislation to aid the children and adults with disabilities should have been prioritized and put at the top of the list for supplemental funding.

“These are our children and our stories are imbedded with them. They are the special children of the Holy Ones and we have an obligation to take care of them,” said Delegate Crotty.

The program also provides day treatment services for adults and an education program for children, as well as 14 group homes on and off campus. Caregivers are responsible for management of their clients’ health care, education, development of independent and social skills, and community involvement.
Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) suggested that Council members prioritize additional funding for persons with disabilities in next year’s budget.

“We should have a clause in the budget to take care of our disabled people and elderly. We need to take care of their warmth and their homes. They should not have to wait to be given funding for their needs. They need sincere help,” said Delegate Tsosie.

Council members voted 21-0 to pass Legislation No. 0201-15. President Begaye will have ten calendar days to consider the bill once it is sent to the Office of the President and Vice President.

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For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 22, 2015

Navajo Parks and Recreation Promoting
Health and Fitness

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – A haven of unparalleled beauty.

Words that describe the land of the Navajo people.

For as long as most people can remember, Navajoland has been a mecca for tourists and the film industry. Awe-inspiring scenery, towering rock formations and yawning canyon walls….this is what attracts millions of tourists from throughout the world.

“We are very pleased that visitors are captivated by our magnificent scenery, but the true beauty of the Navajo Nation is our people,” stated Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department Manager Martin L. Begaye. “Our mission is to protect and preserve our natural resources for future generations. We are doing this for the benefit of the Navajo people and for the guests who visit our land.”

Tourism studies have revealed that the primary reason tourists travel to Navajoland is to see the scenery. Additionally, more than half of the people who visit the Navajo Nation return for a second visit.

In fact, visitation at all of the tribal parks increased tremendously during the summer of 2015. Begaye attributes this to increased marketing efforts throughout the years.
“Because of the vastness of our land, many tourists are not able to stop at all of our tribal parks on their first visit. Many tourists often return to see the rest of our parks,” Begaye explained. “We are grateful that our guests enjoy their vacation to the Navajo Nation and come back. However, we want them to know that we have more to offer than scenery. We have many Navajo cultural events, a myriad of outdoor recreation and year-round events and activities that they can experience.”

With a trend to live healthier lifestyles, Begaye said the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department created a series of year-round running events that will be held at its tribal parks. The first event was held in Window Rock in September.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye, said “Navajo Vice President Jonathan Nez and I are both strong supporters of living healthy. Not only is running a great way to exercise your body, but it is also an excellent way to exercise your mind and spirit. We hope this partnership between the Navajo Nation and NavajoYes will mark the beginning of coveted events that you will want to experience. I commend all of the entities who are working together to make these events enjoyable and successful, but most importantly, as a venue to keep us strong and healthy. We need healthy minds and bodies who can lead the Navajo Nation into the next generation.”

Echoing President Begaye, Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez, stated, “As an avid runner, I am extremely excited about these upcoming running events on the Navajo Nation. I enjoy running with my people and guests who visit our reservation. It’s good to hear stories from the people when I run with them. They have stories of overcoming health issues or struggles. It’s empowering. People say I’m encouraging, but I find them encouraging.”

Begaye added, “The Navajo Nation is the ideal place to get fit while enjoying our beautiful land. Nowhere else in the world will you be able to cross four states in one marathon or run near beautiful rock formations that echo the rich history of the Navajo people. Running has always been part of our Navajo tradition. We are therefore, opening our doorway so to speak to
people who want to experience the embracing culture of the Navajo people. We are partnering with various entities to promote healthy living. We invite everyone to experience what we have to offer.”

Begaye said the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department is collaborating with NavajoYes, which is a non-profit organization that promotes community wellness, lifelong fitness and youth empowerment on the Navajo reservation and the Navajo Nation Division of Health.

NavajoYes CEO Tom Riggenbach stated, “NavajoYes has been an advocate for community wellness and lifelong fitness on the Navajo Nation for over 20 years. We are very excited by the opportunity to work with Navajo Parks and Recreation, the Navajo Division of Health and the Office of the President and Vice President to promote these common goals through the Navajo Parks Race Series.”

The Navajo Parks Race Series includes two remaining races in 2015, which are Asaayi Mountain Run on November 14th and Monument Valley Marathon at Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park on December 12th. The races in 2016 include Little Colorado River Gorge on February 13th; Shiprock Marathon on May 6-7th; Asaayi Mountain Run on August 13th; Navajo Code Talker 29K on September 11th; Four Corners Marathon on October 7-10; Rainbow Bridge Trail Ultra on November 19th and Monument Valley Marathon on December 10th.

For information about Navajo Parks Race Series registration or entry fees, contact Tom Riggenbach at (928) 429-0345 or chuskaman@yahoo.com

Visitors can also contact the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department at (928) 871-6647 for information about Navajo cultural events and other events and activities or via their website at www.navajonationparks.org
32 Cars derailed on BNSF Railway east of Gallup

GALLUP—On Friday, Oct. 23, at approximately 7 a.m., BNSF Railway reported that 32 cars had derailed east of Gallup, N.M. at the Southfork Bridge that crosses north to Red Rock State Park.

State Road 118, also known as Old Route 66, was shut down between Mile Marker 26 and Mile Marker 32 while hazmat crews were on scene to assess a spill from one of the train cars. Hazmat determined the spill was liquid asphalt and was non-hazardous. BNSF Railway is responsible for clean-up of the spill.

According to Sergeant Chad Pierce, Public Information Officer with the New Mexico State Police, State Road 118 is open.

Residents and southbound commuters from Pinedale or Church Rock have also been advised to use Superman Canyon Road or Becenti Trail if necessary.

President Begaye recently met with Carl R. Ice, President and CEO of BNSF Railway based in Ft. Worth, TX. CEO Ice assured

President Begaye that safety is BNSF’s first priority. CEO Ice mentioned that a Navajo group of BNSF workers in Grants, N.M. had recently been recognized for their safety standards.

“This derailment is certainly unfortunate. However, we trust that the New Mexico Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will be diligent in making sure that anything spilled is not hazardous to the environment or to people. EPA must be forthright in this situation as many of our Navajo people live along the railway,” President Begaye said.

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Sundt, an Arizona construction company, is looking to hire approximately 500 contract workers over the course the next three years starting in October 2015.

The Four Corners Power Plant will be installing new environmental equipment onto their two larger units and the contract workers will be utilized in the installation of this equipment over the next three-year timeframe.

Sundt is looking to identify Navajo veterans who would be interested in working on this retrofit project. Jamescita Peshlakai, Veterans Liaison for the Navajo Office of the President and Vice-President will be working with Sundt to facilitate the employment of Navajo veterans for the project.

A Job Fair will be held November 18th at the Navajo Nation Museum. Details on this job fair will be provided to the media and will be discussed in a two-hour radio forum scheduled to be broadcast on KTNN, Radio 660, on November 10th.

Those entities and organizations partnering in this initiative include; Sundt, Four Corners Power Plant, NM Workforce Development, Job Corps, San Juan College, Navajo Veterans Department, Navajo Workforce Development, Navajo Office of Labor Relations, and the Navajo Office of the President and Vice-President, Veterans Liaison.

President Russell Begaye reinforced the fact that both veterans and job creation are critical pillars of the Begaye-Nez administration.

He encourages hard working veterans that are seeking employment to secure one of these positions.

“I commend Ms. Peshlakai, who is a veteran herself, for her strong advocacy on behalf of both veterans and employment opportunities. This opportunity is significant as it will provide for veterans to pay their bills and support their families,” he said.

President Begaye extends his gratitude to the companies involved for being proactive in seeking to hire Navajo veterans.

For more information, the project and employment opportunity contacts are Jamescita Peshlakai jpeshlakai@navajo-nsn.gov NNOPVP or Mike Yeager mayeager@sundt.com, Sundt or Terry Dayish, APS-FCPP Terry.Dayish@aps.com.
HIGHWAY 118 REMAINS CLOSED FOR CLEAN-UP FROM DERAILMENT

GALLUP—Updated information indicates that Highway 118 was closed today at 1 p.m. Traffic is being diverted around Rehoboth on Hogback road, coming out on Route 7048 near Fire Rock Casino. Highway 118 is expected to remain closed until tomorrow as BNSF crews work through the night.

For the community members who reside in South Fork, Padre Canyon and White Cliffs, roads have been bladed by McKinley County. Church Rock Chapter is also attending to roads between Padre Canyon to White Cliffs with their backhoe.

Residents of Church Rock area can also take I-40 East to Exit 33, the Ft. Wingate exit, and get on State Road 118, I-40 frontage road, and go east back to the South Fork Bridge.

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###
CHINLE BANK ROBBER IN CUSTODY

CHINLE-The suspect who robbed the Chinle Wells Fargo yesterday morning was taken into Federal custody at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 26. Police also recovered the vehicle that was used in the robbery.

On Monday, Oct. 26 at approximately 10:51 a.m., Chinle Police Department (PD) received a call from a Wells Fargo employee stating that the bank had just been robbed. Chinle PD responded. Officer Carlton Jim and Lt. Dempsey Harvey were first on the scene.

Information from the crime scene indicated that a bank robber had gotten away with over $1800 dollars. A description of the vehicle involved was given as a red Ford Explorer with New Mexico state license plates. The vehicle fled southbound on Route 191.

Chinle PD alerted both Window Rock PD and Dilkon PD.

At 2:08 p.m., Chinle PD received a call that identified the vehicle at a residence ¼ mile southeast of Chinle Holiday Inn. Police responded along with Arizona Department of Public Safety.

Chinle PD checked the vehicle tags and found the vehicle was identified as being stolen from Albuquerque N.M. Police then cleared the residence and did not find the suspect. Chinle PD called for Strategic Reaction Team (SRT) and K-9 assistance from Window Rock PD.

Police tracked shoe prints east toward the Chinle wash. The suspect was tracked to another residence near the Presbyterian Church. There, contact was made with an individual who said he gave the suspect a ride to Chevron.

The individual said the suspect told him he was trying to get to Window Rock or Gallup and that he would pay for gas to get there. The individual dropped him off at Chevron.

Police dispersed to Chevron to view the security camera footage and were able to ascertain that the suspect had changed his clothes there.

At approximately 6:07 p.m., Officer Carlton Jim said he had detained an individual at Chevron. This individual said he had picked up the suspect and dropped him off at a residence six miles north of Chinle.

Police responded to the residence where they were told the suspect had fled on foot a half-hour earlier. Police units patrolled the area near the residence.

At 7:04 p.m., Lt. Harvey called for units to meet him at the residence six miles north of Chinle. It was there they apprehended the suspect and took him into custody.

The suspect is currently being detained at the Chinle Detention Center and will be transported to Flagstaff by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

“I commend our Navajo Nation Police Department for their professional response to the robbery,” said President Russell Begaye. “I’d also like to thank the Navajo public for assisting our police force in apprehending the criminal.”
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 28, 2015

NBC Today Returning to Navajo Nation -
Seeking to Break World Record

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – NBC Today Show will return to the Navajo Nation in an attempt to break a world record.

And the Navajo Nation hopes that millions of television viewers from throughout the U.S. will capture a glimpse of Navajo culture when NBC Today Show makes its second debut to Navajoland.

NBC Weatherman Al Roker of NBC Television will broadcast his live weather forecast from Four Corners Monument from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. local time on Monday, November 9th.

“We are very excited to return to the Navajo Nation,” said NBC Producer Karen Trosset. “Four Corners Monument was selected because Al Roker needs to do the weather in 50 states and Four Corners Monument allows him to do the weather in four states in the same spot.”

The segment is called Rokerthon is Back, which is one man, 50 states in one week.

Trosset continued, “Al Roker will attempt a Guinness World Record by attempting to report a weather forecast in all 50 states and the District of Columbia in record time.”

The Navajo Nation received world-wide publicity during an event called the Nick Wallenda Skywalk at Little Colorado River Gorge several years ago – NBC aired various stories about the Navajo Nation prior to the event. This will mark the second time NBC will produce a live broadcast on the Navajo Nation.

Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department Manager Martin L. Begaye, stated, “We are working diligently behind the scenes to ensure that we provide a safe place for the NBC television production crew while they are here on the Navajo Nation. We are also very grateful that NBC selected Four Corners Monument as a place to televise Mr. Roker’s weather forecast. Four Corners Monument is the only place in the country where visitors can stand in four states simultaneously. We look forward to sharing the Navajo culture with the world.”
Due to limited space, the public is encouraged to arrive early. For more information, contact Four Corners Monument at (928) 206-2450 or the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department at (928) 871-6647.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TWO BOYS WHO WENT MISSING OVERNIGHT HAVE BEEN FOUND IN BESHBITO AREA

BESHBITO-Two Navajo boys who went missing yesterday while hauling wood with their grandparents and aunt were found at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 28.

The two boys, 3 and 4 years old, wandered off into the woods yesterday at approximately 2 p.m. The incident wasn’t reported to the Navajo Nation Police Department (PD) until approximately 7 p.m.

A search party was organized in the area 15 miles north of State Route 264 in Beshbito Valley, Ariz. A search party worked throughout the night without finding the two boys. The search party was cut off at 5:30 a.m. this morning for the purpose of regrouping.

At 10 a.m. the search party found the boys three miles south of where they were originally went missing. The boys are reported to have been uninjured and in good health.

Navajo County Sheriff’s Department Search and Rescue and Navajo Nation Fish and Wildlife were enroute, but cancelled as the boys were located.

The search was a joint effort of NNPD, Navajo Nation Fire Department, Apache County Sheriff’s Department, Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management, Arizona Department of Public Safety, and the Hopi Emergency Response Team. All participated in the search and the investigation of the missing boys.

“I would like to thank the NNPD for their timely and organized response to this incident. They are consistently working on behalf of our people’s safety,” said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye. “It’s also important to recognize the community and volunteer efforts of those who organized and participated in the search party. Thank you for your efforts.”

“During this season of pinon picking and wood hauling, it’s important that we keep an eye on each other. As a Navajo community, it’s our duty to look out for each other’s safety,” said Vice President Jonathan Nez. “With the onset of the winter months, let’s prepare ourselves and check on our elders as well.”

###
TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY AND REVENUE SHARING HAVE CRITICAL IMPACTS TO GAMING TRIBES, PRESIDENT BEGAYE SAID AT 2015 AIGA EXPO

SCOTTSDALE—On Friday, Oct. 30, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye spoke at AIGA’s Tribal Leadership Forum during a panel on ‘Exploring the Many Facets of Gaming’.

President Begaye was joined by White Mountain Apache Chairman Ronnie Lupe, Hualapai Chairwoman Sherry Counts and Pueblo of Sandia Lt. Governor Stuart Paisano.

The 2015 AIGA Expo was held at Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community’s Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale.

A relative newcomer to gaming, the Navajo Nation has constructed four casinos in five years. These casinos have created 1500 jobs and in the process contributed to utility investments in the areas near development.

Thus far, Navajo gaming has paid a total of $122,550,000 million dollars in employee salaries and benefits. Eighty-five percent of Navajo gaming employees are Navajo tribal members.

“It’s good for our Navajo people to get a paycheck, go shopping and buy cars. It gives them a tremendous sense of pride that they can raise their families,” President Begaye said.

Since its inception, Indian gaming has generated over a billion dollars in the state of Arizona said President Begaye. By impacting the state economy in this manner, President Begaye said tribes are also impacting their own nations. Revenue sharing has greatly benefitted educational programs across the state.

“We have contributed to raising the salary of teachers and impacted many other state programs,” President Begaye said. “Every teacher in Arizona needs to be thankful for Indian gaming.”

President Begaye said he would like to see gaming impact tribal communities on a greater level via revenue sharing with the state.

“The state needs to take the money we send to them and put half of it back into the programs of tribal nations.”

Tribal leaders on the panel discussed threats that are impacting Indian gaming. Lt. Governor Paisano said in New Mexico the largest threat to Indian gaming is the expansion of the lottery and racinos.

“Racinos are beginning to utilize growing technology in gaming to put newer machines into their facilities,” he said. “We are seeing the exclusivity of gaming slipping away. Gaming tribes are looking to enhance protection and communication is key to working together.”

Chief Executive Officer for Navajo Gaming, Derek Watchman addressed alternative markets that have impacted Navajo’s Twin Arrows Casino.

“It’s interesting that for Twin Arrows, our primary competition is Laughlin,” CEO Watchman said. “In the Valley, the alternative is Las Vegas but up in Flagstaff, people will go to Laughlin.”

Watchman said the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise is consistently assessing their own competitive status.

“The encroachment of outside gaming will always be there because gaming creates revenue. As such, we are always thinking outside of the box in moving Navajo gaming forward.”

As tribal nations look forward to the future of Indian gaming, they must also consider the obstacles of renegotiating gaming compacts with the state and the encroachment of non-Indian gaming.

Tribes need to channel gaming revenue back into education programs to affect the next generation of leaders in becoming more market savvy and globally effective said President Begaye.

“The next generation needs to know the struggles we have gone through to create and protect Indian gaming in the state,” he said. “We must defend Indian gaming and to do this we need to have a strong strategy in place to counter commercial and non-Indian gaming.”

Tribes need to exercise their inherent sovereignty, President Begaye told the panel.

“Our sovereignty defines us. It is our strength and it gives us a platform to negotiate with the state and the federal government. We were here way before the United States was formed. We had our own government and way of life. As tribal nations, we need to stand together and move forward.”

###
RED MESA-The Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Project coordinated with Health promotions from Four Corners Regional Health Center in organizing a Red Ribbon Run starting in Kayenta, Ariz. and ending in Red Mesa, N.M.

Brian Parrish from the Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Project said the associated programs have organized the run for the past four years to raise awareness on drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence. Every year the run switches starting points and destinations, either beginning or ending in Kayenta or Red Mesa.

Nationally, Red Ribbon Week addresses substance abuse and violence prevention through awareness campaigns observed annually in October.

Vice President Jonathan Nez showed his support of Red Ribbon Week by participating in the run as he joined at Mexican Water and finished in Red Mesa.

“Red Mesa-The Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Project coordinated with Health promotions from Four Corners Regional Health Center in organizing a Red Ribbon Run starting in Kayenta, Ariz. and ending in Red Mesa, N.M. Brian Parrish from the Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Project said the associated programs have organized the run for the past four years to raise awareness on drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence. Every year the run switches starting points and destinations, either beginning or ending in Kayenta or Red Mesa.

Nationally, Red Ribbon Week addresses substance abuse and violence prevention through awareness campaigns observed annually in October.

Vice President Jonathan Nez showed his support of Red Ribbon Week by participating in the run as he joined at Mexican Water and finished in Red Mesa. Vice President Nez clocked in a full 14.6 miles.

“This run is in support of Red Ribbon Week,” he said. “We want to reinforce the message of saying no to alcohol and drugs. We want to bring awareness to substance abuse and its crippling effects on the community.”

Parrish said the run is a healthy way to get kids involved while raising awareness. Every runner put down miles with the intention of battling substance abuse while preventing violence on the Navajo Nation.

The 57 miles course was run relay style. The lead runner carried a prayer stick and handed it off as the next runner would take over. Participants ranged from elementary school children and hospital service staff to leaders of the Navajo Nation.

“‘We want to empower our citizens, our Navajo people and especially our youth. The youth these days are around substance abuse,’” said Vice President Nez. “‘They see it all the time and they think it’s normal. It’s not. We need to reinforce the message in our children that substance abuse is not normal.”

Vice President Nez addressed the fact that elders and youth are a critical pillar on which the Begaye-Nez administration stands. Because of which, he told the participants that now is the time to plant a seed of healthy living, active lifestyles and resistance to substance abuse.

“‘If we instill this in our young people, they are less likely to become substance abusers. We need to plant these seeds in our youth,’” he said. “‘We may see fruition in our lives but either way, we need to work toward instilling this in the youth for a greater Navajo Nation. In turn, they will live healthier lives. They will know spiritual wellness, active lifestyles and healthy diet.”

On behalf of both himself and President Russell Begaye, Vice President Nez thanked each and every person who participated in the run.

“I appreciate the opportunity of being able to run with each and every one of you. Thank you Kayenta Special Diabetes Program, Health Promotions from Four Corners Regional Health Center and all the service staff of health centers across the Nation.”
WINDOW ROCK-Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye signed a resolution this morning that will require the Navajo Nation Supreme Court Chief Justice to hold a Juris Doctor degree.

While Navajo Nation Supreme Court Justices do not reside directly over criminal proceedings, they do hear appeals of criminal proceedings and it is necessary that they be qualified to hear and rule on these types of cases that will come before them.

President Begaye views the legislation as a step in the right direction toward establishing more judicial control over cases involving non-Native Americans.

"In order to position the Nation to try non-Indians in our courts, our judges, especially at the Supreme Court level, need to have a Juris Doctor degree," President Begaye said.

The Nation has every right to enforce both civil and criminal laws on anyone living on, or passing through, Navajo land said President Begaye.

The mission of the Navajo Nation Supreme Court is to "hear cases on appeal and render a final judgement based on law, equity and tradition."

By requiring the Supreme Court Chief Justice to hold a Juris Doctor degree, the Navajo Nation seeks to improve the quality in the administration of justice and ensure the Nation is able to exercise its sovereignty to the greatest extent allowed under federal law.

President Begaye said he hoped the legislation would have passed 'as is' which included the requirement of all three judges to be state bar licensed. He does, however, see this legislation as progress.

"If we are intent on assuming jurisdiction over any non-Indian on our nation, we have to increase the qualification of our judges both at the Supreme Court and district level," he said. "We are more than capable of doing this ourselves with so many of our Navajo people in law school."

The legislation serves to ensure that only the most qualified people are appointed to the Navajo Nation's highest judicial position. It proposes that individuals with formal legal training will make qualified decisions on the interpretation of the Navajo Nation's laws and their application to disputes brought before the Navajo Nation Supreme Court.

"We do appreciate the passage of this legislation but we want to see more done so that that we can position our judicial system at the proper level of a true nation," President Begaye said.

###
TEESTO-Leaders Say President Begaye Kept His Word

President Russell Begaye signs legislation for $2.9M to construct a new chapter house in Teesto. President Begaye was joined by Vice President Jonathan Nez along with county, chapter and council representation.

“W
We are very elated and very thankful. I think President Begaye gave us a new vision and a higher level of objective.” - Teesto
Chapter President Elmer Clark

TEESTO-On Sunday, Nov. 8, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye signed a $2.9 million dollar legislation for the Teesto Chapter Construction Project.

At the signing ceremony, President Begaye told the Teesto Chapter that he had promised leadership and the community that he would sign this legislation.

“I want to keep my promise to you, the Teesto Community,” he said. “We want to see a nice building out here.”

Vice President Jonathan Nez said the legislation is a token of appreciation from the Navajo Nation for what local leaders have done for the Nation.

“They probably never wanted anything in return. But today, we’re giving back,” he said. “Today is a celebration for you. Today is your day,”

President of Teesto Chapter, Elmer Clark said he is elated the chapter will finally have a new location. Clark said President Begaye has been very direct in addressing the legislation.

“He told us to go back and do a stand-alone legislation. If it’s successful, I’ll sign the legislation,” Clark said.

The legislation has been reviewed and put forth before Navajo Nation Council two times without success. Most recently, during the Fall 2015 Session, the Council voted unanimously to approve the legislation.

“It’s the only piece of legislation that was passed through council unanimously,” said Council Delegate Seth Damon.

Damon thanked President Begaye for keeping his promise and coming to Teesto for the signing
Teesto has been without a chapter house for over a year when the previous facility had burned to the ground. In the meanwhile, the community has been running meetings and facilitating programs out of the Veterans Building.

According to Delegate Lee Jack Sr., the chapter house caught fire during the 2014 Navajo Nation Fair.

“It happened on Saturday night at 2 a.m.,” he said. “The local residents noticed the chapter was on fire and they contacted the authorities. However, by the time the police and fire department responded, the chapter house was gone.”

Delegate Jack Sr. said Teesto and the surrounding communities don’t have a fire department in the area, which is another challenge the area faces.

Teesto Chapter President Clark said when the chapter house burned, the community lost a critical reference point. The previous facility housed the Community Healthy Representative, the senior citizen center and the new meal program. It also served as a post office.

“Everything was lost overnight,” Clark said. “I tell my community that I literally lost my direction. That’s how much it impacted the community and myself.”

With President Begaye’s signing of the chapter replacement legislation, Clark said the community looks forward to a better future.

“We are very elated and very thankful,” he said. “I think President Begaye gave us a new vision and a higher level of objective.”

President Begaye said he would like to see a youth center and multipurpose building included in the plans for the new building. He emphasized the need for the community to connect with Teesto youth and feels a youth center would support this need.

Teesto Chapter Vice President LeRoy Thomas expressed his gratitude to the Begaye-Nez administration and said it was a historical day for the community. Thomas noted that the Teesto Community has an extensive veteran community that will benefit from the new building.

“Thank you Honorable President Russell Begaye. You have a good administration,” he said.

Funding for the replacement facility has been a long time coming and with the signing of the legislation, the Teesto community can look forward to a new chapter house.

“The community was really devastated by what happened,” said Delegate Jack Sr. “I really appreciate the President for coming out and keeping his promise. The people are really delighted and happy about it.”

Delegate Jack Sr. said upon President Begaye’s signing of the legislation, chapter leadership would meet with a construction company to start the process of building a new chapter house.

###
PRESIDENT BEGAYE VETOS $20M AIRCRAFT
LOAN LEGISLATION

WINDOW ROCK- After careful consideration and consultation with Divisions of the
Executive Office, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye vetoed legislation today au-
thorizing a $20 million dollar unsecured tax-exempt loan to acquire new aircraft for the
Navajo Nation.

The legislation was for the purchase of a new aircraft, equipment necessary to main-
tain the new aircraft as well as related financial and legal costs.

Prior to receiving this legislation, the Executive Office wrote a memo expressing our
concerns with the legislation, President Begaye said. “Council was aware we had crit-
ical concerns and if not addressed then we were not going to support this legislation.”

In a memorandum dated Nov. 9, 2015, President Begaye outlined four areas of con-
cern to support his decision to veto the legislation. His two prime concerns were lack of
justification and the source of funds to repay the loan.

First, the legislation does not include sufficient justification for the $20M dollar loan
such as a comprehensive feasibility study. Without justification, the Begaye-Nez ad-
ministration will not “support efforts blindfolded.”

Second, the legislation fails to identify the source of funds and collateral that will be
used to pay for this loan. President Begaye said he has requested this information from
the Office of the Controller but as of today’s date, the source of funds has yet to be
identified.

“As leaders of the Navajo Nation, we must be prudent and fiscally responsible to our
People and for our Government,” said President Begaye.

The memorandum outlining all four areas of concern in vetoing Resolution No. CO-
41-15 is included as an attachment.

###
TO: Honorable LoRenzo Bates, Speaker
   Navajo Nation Council

FROM: Russell Begaye, President
   THE NAVAJO NATION

DATE: November 9, 2015

SUBJECT: Resolution No. CO-41-15: RELATING TO BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE AND NAABIK’ ÍYÁTI’ COMMITTEES AND NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL; AUTHORIZING A SENIOR UNSECURED GENERAL OBLIGATION TAX-EXEMPT TERM LOAN TO ACQUIRE NEW AIRCRAFT AND TO PURCHASE EQUIPMENT NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THE NAVAJO NATION’S NEW AIRCRAFT AND TO PAY RELATED FINANCING AND LEGAL COSTS; APPROVING TERM SHEET; DELEGATING AUTHORITY TO NEGOTIATE, EXECUTE AND DELIVER FINAL LOAN DOCUMENTS; AND RELATED MATTERS

Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. 1005 (C)(10), action for Legislation CO-41-15 is being submitted to the Navajo Nation Council, through the Office of the Speaker within the ten (10) day requirement. Furthermore, the Navajo Nation President has veto authority pursuant to 2 N.N.C. 221 (B) for resolutions that enact new Navajo law or amend existing Navajo law and are adopted by the Navajo Nation Council and shall become effective on the day the President of the Navajo Nation signs it into law or the Navajo Nation Council takes action to override the President’s veto, unless the Navajo Nation Council specifically authorizes and directs a different effective date.

After careful consideration and consultation with the Divisions, I have decided to exercise my veto authority and veto authorizing a senior unsecured general obligation tax-exempt term loan to acquire new aircraft and to purchase equipment necessary to maintain the Navajo Nation’s new aircraft and to pay related financing and legal costs; approving term sheet; delegating authority to negotiate, execute and deliver final loan documents; and related matters.

The justification for use of the President’s veto authority is set forth below.
The Office of the President and Vice-President issued a memorandum dated July 9, 2015 that outlined four (4) issues with this legislation. In the memorandum we requested the following: 1) justification for a $20 million dollar loan; 2) source of funds that will be used to pay the loan; 3) whether the indemnification clause is an additional waiver of sovereign immunity; and 4) whether the non-impairment clause is too broad. Although the memorandum was part of the legislation that was approved by the Navajo Nation Council, the concerns of this Office were not addressed. As such these issues remain outstanding and this Office cannot support this legislation. I reiterate our concerns below.

First, the legislation fails to provide sufficient justification for a $20 million dollar loan. Before considering a loan, it is highly recommended that a comprehensive feasibility study is developed identifying the options available to the Nation, including the ability to service debt. The study would also include the equipment, aircraft, expenses such as maintenance costs and supplies. If not, to the least comparable valuations or proposals should be offered to justify this amount. This information is not provided. This administration is not going to support efforts blindfolded.

Second, this legislation fails to identify the source of funds and any collateral that will be used to pay this loan. This is not just a concern from the Office of the President and Vice-President, but from the Navajo Nation’s Controller and financial advisors. We have made requests to the Controller to identify a source of funds. As of today’s date, those source of funds are not yet identified. We must be prudent in making these decisions, as leaders of the Navajo Nation we are also fiduciaries in the use of the Navajo people’s funds.

Third, the indemnification clause in the term sheet remains the same. As stated in our memorandum, we are of the opinion the language is a limited waiver of sovereign immunity that would require an additional waiver of sovereign immunity from the Navajo Nation Council. The vote to the legislation was 13 to 5 which is not a 2/3 vote which is the number of votes needed to approve a limited waiver of sovereign immunity. Furthermore, any waiver of sovereign immunity must be “expressed” within the legislation. The waiver was not written into the legislation. As such, this legislation appears to be out of order.

Fourth, the non-impairment clause remains too broad. I understand the financial institution’s concern is the Navajo Nation would not enact a law that would allow for the Nation to not carry out its obligations under the loan. We recommend the language to be written very narrow and clear it is limited just to this loan.

For all the above reasons, I decided to exercise my veto authority, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. 221 (B).
RESOLUTION No.: CO-41-15/Legislation 0238-15

TITLE: RELATING TO BUDGET AND FINANCE AND NAABIK’ÍYÁTI’ COMMITTEES AND NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL; AUTHORIZING A SENIOR UNSECURED GENERAL OBLIGATION TAX-EXEMPT TERM LOAN TO ACQUIRE NEW AIRCRAFT AND TO PURCHASE EQUIPMENT NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THE NAVAJO NATION’S NEW AIRCRAFT AND TO PAY RELATED FINANCING AND LEGAL COSTS; APPROVING TERM SHEET; DELEGATING AUTHORITY TO NEGOTIATE, EXECUTE AND DELIVER FINAL LOAN DOCUMENTS; AND RELATED MATTERS

DELIVERED TO PRESIDENT’S OFFICE: 10/30/15 PM

Date Time

Received By: Brittany Snail 10/30/15 10:43

Name Date

Veto Waived as of 5:00 P.M. 11/09/15

Date

Prepared by Office of Legislative Services
RESOLUTION OF THE
NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL - FIRST YEAR, 2015

AN ACTION

RELATING TO BUDGET AND FINANCE AND NAABIK'ÍYÁTI' COMMITTEES AND
NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL; AUTHORIZING A SENIOR UNSECURED GENERAL
OBLIGATION TAX-EXEMPT TERM LOAN TO ACQUIRE NEW AIRCRAFT AND TO
PURCHASE EQUIPMENT NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THE NAVAJO NATION'S NEW
AIRCRAFT AND TO PAY RELATED FINANCING AND LEGAL COSTS; APPROVING
TERM SHEET; DELEGATING AUTHORITY TO NEGOTIATE, EXECUTE AND
DELIVER FINAL LOAN DOCUMENTS; AND RELATED MATTERS

BE IT ENACTED:

Section One. Findings

A. Pursuant to 12 N.N.C. §1330-1350, the Navajo Nation Council
has authority to consider and approve the issuance of
general obligation bonds, as such term is defined in
Section 1310(J) of the Bond Financing Act (the "General
Obligation Bonds" or the "Bonds"); and

B. The Navajo Nation is authorized to incur indebtedness for
financing the cost of capital improvement through the
issuance of bonds or other debt obligations (including bank
loans and financing agreements) ("Bonds") under 12 N.N.C.
§1300 et. seq. of the Navajo Nation Code, as amended (the
"Bond Financing Act").

C. Bonds may include "general obligation bonds" backed by the
"full faith and credit" of the Navajo Nation, as such terms
are defined in § 1310 of the Bond Financing Act; and

D. The Navajo Nation finds and determines that a critical need
exists for the Navajo Nation Air Transportation Department
to acquire new aircraft and to purchase equipment necessary
to maintain the Navajo Nation's new aircraft (collectively,
the "Aviation Projects") and that the interests of the
Navajo Nation are best served by securing financing for all
or a portion of the capital costs associated with the
Aviation Projects including paying related financing and
legal costs through the issuance of general obligation
bonds. As required by the Bond Financing Act, the Aviation
Projects constitute a major project that is not recurring on an annual basis, has a useful life in excess of five years and is in a dollar amount greater than $50,000, and the Controller has determined that the dollar amount of the Aviation Projects requires debt financing; and

E. The Office of the Controller has obtained a proposal from KeyBank to finance the Aviation Projects and the Office of the Controller recommends approval and the execution and delivery of the Proposed Terms and Conditions dated June 17, 2015 submitted to the Nation by KeyBank, in substantially the form attached hereto as Exhibit A (the "Term Sheet"), with respect to a general obligation bond to be issued in the form of a privately negotiated Senior Unsecured General Obligation Tax-Exempt Term Loan (the "Loan") in an aggregate principal amount not to exceed Twenty Million Dollars ($20,000,000); and

F. The Office of the Controller has reviewed the terms and conditions of the Loan and performed the necessary calculations and evaluated the debt service requirements of the Loan and has determined that such indebtedness will comply with the requirements of the Bond Financing Act; and

G. The Navajo Nation Council finds and determines that the Aviation Projects constitutes a "capital improvement" within the meaning of the Bond Financing Act.

H. The obligations of the Navajo Nation in connection with the Loan will be backed by the "full faith and credit" of the Navajo Nation (as defined in § 1310(I) of the Bond Financing Act), including all assets and revenues of the Navajo Nation except (i) those assets and revenues held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Navajo Nation, (ii) assets and revenues subject to a restriction on alienation or other federal or Navajo Nation legal prohibition or requirements (in case of the Navajo Nation, existing on the closing date of the Loan), including the Permanent Trust Fund, the minimum Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance required to be maintained in the General Fund and restricted federal grant and program moneys, (iii) real property of the Navajo Nation, (iv) fiduciary funds of the Navajo Nation, (v) the Sihasin Fund, and (vi) any assets or
revenues identified in writing by the Navajo Nation and accepted by KeyBank to be secured or financed by current or future additional obligations of the Navajo Nation (the "Available Assets"); and

I. The Loan may bear interest at variable or fixed interest tax-exempt rates, subject to the approving opinion of Bond Counsel, ("Bond Counsel") to the Navajo Nation concerning the tax-exempt status of interest on the Loan.

Section Two. Approval

A. The Navajo Nation Council hereby finds that there is an immediate need to secure and close the Loan to fund the Aviation Projects.

B. The Navajo Nation Council, pursuant to its authority under the Appropriations Act and the Bond Financing Act, hereby approves the Loan and the Term Sheet and authorizes and directs the President of the Navajo Nation and the Acting Controller of the Navajo Nation (the "Authorized Officers"), to execute and deliver the Term Sheet on behalf of the Navajo Nation, which execution and delivery by the Authorized Officers shall be conclusive evidence of approval thereof, and to do and perform any and all such further action as the Authorized Officers deem necessary or appropriate in connection with the Term Sheet based on the advice of the Navajo Nation Department of Justice and Bond Counsel; and

C. The Navajo Nation Council hereby authorizes and directs the Authorized Officers to negotiate, execute and deliver all documents necessary to consummate the transactions contemplated by the Term Sheet in connection with the Loan, consistent with the material terms and conditions set forth in the Term Sheet and in compliance with the Bond Financing Act, including, but not limited to, a credit agreement, promissory note, tax certificate and closing certificates in connection with the Loan (collectively, the "Loan Documents"); based on the advice of the Attorney General of the Navajo Nation and Bond Counsel to the Navajo Nation, the financial advisor (the "Financial Advisor") to the Nation; and
D. Upon negotiation of the final Loan Documents, the Authorized Officers are hereby authorized and directed to execute and deliver the Loan Documents, which execution and delivery by the Authorized Officers shall be conclusive evidence of approval thereof, and to do and perform any and all such further action as the Authorized Officers deem necessary or appropriate in connection with the Loan, having received the advice of the Navajo Nation Department of Justice, Bond Counsel, and the Financial Advisor; and

E. The Navajo Nation Council hereby ratifies, approves and confirms all actions previously taken by the Authorized Officers in connection with the Loan consistent with the purposes and intentions of this resolution; and

F. The Navajo Nation Council hereby acknowledges and affirms that all actions, requirements, terms and conditions of the Bond Financing Act for the due authorization, execution, delivery, validity and enforceability of the Loan Documents have been taken or satisfied and that the Loan Documents shall upon execution and delivery by the Authorized Officers be legal, valid and binding obligations of the Navajo Nation enforceable against the Navajo Nation in accordance with their terms.

Section Three. Dispute Resolution, Jurisdiction and Governing Law with Respect to the Loan

A. The Navajo Nation Council hereby finds that the consent to arbitration and jurisdiction and related dispute resolution and remedial provisions contemplated by the Term Sheet and that will be included in the Loan Documents (the "Arbitration Provisions") comply with Navajo Nation law (including, but not limited to, the Bond Financing Act, the Sovereign Immunity Act, and the Arbitration Act). Upon execution and delivery of the Loan Documents, such Arbitration Provisions shall constitute a valid and enforceable limited exception to the Navajo Nation’s defense of sovereign immunity, and no such defense of sovereign immunity shall prevent the enforcement of such obligations under 1 N.N.C. §§ 554 (J) and (K), Sovereign Immunity Act. Since authority to waive such sovereign immunity has been properly delegated pursuant to 1 N.N.C §§ 554 (J) and (K), Sovereign Immunity Act; the arbitration clause shall not constitute a waiver of sovereign immunity pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 223 (C); and
B. The Loan and the Loan Documents shall be governed by Navajo Nation substantive and procedural law. Where no applicable Navajo Nation law exists, Navajo custom, the law of the State of Arizona or applicable federal law will apply as provided in the Navajo Nation Code. All actions arising out of the execution and delivery of the Loan and the loan Documents and the transactions they represent as evidence shall be brought in the courts of the Navajo Nation.

Section Four. Loan Secured by the Full Faith and Credit of the Navajo Nation and Payable from Available Assets

The obligation of the Navajo Nation to pay the Loan and all obligations of the Navajo Nation under the Loan Documents shall be secured by the full faith and credit of the Navajo Nation and payable from any and all legally Available Assets of the Navajo Nation as described in Recital G of this Resolution.

Section Five. Savings Clause

If any provision of this resolution or the application of any provision of this resolution is held to be invalid, the remainder of this resolution shall not be affected with respect to the same.

Section Six. Licenses and Approvals

The Navajo Nation Council hereby finds that, as a matter of tribal law, no licensing, registration, certification or eligibility requirements of any kind (other than those expressly set forth in the Loan Documents) apply, and shall not in the future apply, to KeyBank or any other parties to the Loan Documents. Additionally, the Navajo Nation Council finds that none of the obligations contained in the Loan Documents or in connection with the Loan require any additional actions, reviews, approvals, ruling or vote.

Section Seven. Effective Date

The action is effective upon its approval pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 221(B).
CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Navajo Nation Council at a duly called meeting in Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona) at which a quorum was present and that the same was passed by a vote of 13 in favor and 5 opposed, this 20th day of October 2015.

LoRenzO Bates, Speaker
Navajo Nation Council
Oct. 30, 2015
Date

Motion: Honorable Seth Damon
Second: Honorable Kee Allen Begay

ACTION BY THE NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT:

1. I hereby sign into law the foregoing legislation, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §1005 (C)(10), on this _____ day of ____________________ 2015.

Russell Begaye, President
Navajo Nation

2. I hereby veto the foregoing legislation, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §1005 (C)(11), this 9th day of November 2015 for the reason(s) expressed in the attached letter to the Speaker.

Russell Begaye, President
Navajo Nation
3. I hereby line-item veto the foregoing legislation, pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §1005 (C) (10) and 2 N.N.C. §164 (A) (17), on this ______ day of __________, 2015. The justification of my line-item veto is set forth by memorandum.

________________________
Russell Begaye, President
Navajo Nation
TUBA CITY—As a Navajo Nation Code Talker, Sergeant Major Dan Akee is a national treasure whose military service is a testament to freedom and cultural perseverance. He is one of the few remaining Code Talkers left on the Navajo Nation.

Akee’s hearing is failing and his eyesight has diminished. He gets around with the assistance of a walker and the help of his son Danny.

As he’s grown older, Dan Akee has expressed a lingering desire to live in the home he built for his family that now sits dormant and unoccupied. The house, which was built in the mid 50s, is in severe need of roof repair and overall renovation.

He often reminisces about raising his children and grandchildren in the home. Through his memories he catches glimpses of hope in a nostalgic rearview mirror.

“I was sitting outside with him and he was crying,” Danny said. “He said he wished God would bless him to somehow have the house fixed.”

Currently, the Code Talker and his family live in a doublewide mobile home that sits directly east of the old brick-structure. But the elder Dan said he would be more comfortable in the house he built.

“I have a lot of memories there. This trailer, although it looks nice, I’m not comfortable here,” he said. “Having my home fixed would be a wish come true.”

Akee’s words were not in vain. His wishes were conveyed to Eunice Begay, Veteran’s Service Officer in Tuba City through Arnold Maryboy, Veteran’s Commander.

Begay conducted a home visit to Akee’s residence to assess the extent of the damages. It was then that she knew the renovation of Akee’s home was a worthy cause.

She then went to work organizing volunteers and resources. “We have donated a lot of our time and money to make it possible for him to come back into his house,” she said. “I have so much appreciation for those people who have been willing to help without asking for money. They are volunteering their time to make Mr. Akee’s dream a reality.”

In a coordinated effort, organized by the Tuba City Veteran’s Service Office and Red Feather Construction, with assistance from the Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP), a group of volunteers rolled up their sleeves to begin cleaning and renovating Akee’s residence.

On Nov. 7, volunteers, who included both President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez, dedicated an entire Saturday afternoon to removing old counters, bathtubs, and window frames.

These volunteer efforts exemplify what the Begaye-Nez administration has continued to promote in both supporting Navajo veterans and empowering communities through sweat equity not entitlement.

“We have partners out here that are assisting like Red Feather Construction,” said Vice President Nez. “This is a good example of getting everybody together to help and empower our people through volunteer assistance and in this case rebuilding and remodeling a home for a Navajo Nation Code Talker.”

As the day began, rooms in the house were filled with boxes of old clothes and the floors had thick coats of dust and sand from years of vacancy. Construction leads directed the crews of volunteers toward the day’s objectives.

Taking a quick break from ham-
mering out window frames for replacement, President Begaye commented that the day’s efforts were certainly worthy and appreciated.

“God blessed us with a beautiful day to work and assist our Code Talker and it’s good to see a lot of folks out here trying to help,” he said. “We just removed all the windows. We did a lot of clean up in and around the house and now we can get it ready for some interior building.”

President Begaye said the next big project would be to replace the roofing and then start working on renovating the interior and eventually paint the house.

Eunice Begay agreed the roofing would be next in line and put a two-week timeframe on completing that project with weather permitting.

“It will be quite an accomplishment when the roofing is finished,” she said. “We’re hoping to have it done in two weeks.”

Being back in his home is his dream and Code Talker Akee said he hopes to see this before his days are done.

“That’s something that we need to work with,” she said.

Before the noon hour, Akee came outside to greet the volunteers and leadership. With the help of his son and grandson, he let everyone know he was very grateful for everyone coming together to help him.

His jacket and hat were emblazoned with U.S Marine logos, which is the branch of military in which he served. As with most Navajo Code Talkers, his service was top secret and many of his stories remain untold.

“They didn’t talk about it and he still doesn’t want to talk about it,” said his son Danny. “He has told me some of his war stories but for the most part that is in the past. That’s the way my dad is.”

Danny said he hadn’t known his father was a Code Talker until the 70s when the Navajo Code Talkers were being recognized and honored with gold and silver medals.

This simple aspect of Akee’s perspective truly exemplifies the humility and integrity with which our Code Talkers served our country for the greater purpose of our Navajo Nation.

“They are not just Navajo Nation treasures. They are national and international treasures,” said President Begaye.

Akee obliged requests for photos. He called upon his grandson to fetch his uniform that he displayed with pride. His wife Martha joined him for a few photos. His movements and words were carefully chosen and deliberate.

Inspired by his quick visit, volunteers went back to work clearing the final remnants in the near empty rooms and packing boxes of memories into storage. The metal trash container was filled to capacity with refuse removed from the house.

When it came time to call it a day, the once cluttered and dusty home was clean and empty. The preparation for future renovations and roofing were set in place.

“We’re not done yet,” said President Begaye. “OPVP is going to help buy more materials. They are needed and we are going to pitch in and buy them to make this into a good, solid house again for him to live in.”

Vice President Nez reinforced that veterans have been put to the forefront of the administration’s pillars. With the help of collaborative partners, departments and programs, making tangible change for veterans is completely possible, he said.

“We’re not trying to reinvent the wheel. There are great partners out there and what we’d like to do is take it to the next level by bringing everybody together,” he said.

Eunice Begay expressed her gratitude for the assistance the volunteers and OPVP had provided that day.

“I appreciate the President and his staff being here today,” she said. “It’s wonderful to see him out here working.”

For Dan Akee, his wish to be back in the home he built will be realized very soon. His service and legacy as a Navajo Code Talker will not be forgotten. Instead, a culmination of efforts will work to make his wish a reality.
Ya’at’eeh’ from the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President,

As Diné people we are descendants of great warriors. Historically, chiefs like Manuelito, Barboncito and Narbona have led our tribe. With courage and foresight, these leaders protected our people, our land and our culture.

Before the Federal Government had granted the Navajo Nation sovereignty, through the Treaty of 1868, we had long established a society of warriors and chiefs to protect our people.

The Begaye-Nez Administration recognizes the critical and distinguished role our veterans have in our society. The impacts of their military service have been tremendous to say the least.

Our people have never looked toward defending our country with any reluctance. If you look back upon any American war or conflict, our Navajo people have been there on frontlines. They’ve put their lives on the line to defend our freedom, our way of live and the lands we live on.

As such, the honor and respect we owe our veterans is perpetual and should extend to every day of the year. But on Veterans Day, I’m asking the Navajo people to extend their hearts and hands to assist our veterans and recognize their service.

Veterans are at the forefront of the pillars of the Begaye-Nez Administration. We are working to address issues of housing, health and mental health services, as well as employment and veteran benefit programs. We are working to protect the legacy of our great Navajo Nation Code Talkers with a museum in their honor.

Our administration will strive to work on their behalf as they have done the same for us and continue to do so.

On this Veterans Day of November 11, 2015, we ask that people across the Navajo Nation join us in celebrating the dignity with which our Navajo Nation Veterans, and all veterans, have selflessly served our great country and our Nation.

Ahe’hee’,

Honorable Navajo Nation President
Russell Begaye

Honorable Navajo Nation Vice President
Jonathan Nez
President Begaye and Vice President Feed Veterans on Veterans Day

WINDOW ROCK-Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez honored all Navajo Veterans today by serving them an honorary meal at the Veterans Day event held at the Window Rock Sports Center.

“When I hear the National Anthem it stirs a feeling in my heart and it’s because of all of you here today,” President Begaye told the gathered veterans.

Navajo people have a long history of protecting this country, its citizens and the land, he said. As a Nation, he said, we owe veterans of all branches a debt of gratitude for protecting our freedom.

Throughout the many wars and conflicts, Navajo Veterans have always gone above and beyond in their military service. From World War II to Vietnam, Navajo Veterans have been an integral part of the success of the military.

“To our Code Talkers, we thank you for your service,” he said. “Our soldiers actually were the cause for us winning the war.”

The Begaye-Nez Administration has consistently pushed for the construction of homes for veterans. As such, the Navajo Nation will be one of ten tribes to use NHASDA funds to build homes for veterans.

President Begaye told the veterans that he spoke last week with Secretary Castro, Administrator for HUD, who has approved the use of these funds to construct veteran’s homes.

Veteran Liaison for the Office of the President and Vice President, Jamescita Peshlakai is a veteran herself who served in the United States Army.

Peshlakai has recently been working the Four Corners Power Plant to facilitate employment of 300 Navajo veterans for a retrofit project the power plant is undertaking within the next three years.

“I didn’t realize the life I was signing up for when I joined the U.S. Army,” she said. “When I signed that dotted line, I didn’t know that I would be serving on behalf of such a great nation.”

Peshlakai said that in her position as Veteran Liaison, she is dedicated to making the lives of veterans easier while giving them the dignity they deserve.

Vice President Nez thanked the veterans for their service and their families for their support. Everyday is Veterans Day, he said, and OPVP has prioritized their support for Navajo Veterans to advocate on their behalf.

“We need your support as well,” he said. “We need you to be at hearings so that your voice is heard at the highest level.”

Both President Begaye and Vice President Nez called upon the Navajo people to come together to support veteran’s causes.

More recently, the two leaders joined together with the Veteran’s Service Office in Tuba City to volunteer their assistance in helping to renovate the home of Navajo Code Talker Dan Akee.

This advocacy for community based assistance efforts is rooted in Navajo culture, President Begaye said.

“This is how we, as Navajos, do things. We help each other,” he said. “We need to be willing to help one another and we need to do this for our veterans.”

As the noon hour hit and the agenda broke for lunch, both President Begaye and Vice President Nez helped to serve lunch to the veterans in attendance.

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“James and Ernie entertained the lunch crowd while Vice President Nez and other attendees participated in a 5K run for Navajo Veterans.” President Begaye said.
NAPI-Navajo Agricultural Products Industry (NAPI) announced that Friday, Nov. 13, 2015 was NAPI Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Tsosie Lewis’s last day of employment.

Lionel Haskie has since accepted the position of Interim NAPI CEO.

“Both Vice President and I were surprised to hear that Tsosie Lewis’ last day was yesterday,” said President Russell Begaye. “We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to him for the years of service he has put into building NAPI into what it is today.”

Lewis worked with NAPI for over forty years. Having come aboard as a Livestock Manager, Lewis held multiple positions with NAPI before becoming the CEO.

While serving in this capacity, NAPI credits Lewis with modernizing their communications technology, overhauling their marketing structure and turning annual losses into profits.

“The Navajo Nation is well known for NAPI. It’s the largest farm owned by an Indian Nation and Tsosie Lewis had a huge role in making it possible,” President Begay said.

The farming enterprise encompasses 72,573 acres of Navajo Nation land. NAPI grows and sells produce under the Navajo Pride brand name.

As NAPI transitions into interim leadership, President Begaye encourages all NAPI employees to stay focused on building the success of the farming enterprise. He also calls upon members of Congress to help the Nation build the farm to its fullest potential.

President Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez would like to express their deep appreciation to Lewis and his family, as well as the all NAPI employees at the farm.

“Lewis was a true pioneer and the Navajo Nation was privileged to have him. We wish him well in his next endeavor,” said President Begaye. "We know he will be successful in whatever he does."

###
Window Rock – President Russell Begay today released the following statement on reports that Colorado officials are disputing claims made by the EPA regarding the Gold King Mine Spill. The Associated Press obtained a letter from Mike King, executive director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, to the EPA asserting that the agency was not telling the truth when it said state regulators approved a plan to unplug the abandon mine:

"The Gold King Mine Spill culturally and economically devastated the Navajo people. Colorado officials now claim that the EPA has not been truthful regarding the events leading up to the spill. If true, these allegations further undermine the EPA’s credibility and supports our calls that an independent federal department lead efforts to correct and remedy the harms caused by the spill.

"How can we trust the EPA to keep its word and address this crisis? The Navajo people have been waiting for months for the full and fair recovery we deserve. It's past the time for the Administration, federal agencies and all responsible parties to step up and make the Navajo people and the Navajo Nation whole for the serious harms caused by the Gold King Mine Spill."

###
NAVADO NATION ENTERS A NEW DAWN OF LEVERAGING FINANCIAL ASSETS

The Navajo Nation made history today by successfully closing its first capital markets offering.

The Nation’s $52,900,000 General Obligation Refunding Bonds, Series 2015A (Tax-Exempt) (the “Bonds”) were priced by KeyBanc Capital Markets as initial purchaser on Thursday, November 5 pursuant to a limited offering to qualified institutional investors. The Bonds, the Nation’s first securities offering, were well received by investors.

“The Navajo Nation has entered a new era of leveraging its financial assets to fund infrastructure projects. This is a step we must take on the path to achieving AAA rating and having the investor community develop confidence in the Navajo Nation,” said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye.

The Bonds carried a BBB+ credit rating from S&P. The proceeds from the sale of the Bonds will be used to refinance an outstanding bank debt taken on to build several judicial and public safety facilities on the Reservation.

“This landmark transaction is an endorsement of investor confidence in the Navajo Nation,” said Geoff Urbina, Managing Director, KeyBanc Capital Markets Public Sector. “It allows the Nation to diversify its financing options with respect to additional infrastructure and other capital projects by expanding the Nation’s access to the capital markets at attractive rates.”

“Achieving this milestone positions the Navajo Nation well to finance its infrastructure needs,” said Doug Goe, partner, Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP.

###
BEEHOLDZIL FIGHTING SCOUTS EVENTS CENTER TO HOST NATIONALLY TELEVISED BASKETBALL GAME BETWEEN EMBRY-RIDDLE AND NAU

WINDOW ROCK-Embry-Riddle’s Eagles Basketball team will take on the Northern Arizona University Lumberjacks at the Beeholdzil Fighting Scouts Event Center in Ft. Defiance on Friday, Nov. 20 at 7 p.m. MST.

The regular season game is scheduled to be televised on FOX Sports Arizona.

Embry-Riddle Eagles Head Coach Eric Fundalewicz said that playing on the Navajo Nation will be huge exposure for the school and the team. According to Coach Fundalewicz, it’s important for the team to get out and gain recognition for the school’s first-year basketball program.

“We’re excited for this opportunity and look forward to it,” said Fundalewicz. “We’re honored to be a part of this game and excited that NAU would present this opportunity to us.”

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Nez are slated to address the audience during the game’s half-time program.

The Navajo Nation is glad to host a Division I Basketball game at the Beeholdzil Event Center said President Begaye.

“By bringing college-level athletic exposure to our youth and high school seniors, we’d like to emphasize that they too can be successful in athletics while pursuing their education beyond high school.”

The basketball game will be a great way for families to participate in Division I athletics at a local level.

“We hope to see all the Fighting Scout fans, and fans of great basketball play in general, at the game on Friday night,” said Vice President Nez. “Come support these two great teams and help us to bring more of these events to the great Navajo Nation.”

The Beeholdzil Fighting Scouts Event Center located in Ft. Defiance is a multipurpose facility that seats 6,500 for sporting events. The event center meets all American Disabilities Act specifications to accommodate guests with disabilities on the concourse level.

###
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 19, 2015

Navajo Nation - A Haven for Year-Round Adventure

MONUMENT VALLEY – Winter time paradise.

When Mother Nature segues from summer to winter, it is a time for unparalleled extravaganza for people who enjoy life on the mild side.

And for serious outdoor winter enthusiasts, Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park is definitely the place to be.

No matter what kind of blanket Mother Nature covers the valley of fiery red rock formations here in December, Monument Navajo Tribal Park will ablaze with excitement.

Yawning canyon walls will awaken as runners from throughout the world will gather for the very first time to participate in a marathon, half marathon and relay here on the northern outskirts of the Navajo Nation on Saturday, December 12th beginning at 10 a.m. Runners will be able to see one of the world’s finest natural master pieces as they immerse themselves in the tranquil and rustic charm of Navajoland.

Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department Manager Martin L. Begaye, explained, “We are very excited to bring a new event to Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park in December. We are very fortunate to attract many worldwide visitors to our parks between the spring and fall months; however, it has always been a challenge to attract tourists to our parks during the winter months.”

After months of planning with various different entities, Begaye said the Department is pleased to announce running as a new venue for outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

“Many of our visitors enjoy taking photos of our tribal parks, but there are more and more visitors who want to experience our parks by venturing in some sort of outdoor activity,”
Begaye stated. “We want to enrich their memories of the Navajo Nation and let them know that we are a year-round tourism destination.”

The inaugural event will include a marathon, half marathon and relay. According to Tom Riggenbach who is the CEO of Navajoyes.org and marathon organizer, the marathon and half marathon will be competitive while the relay will be non-competitive and have few strict guidelines. The course will be dirt road, which includes a 400-foot climb in the final couple of miles of the race.

Riggenbach stated, “I know of many runners from afar who are willing to participate in this place of timeless beauty. There is truly a sense of peace and calm when you run on the Navajo Nation. There are many runners who are looking forward to this much anticipated event.”

The marathon event was the brainchild of Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez who is an avid runner and a strong advocate of living healthy.

“Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and I want our people to live long healthy lives and one way of achieving that goal is through physical exercise such as running. Not only do we want more visitors to embrace our unique Navajo culture and our land of enchantment, but we also want our own Navajo people to visit our tribal parks. The marathons provide a great opportunity for the Navajo people and our visitors to see our beautiful parks.”

Avid runners Nez and Riggenbach both echoed that many runners serve as an inspiration to others and every runner is a winner.

The coveted event is a collaborated effort between the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department, the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President, the Navajo Nation Division of Health, and Navajoyes.org, which is an entity that promotes healthy living for the youth.

The Annual Monument Valley December event will also include hot air balloons that will grace the crisp blue skies on December 11-13th. The balloon launches will be held from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. with evening glows at the Monument Valley Welcome Center on December 11th and in Kayenta on December 12th.
For more information about how to register for the marathon, contact Riggenbach at www.navajoyes.org or chuskaman@yahoo.com. He can also be reached at (928) 429-0345.

Individuals who want to obtain information about the hot air balloon event can contact the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department at (928) 871-6647 or via their website at www.navajonationparks.org
BEGAYE COMMENDS SILVERTON AND SAN JUAN COUNTY FOR JOINING EFFORT TO DESIGNATE UPPER ANIMAS WATERSHED AS SUPERFUND SITE

Window Rock – President Russell Begaye released the following statement today commending the Town of Silverton and San Juan County for joining the effort to list the mining district in the Upper Animas watershed as a Superfund site. The Durango Herald reports that after 20 years of debate, the town of Silverton will begin to officially engage the United States Environmental Agency to add the mining district to the National Priorities List.

“It is well past time for the United States Environmental Protection Agency to step up and protect downstream communities by addressing pollution in the Animas River Basin. The first step in this process is to list the Upper Animas Mining District as a Superfund site. This will provide much needed funding and technical assistance to responsibly address the threats posed by the District.

“The health and well-being of the region should be of primary importance to the USEPA. We applaud the Town of Silverton and San Juan County for joining the effort to convince the agency to list this polluted area on the National Priorities List. The EPA now needs to move quickly to get the mining district listed and to address the serious contamination and harms caused by the mines.”

##
WINSTOWN-Prior to Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell’s visit to the Winslow Residential Hall on Tuesday, Nov. 17, the Secretary met with Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez to discuss issues the Nation would like to have brought forth to President Obama’s Administration.

The Begaye-Nez Administration would like to see more dialogue facilitated between President Obama’s office and tribal nations. Specifically, he stated that Native American representation at a Federal Executive level would be very beneficial to tribes.

“We appreciate President Obama’s creation of the White House Council on Native American Affairs. However, we would like to see a Native American representing us on this Council to voice our concerns” he said.

He also expressed the need for the Navajo Nation to be allowed additional representation during the annual White House Leaders Conference. As it stands, tribal nations are allowed only one representative to attend the conference whether their tribe consists of a dozen members or thousands.

“The Navajo Nation has over 300,000 constituents and we feel additional representation at the White House Leaders Conference is very justified on our part.”

Vice President Nez advocated on behalf Navajo Indian Irrigation Project (NIIP), Navajo water settlements and support for the Native American Energy Act.

NIIP was authorized in 1962 under John F. Kennedy’s Administration and still remains uncompleted, Vice President Nez told Secretary Jewell.

“It is ridiculous that the federal government made a promise to complete the project in 1962 and more than half a century later it’s still not complete,” he said.

Water holds great importance to the Navajo people. Yet still, the Nation has no quantifiable water rights.

Vice President Nez said now is the time for the federal government to ensure that fair water rights are given to the Nation for water that runs through its lands.

“Please work with us to negotiate fair and meaningful water rights settlements in both Arizona and Utah,” he said.

He also called for support of Senator John Barrasso’s Energy Bill that would allow the Nation more responsibility over its resources.

“We ask that the Department of Interior support this bill that contains provisions which are specific to the Navajo Nation and allow us to better manage our own resources,” Vice President Nez said. “Please urge the White House to support Senator Barrasso’s bill in the Senate if it comes to a vote.”

Vice President Nez also provided an update on the Gold King Mine spill in which he asked the Obama Administration to continue to work with Navajo Emergency Management to reinvest in the communities devastated by the spill.

Vice President Nez continued to remind federal officials of the incomplete work and the necessary follow up of the spill.

###

Vice President Nez said there needs to be more dialogue facilitated between President Obama’s office and tribal nations.
Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez traveled to the Teec Nos Pos community on Friday, Nov. 20 to sign legislation that allocates $500K toward renovations for their chapter house.

TEEC NOS POS-Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye signed legislation on Friday, Nov. 20, appropriating $500,000 dollars toward renovations to the Teec Nos Pos chapter house.

The signing ceremony was held at the current facility. President Begaye said he wanted to show the chapter that he was personally aware of their need. President Begaye said he had attended a chapter meeting at their former facility.

“We came here to sign the document and make those dollars available to you,” he said. “It’s important that your community have a proper facility to conduct business.”

Currently, the chapter runs all of its administrative services out of a modest hogan while conducting larger chapter meetings in a nearby warehouse. The warehouse has no central heating or stove and no plumbing.

Chapter Vice President Arnold Bitah said the original chapter house building is over 30 years old and suffers from roof damage. He said the chapter has been trying to have renovations done since 2013.

Thus far the legislation has gone through committees to get where it is today: Naabik’iyati’ Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee, the Resource Committee and then through Navajo Nation Council.

“Now the President is here to sign it,” said Chapter Vice President Bitah.

Before the chapter can start renovations, the building will need to have structural blueprints reprocessed and initial assessments done. From there the determined renovation will undergo a cost analysis.

“Then finally the construction part will begin,” said Steven Benally, Teec Nos Pos Community Service Coordinator. “We’re looking at approximately over a year before it will be open for business.”

Chapter President Alfred Jim said he thinks renovations could take up to two years. In the meanwhile, he said the chapter is looking into leasing mobile units to conduct meetings and administrative services.

He thanked both President Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez for coming to Teec Nos Pos for the signing ceremony.

Community Service Coordinator Benally said he was honored to have both leaders come to Tees Nos Pos to approve the legislation.

“We feel good about knowing there is something good up ahead,” he said. “We thank both President Begaye and Vice President Nez for all their doing to support us. Thank you.”

###
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 23, 2015

CONTACT:
press@operationyellowwater.com

NAVAJO DOJ CONTINUES TO QUESTION ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY’S GOLD KING MINE SPILL RECOVERY EFFORTS

Window Rock – In a letter sent this week to US Environmental Protection Agency General Counsel Avi Garbow, Attorney General Ethel Branch questioned the agency’s efforts to address claims for damages caused by the Gold King Mine spill. Earlier this month, Mr. Garbow sent a letter saying that a decision had not been made as to whether the Navajo Nation could assert claims under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA).

“Despite the USEPA’s repeated commitments to members of Congress, to the press, and to the Navajo Nation regarding fair, effective and expeditious compensation for harms caused by the Gold King Mine Spill, your letter appeared to take several steps back,” wrote Attorney General Branch. “I was surprised by the suggestion in your letter that the USEPA has not yet decided that the FTCA applies to the Gold King Mine Spill. This position cannot be squared with the USEPA’s repeated public statements of responsibility for the spill.”

Attorney General Branch also expressed her frustration with the fact that more than three full months after the spill the USEPA still does not have a process in place that will ensure full, fair and prompt recovery for the Navajo people and the Navajo Nation. The USEPA has thus far failed to establish an interim claims process and relief fund to allow members of the Navajo Nation to seek compensation without releasing future unknown claims.

“I remain committed to working with any and every federal agency that will provide support and fair treatment to the Navajo Nation and its people. But I am sure you appreciate that your letter has raised more concerns and questions for us,” concluded Attorney General Branch, again imploiring the US EPA to provide full recovery for the harms caused by the spill.

Full Copy of the letter: http://bit.ly/1R1CduH

##
NATAANII AREA-President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez have been actively addressing the lack of infrastructure issues that exist in the Former Bennett Freeze Area (FBFA).

On Saturday, Nov. 21, both leaders traveled out to Lorrena Sheppard’s residence, in what is known as the Nataanii Area near Black Falls, to formally sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Navajo Nation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Region to develop an Integrated Resource Management Plan (IRMP) addressing the FBFA.

An interdisciplinary team will be composed of both Navajo Nation and BIA personnel that will develop and address an Environmental Assessment/Impact Statement along with other compliance work. The MOU identifies interdisciplinary team members, defines roles and responsibilities of each party and identifies project time frames.

The MOU also defines the resources to be evaluated.

In developing the goals and policies for the project, the Navajo Nation and BIA must form a cooperative relationship to provide direction for the planning and implementation of the IRMP for the FBFA.

“I want to congratulate the Begaye-Nez administration for understanding the need for this MOU and agreeing to this high-level partnership,” said Sharon Pinto, Regional Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Region.

According to Pinto, by implementing the MOU, an interdisciplinary team will go out and collect data on the existing natural resources located in the area. They will then determine how these resources can be utilized in the development of the FBFA.

“This is a critical document,” she said “I appreciate the administration for seeing that this is the first step toward some real development.”

President Russell Begaye said the MOU is a way to effectively collaborate between the Navajo Nation and the BIA to bring substantial change within shorter time frames.

“I think collectively we can do more,” he said. “Right now, if we’re looking strictly at one department or agency to address the many issues that exist, it’s not going to happen. The need is too overwhelming.”

To see the conditions FBFA residents are facing, both President Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez have toured the area and listened to the needs expressed by area families. For this reason, President Begaye felt it was important to sign the MOU at a residence located on the FBFA and not at a chapter house.

“We are here to see first hand the conditions our people are living in and it’s better for us to be where the people are to adequately address their concerns.” President Begaye said.

President Begaye said he sees the MOU as a way to untangle the bureaucracy that can often stifle progress in bringing infrastructure to the area. The response to these needs should be immediate and shouldn’t take five or ten years, he said.

“It’s beautiful country out here. It’s peaceful under the open skies and land. However, in the midst of all this beauty, there is so much need that exists among the residents of the FBFA.”

Over sixty community members gathered at the Sheppard residence for the day’s signing. Afterward, President Begaye and Vice President Nez gave away over 200 turkey baskets to the gathered elderly and those across the FBFA for their Thanksgiving meal.

###

PRESIDENT BEGAYE SIGNS MOU BETWEEN NAVAJO NATION AND BIA TO ADDRESS INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES IN FBFA
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Margie Begay, Senior Planner
Navajo Division of Transportation
Phone: (505) 371-8307
Email: mbegay@navajodot.org

Navajo Division of Transportation to Host Quarterly Regional Meetings

Tse Bonito, NM – The Navajo Division of Transportation (Navajo DOT) Planning Department will host its next quarterly Regional Agency Meetings the week of December 14–18, 2015 at the Navajo DOT Complex in Tse Bonito, NM.

Regional Agency Meetings will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. daily according to the following schedule:

- Monday, December 14, 2015 – Ft. Defiance Agency Regional Meeting;
- Tuesday, December 15, 2015 – Northern Agency Regional Meeting;
- Wednesday, December 16, 2015 – Central Agency Regional Meeting;
- Thursday, December 17, 2015 – Eastern Agency Regional Meeting;
- Friday, December 18, 2015 – Western Agency Regional Meeting.

Afternoon training sessions are scheduled from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm daily throughout the week. Topics will include project management and project development.

Contact the Navajo DOT Planning Department at (505) 371-8307 if you require more information or have any questions.

The Navajo DOT Complex is located at #16 Old Coalmine Road Mentmore, NM 87319.

- If driving west on NM 264, then before you arrive in Tse Bonito you will see the complex on the north (right) side of the highway before the bend into Tse Bonito.
- If you are traveling on NM 264 from the east, then you will see the complex as you exit Tse Bonito around the bend on the north (left) side of the highway.

###
North American Coal Corporation (NACC) is a subsidiary of NACCO Industries, Inc. and traded on the New York Stock Exchange as NC. NACC has been selected by Navajo Transitional Energy Company (NTEC) to enter into negotiations as potential new operators of the Navajo Nation owned BHP Billiton mine.

Negotiations are currently underway.

NACC mines and markets lignite, bituminous and metallurgical coal primarily as fuel for power generation and for steel production. The Corporation has been around since 1913 with corporate headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio. NACC has 1,800 employees, had revenues of $172.7 million in 2014.

On Monday, Nov. 23, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye was introduced to the executive team from NACC including President and CEO J.C. Butler, Jr. and mine operations President Vern Lund.

###
Window Rock, AZ - On Monday, Nov. 30, the Office of the President and Vice President signed an Executive Order launching the “Building Communities of Hope” Initiative to bring awareness by implementing suicide prevention initiatives and offering help to the Navajo people.

The Executive Order states that the third week of December and second week of June shall be declared “Navajo Nation Suicide Prevention Week.”

“It is our goal to welcome a new dawn by empowering individuals, families and communities to make positive choices to restore hope, self-sufficiency and determination,” said President Russell Begaye. “We believe in providing our Navajo people with the means to cope with life’s challenges and to never give up. Every life is precious.”

At the signing, Vice President Jonathan Nez asked for tools to be brought forth from Navajo Nation departments to address the epidemic of suicide on the Navajo Nation. Although the topic of suicide is taboo within traditional perspectives of Navajo culture, he said a dialogue needs to take place within Navajo communities addressing suicide.

The initiative instructs all tribal departments to coordinate resources to address suicide prevention, response, and post-vention. It calls for suicide-related training to be given to Navajo Nation employees.

The effort is a comprehensive strategy to educate the Navajo people on suicide prevention services that exist on the Nation through a direct interface with the Navajo people. The theme of the suicide prevention initiative is “Building Communities of Hope” which focuses on information and outreach.

Additionally, the Executive Order calls for the development of a social media campaign using electronic mediums such as a website, Facebook, or Twitter while engaging in traditional means of advertisement such as billboards and posters. The initiative serves to maximize avenues used to help Navajo people of all ages in a variety of ways.

Furthermore, all tribal buildings will be required to display the “Building Communities of Hope” official poster that will provide a helpline and information to anyone looking for help.

“We need to reinforce the traditional concepts of K'é and Hózhó in our Navajo communities,” said President Begaye. “Among the youth, we need to let them know they have self-worth and that liná is valuable. Everyone needs to hear something positive.”

The week of December 14 - 19, 2015, begins the Suicide Prevention and Awareness Tour, whereby President Begaye and Vice President Nez are scheduled to visit nine Navajo communities along with departments and programs to share a message of hope, and to encourage attendees with supportive resources. These resources include on-site clinical specialists, motivational speakers and resource information.

A finalized tour schedule will be released soon.

For more information about the tour, please contact either Christopher Bahe or Yvonne Kee-Billison at 928-871-7000, Office of the President and Vice President.
EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 03-2015

INITIATE THE “BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF HOPE” INITIATIVE TO ORGANIZE A ONE NATION, ONE VOICE APPROACH TO ADDRESS SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR OUR NAVAJO PEOPLE

THE NAVAJO NATION
EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 03-2015

NOVEMBER 30, 2015

WHEREAS:

1. The President of the Navajo Nation serves as the Chief Executive Officer for the Executive Branch of the Navajo Nation government with full authority to conduct, supervise, and coordinate personnel and program matters. 2 N.N.C. 1005 (A);

2. The President shall have the enumerated power of issuing an executive order for the purpose of interpreting, implementing or giving administrative effect to statutes of the Navajo Nation in the manner set forth in such statutes. 2 N.N.C. 1005(C)(14);

3. An executive order shall have the force of law upon the recipient. Id.

THEREFORE:

I, Russell Begaye, President of the Navajo Nation and J. Jonathan Nez, Vice-President of the Navajo Nation, by the authority vested in us, we hereby issue the following order:

1. Establish the “Building Communities of Hope” Initiative, which is to bring hope back to our communities and awareness to suicide by organizing our Navajo Nation Government to develop a suicide prevention, response, and post-vention program.

2. The third week of December and second week of June shall be declared “Navajo Nation Suicide Prevention Week” this week shall be to bring awareness and education on this issue and include:
a. Training for all Navajo Nation employees;

b. Divisions and Departments shall host, participate and initiate activities that carries out “Building Communities of Hope” Initiative; and

c. Support the Prevention Tour across the Navajo Nation to provide information and training to our People, from our children, youth, adults and our elders.

3. The Department of Health, Division of Social Services, Division of Public Safety and Department of Diné Education shall lead and are directed to initiate the “Building Communities of Hope” Initiative and any and all other Divisions, Department and Programs, as requested, shall share information and cooperate in the implementation of the “Building Communities of Hope”. This will include:

a. Collaborate and coordinate with the non-profit, national, tribal, non-tribal, federal, faith-based organizations and schools in implementing this Initiative, such as National Suicide Prevention LIFELINE and National organizations.

b. Develop a post-vention strategy, which may include subcontracting with technical teams.

c. Develop a Navajo Nation information poster to be disseminated across the Navajo Nation by December 10, 2015 that shall include a National Suicide Prevention LIFELINE and information on where people can seek help.

d. Develop a “Building Communities of Hope” website, social media campaign with Facebook, Twitter, and billboards, posters, cards that can provide information to our People such as a LIFELINE.

4. By December 18, 2015, all Divisions, Departments and Programs are directed and shall be required to post the “Building Communities of Hope” poster in a conspicuous location at the entrance of all Navajo Nation Government Buildings and Chapter Houses.

5. Responsibility for implementation. The Division/Department Directors and Chapter Managers are responsible for implementing and ensuring compliance with this order.

6. Consistency with other laws. The provisions of this order shall be implemented consistent with the laws of the Nation and highest welfare of the Navajo people.
EXECUTED this 30th day of November, 2015

Russell Begaye, President

Jonathan Nez, Vice-President

ATTEST:

Ethel Branch, Attorney General
WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez are pleased to appoint Jim R. Parris as the Controller of the Navajo Nation. Parris is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and a tribal member of the Osage Nation and the Cherokee Nation.

Parris has over 35 years of experience in accounting, auditing and management in tribal, federal and private sectors across the United States. Parris was the first Controller for the Osage Nation. He also served as the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer for the Cherokee Nation.

Aside from tribal experience, Parris worked many years at the U.S. Department of the Interior. Parris was the first Native American CPA to work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior. He initiated the very first external audits by independent auditors to audit tribal: Individual Indian Monies, Alaskan Native Escrow, Contributed Trust funds held by the BIA. He also contracted the first investment professionals to invest the BIA’s trust investment program for tribal trust funds, including establishing the first Master Trust System to account for trust funds held by BIA.

Parris transitioned into the private sector as a sole practitioner in public accounting and consulting primarily supporting tribes. He has served on numerous Boards as the Treasurer for Native American Finance Officer’s Association, InterTribal Monitoring Association, Council of Energy Resource Tribes for Cherokee Nation, and the Indian Land Working Group. More recently, Parris has assisted over 20 tribes across the United States from Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Wyoming, Oregon, Montana, Washington, South Dakota and Wisconsin in trust litigation resulting in numerous successful settlements, including the Navajo Nation.

“We welcome Jim to the Navajo Nation. We know his experience and knowledge is vital in overseeing and protecting the Navajo Nation’s finances and assets and in helping build the portfolio of the Nation. It became challenging for our Administration in finding the right Controller as there are very few Navajo CPAs. Many are still sitting for their exams and most have just started in their career and wish to seek experience before returning home,” said President Begaye.

Vice-President said that our objective is to not only bring home Navajos but train our Navajo people to give them more opportunities. Parris has made that commitment to the Navajo Nation. This is not a long-term career move for Parris, he is here to develop our Navajo people, help those who are seeking their CPA and accounting degrees and mentor the next Navajo Controller.

“I am happy to help and honored to be appointed as the Navajo Nation’s Controller. This Administration has great vision and I am glad to be part of the team. Over these next few years, I will focus on mentorship and training for those within the Office of the Controller to be the next Controller for the Navajo Nation. I hope to see promotion within OOC, it is good to bring our Native people home, but we can’t forget those here, said Jim Parris

Parris is also a Veteran, having served in the United States Navy from 1973 to 1976.

###
PHOENIX, AZ—During a meeting between Arizona tribal leaders and Governor Doug Ducey, Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez told the Governor that when tribal nations are prosperous, Arizona is also prosperous.

Tribal leaders were afforded time to present issues facing their tribal communities before Governor Ducey in a consultation session held in the Monte Vista Room at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Ariz.

Vice President Nez called attention to water rights, increased resources for education, a Navajo specific Medicaid system and withdrawing Arizona’s support of the amicus brief in the Dollar General Corporation vs. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians case.

Vice President Nez noted the need to establish clear water rights for the Navajo Nation and develop the capacity to deliver adequate supplies of affordable water.

“It is a priority for the Navajo Nation to get back to the negotiating table to openly discuss its water rights relative to the Little Colorado and Colorado Rivers with all relevant parties. We look forward to working with you in bringing critical parties back to the table to find viable solutions to this major challenge for the Navajo Nation. Be our champion on this issue,” Vice President Nez said.

Vice President Nez affirmed that the Begaye-Nez administration supports language revitalization and cultural preservation among education systems on the Navajo Nation. A stable foundation for Native peoples in Arizona can be found in their indigenous languages, culture and traditions, he said.

He noted that budgets for education have faced cuts in recent years. In the short run, the fact is Navajo Nation cannot afford any further cuts in the education of our youth.

As with most rural school districts, the Nation’s school districts are struggling. Money is not the only challenge but it is a major challenge for schools that needs to be addressed.

“The Navajo Nation’s leaders are working with Navajo education leaders to develop other recommendations focused on improving education for Native American students across Arizona. We look forward to meeting with you when our plan is refined to discuss it with you for your consideration,” he said.

The Navajo Nation has developed a position on taking over its own Medicaid program. A feasibility study was conducted
by the Navajo Division of Health in May 2014. The results of the study show that it would be feasible for the Navajo Nation to operate as a Medicaid Agency.

The study accessed the cross jurisdictional health care disparities, eligibilities, enrollment processes, amount of reimbursements, mandatory service and data access.

Based on the study, the Navajo Nation will call upon appropriate Federal agencies to support the feasibility planning design for a Navajo Nation Medicaid Agency.

“We have the professional capacity to do this,” he said. “We need state support in pushing for Congressional approval on this issue.”

Vice President Nez addressed an outcry within Indian Country over the Dollar General Corporation vs. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians case.

He reminded Governor Ducey of a letter the Navajo Nation had sent him regarding an amicus brief the State of Arizona had signed onto, filed by the State of Oklahoma.

The amicus brief dismisses tribal courts and suggests that state courts are, in all instances, the appropriate forums for tort-claims against non-Indians who harm tribal citizens on tribal lands. Vice President Nez said the state of Arizona has always recognized the jurisdiction of tribal courts to prosecute crimes that take place on tribal lands.

“We respectfully ask that the State of Arizona withdraw from the State of Oklahoma’s amicus brief,” he said.

Speaker of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council Lorenzo Bates was in attendance and brought forth concerns regarding the Nation’s energy issues, specifically coal-based revenues. Speaker Bates said that coal is a major industry for the Nation, in terms of both employment and revenue.

“We look to you to advocate and promote the fact that the Navajo Nation has taken hits by shutting down several of our power plants. Yet, there continue to be more regulations handed down from the federal government.”

Speaker Bates said he feels the Nation has gone above and beyond to comply with federal regulations. He called for State support in transitioning from coal-based to alternative forms of energy.

In closing, Vice President Nez extended the invitation from both himself and President Russell Begaye to visit the Navajo Nation.

He expressed appreciation to the Governor for bringing tribal leaders together for the purpose of consultation.

Government Ducey acknowledged the issues presented by the many tribal leaders in attendance. He committed to fostering ongoing communication the Governor’s Office and Arizona Indian nations.

“What I want to do is spend less time talking and more time working,” Governor Ducey said. “This idea of consultation is important to me.”

"It is a priority for the Navajo Nation to get back to the negotiating table to openly discuss its water rights relative to the Little Colorado and Colorado Rivers with all relevant parties. We look forward to working with you to find viable solutions to this major challenge for the Navajo Nation” - Vice President Nez

###

THE NAVAJO NATION

Russell Begaye  President

Jonathan Nez  Vice President

Contact: Mihio Manus, Sr. Public Information Officer
Office of the President and Vice President
THE NAVAJO NATION
Phone: (928)871-7728
Fax: (928)871-4025

Arizona Governor Doug Ducey (center) stands with Vice President Jonathan Nez (right) and Speaker Lorenzo Bates (left) at a tribal consultation meeting held at the Heard Museum on Monday, Nov. 30.
WASHINGTON—Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye called on support from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell to combat and address suicide in Indian Country through a summit to be hosted in the Navajo Nation. President Begaye and tribal leaders met over two-days during the Secretary’s Tribal Advisory Committee meeting.

“We are asking for a summit to be held to address suicide,” the president said. In addition to a summit, the president called for a national anti-suicide campaign to reach Native youth through videos and social media. The videos could be designed and produced by Native youth.

President Begaye shared a recent executive order he signed with Vice President Nez that calls for Navajo Nation employees to be involved in preventing suicide in the Navajo Nation.

In the coming weeks, the president and his staff will begin a reservation wide tour that will include presentations on suicide prevention. “The vice president and I will visit Navajo communities and schools throughout the Navajo Nation to help build communities of hope,” President Begaye said.

One of the challenges the president raised with Secretary Burwell was the lack of data on suicides in Indian Country and specifically the Navajo Nation. “We need data. No one is keeping adequate records, not only for those that do commit suicide, but also the attempted suicides. One suicide impacts a large community. How do we address and work with the communities impacted by this suicide? The data problems are compounded by the fact that we are situated within three states,” the president said.

Secretary Burwell said the Indian Health Service is unable to provide complete data because they do not attend each suicide. She asked how local law enforcement collects data, and if there is regional consistency in reporting and if there are data sharing agreements between tribal and non-tribal public safety agencies.

Lastly, the president informed the secretary of a pilot project the U.S. Department of Justice is undertaking to knock down silos and concentrate funding to combat substance abuse. President Begaye advised the secretary to do something similar with regards to suicide.

###
WINDOW ROCK, AZ-On Friday, Dec. 4, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez signed a proclamation declaring the third week in December as Suicide Prevention Week.

The proclamation serves to provide impetus for Navajo Nation departments and communities to promote dialogue and awareness about suicide prevention and the prevention resources available throughout local communities.

“It is our goal to empower individuals, families and communities to make positive choices while restoring hope, self-sufficiency and determination,” said President Russell Begaye. “The loss of one life is one too many.”

During the week of December 14 - 19, 2015, President Begaye and Vice President Nez will begin the Communities of Hope tour addressing suicide prevention and awareness across the Navajo Nation. The tour is scheduled to stop at twelve Navajo high schools and a youth center.

For Native Americans of all age groups, suicide is the 8th leading cause of death. Realizing that public awareness forums are key in addressing suicide prevention, The Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) signed an Executive Order on Nov. 30, launching an initiative instructing all tribal departments to coordinate resources to address suicide prevention, response, and post-vention.
This effort is a comprehensive strategy to educate Navajo communities on suicide prevention services that exist on the Nation through a direct interface with the Navajo people.

OPVP alongside tribal departments and programs will be visiting schools and communities addressing Navajo youth with educational messages about prevention measures. The tour will focus on sharing messages of hope, encouragement and supportive resources. These resources will include on-site clinical specialists, motivational speakers and resource information.

“We need to let the youth know they have self-worth and that their lives are valuable,” said Vice President Nez. “By reaching out and visiting high schools across the Navajo Nation, we hope to provide a positive influence on Navajo youth while reinforcing the serious nature of suicide prevention.”

The Communities of Hope tour scheduled is listed below. For more information about the tour, please contact either Christopher Bahe or Yvonne Kee-Billison at 928-871-7000, Office of the President and Vice President.

###

**COMMUNITIES OF HOPE TOUR SCHEDULE**

**Monday, December 14, 2015**
5:30 PM   Crownpoint High School

**Tuesday, December 15, 2015**
9:00 AM   Sanders High School
1:30 PM   Winslow High School
5:30 PM   Leupp Elementary School

**Wednesday, December 16, 2015**
9:00 AM   Aneth High School
5:30 PM   Monument Valley SAC Auditorium

**Thursday, December 17, 2015**
9:00 AM   Whitehorse (Montezuma Creek) High School
1:30 PM   Shiprock High School
5:30 PM   Newcomb High School

**Friday, December 18, 2015**
9:00 AM   Navajo Pine High School
1:30 PM   Ganado High School
5:30 PM   Office of Diné Youth, Fort Defiance, AZ

**Saturday, December 19, 2015**
5:30 PM   Coca Cola Classic, Wildcat Den, Chinle, AZ
NAVAJO NATION MOURNS LOSS OF LEONARD HASKIE

WINDOW ROCK—It is with a heavy heart and great sorrow that the Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) has learned today about the passing of one of our former leaders, Leonard Haskie.

“Today we learned that one of our former leaders, who had served both as a Navajo Nation Chairman and President, had passed away last night at Northern Navajo Medical Center in Shiprock, N.M. Leonard Haskie was a person with a wealth of knowledge that he used to advance the Navajo Nation toward a better future. It was a pleasure to serve with Leonard Haskie during my time as a council delegate on the 22nd Navajo Nation Council,” said President Begaye.

Leonard Haskie was originally from Tsé’al’naóz’ii’ (Sanostee), New Mexico. His clans were Ta’neeszhahnii (Tangle People Clan), born for Táchii’nii (Red-Running-Into-The-Water Clan), his maternal grandfathers are Tódlích’íí’nii (Bitter Water Clan), and his paternal grandfathers are Nakai Dine’e (Mexican Clan).

Former President Haskie was a great man who took the reigns in leading the Navajo Nation as interim chairman in 1989.

In his leadership capacity, he served as interim chairman, then president for two years. He was the tribe’s first president under the amendments to Title 2 of the Navajo Tribal Code.

It was during Haskie’s tenure as interim president that the 88-member tribal council and chairman’s post were formally separated into two distinct legislative and executive branches. Previous to his tenure, the chairman sat on the council and controlled it.

During his term as interim president, Haskie reactivated the Navajo Labor Investigative Task Force (Task Force) by Executive Order. The Task Force deliberated on proposed amendments to the Navajo Preference and Employment Act, held public meetings to receive input from the Navajo people, and established a comprehensive understanding with organized labor.

One of Task Force’s goals was to achieve higher quality and more numerous employment opportunities for Navajo people within the Nation and among neighboring communities.

The former president was a staunch supporter of education. Haskie held a bachelors and masters degree in civil engineering and was a licensed, professional engineer in the states of Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico for several years.

Beyond this, he also held a position as an assistant superintendent for support services for the Gallup-McKinley County School District.

Most recently, Haskie served as a council delegate.
During a special session in November 2014, the Navajo Nation Council welcomed Leonard Haskie as a newly appointed council delegate. Haskie represented the communities of Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’koi, Red Valley, Sheep Springs, Toadlena/ Two Grey Hills, Tsé’al’náoz’t'íi.

President Begaye said Haskie was a leader from, and of, the Navajo people. The president stated that Haskie’s commitment in connecting with people at a grassroots level was testament to his effective leadership capacity.

Looking back at the political career Leonard Haskie had undertaken in tribal government and education in, OPVP would like to express its deepest gratitude to his family. The Office thanks him for his service toward enhancing the great Navajo Nation.

“It was an honor to sit with him on council. I learned a great deal from him,” said Vice President Nez. “We ask the Navajo People to pray for him and his community.”

At this time, the OPVP calls upon the Navajo people for prayers for the family as they mourn and remember the life of Leonard Haskie. The Office stands by the family in their time of grief and OPVP also pays tribute in honoring a great Diné man and Navajo Nation leader.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez will issue a proclamation in honor of Leonard Haskie to have all flags flown at half-mast on Friday, Dec. 11.

###
ALBUQUERQUE, NM—During the opening banquet for Navajo Division of Social Service and Casey Family Program’s Navajo Child Work Session in Albuquerque on Monday, President Russell Begaye called for the absolute protection of Navajo children in his support of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

“We need to make sure that every Navajo child in state custody or foster care doesn't have to go through life wondering who they are or who their parents are,” President Russell Begaye said during his speech that opened the NDSS and Casey Family Program’s Navajo Child Work Session. “There is nothing more devastating than seeing a Navajo child being taken from their parents. The connection that exists between a child and their parent is strong. It’s a sacred bond. In our support of the ICWA, we are protecting the connection between children, their parents and siblings,” President Begaye said.

Last week, President Begaye delivered a letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Burwell asking for her to support ICWA in enforcing that state courts investigate and verify the enrollment of Native American children in cases regarding custody and foster care.

President Begaye talked about the boarding school era in the history of Native Americans to emphasize the historical trauma caused by the separation of Indian children from their families, culture and lan-
guage. Both President Begaye and his brothers attended boarding school as young men.

“Imagine your identity being erased. Imagine not being able to see your mother and father. Imagine knowing you have family but not being able to see them. The separation is too much,” he said. “Now imagine children who are separated from their families and cultures for the entirety of their lives.”

On July 7th of this year, ICWA came under fire when the Goldwater Institute filed a proposed class-action lawsuit in federal district court in Arizona challenging the constitutionality of ICWA and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) guidelines that strengthen this legislation.

The Goldwater lawsuit has sparked a national discussion questioning the purpose of ICWA. It is the position of the Navajo Nation that tribes, states and partners do everything they can to advocate for this legislation which protects tribe’s connection to Native American children.

President Begaye said the lawsuit portrays the lifeways of Native Americans as being insignificant while also portraying tribal communities as substandard. For non-Natives, the lawsuit could be interpreted as compelling.

“It makes you think about the issue in the questions it raises,” he said. “Rather than go down that road, we, as Native Americans, need to know that we are just as good as anybody else.”

The Goldwater lawsuit is a fight for the soul of tribal nations, he said. It challenges the equality of tribal nations against non-tribal paradigms of societal standards not based in traditional culture or knowledge.

“Our traditional ways nurture our children and foster environments that are conducive to the success of our children. Navajo culture inherently protects the future generations as it does the elders.”

President Begaye expressed his gratitude to all departments in attendance, as well as the Health Education and Human Services Committee and Law & Order Committee delegates, for coming together to support and address the importance of ICWA in keeping Navajo children with Navajo families. He called for the Nation’s continued support of ICWA and for tribes to stand against the Goldwater Institute’s lawsuit, which questions the constitutionality of the Act.

“Native Americans are just as good as any other society on earth. We love our families and will stand with them,” he said. “We need to make sure that every Navajo child in state custody or foster care doesn’t have to go through life wondering who they are or who their parents are.”

During the following morning’s agenda, Vice President Jonathan Nez presented a welcoming address to the work session that supported President Begaye’s position while also supporting positive, healthy families and homes on the Nation. The vice president also extended gratitude to the partners who organized the conference.

Regarding the Goldwater Institute’s lawsuit, Vice President Nez supports the need for all tribal nations to come forth with strong messages supporting ICWA. He said there is a the need for the Nation to develop a strong strategy in combating the Goldwater Institute’s messaging and media campaign.

“What they are doing is chipping away at the sovereign rights of Native Americans which can eventually extend beyond ICWA,” Vice President Nez said. “What the Goldwater Institute is doing is wrong.”

Both President Begaye and Vice President Nez voiced support of ICWA and the protection of Indian children by keeping them with Native American families.

###
Tomorrow, the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee will hold a special session to discuss overriding, limiting and amending the line-item veto authority of the President of the Navajo Nation.

“There is nothing to debate tomorrow. The line-item veto authority was given to the President directly by the People, only the People can limit and clarify this authority. This is not a question for the Navajo Nation Council, this is a question only the Navajo people can answer. I have asked in my veto message that the Council should not challenge the voice and vote of the People. That will continue to be my message,” said President Russell Begaye.

On Nov. 12, President Begaye vetoed the legislation as it attempts to amend the President's line-item veto authority that is contrary to the 2009 initiative. The initiative passed by the People clearly states that amendments to the line-item veto authority can only be by the initiative process. In other words, only the Navajo People can change this authority. It is not an authority that can be limited or amended by the Navajo Nation Council.

The line-item veto was part of an initiative pursued in 2008, by former President Joe Shirley, Jr. to bring governmental fiscal responsibility back to the Navajo Nation. On December 15, 2009, the Navajo People voted “yes” to give line-item veto authority to the Navajo Nation President. On June 25, 2010, former President Shirley made history and exercised the President's first line-item veto.

Since that time, this authority has been exercised many times over by President Shirley, former President Ben Shelly and more recently by President Begaye.

THE AMENDMENT:

The initiative passed by the Navajo People states “budget items” in the “Navajo Nation Comprehensive Budget and supplemental appropriations” are subject to line-item veto. The Navajo Nation Council is attempting to amend the President's line-item veto from “budget items” to only the “numeric appropriated dollar amount”.

“Any direct impact to the budget are “budget items” which include set asides, waivers, and conditions of appropriations. The Navajo people passed this initiative to stop wasteful spending and ensure government fiscal responsibility and efficiency. This amendment can easily be used to manipulate the budget by hiding appropriations in other parts of the budget where the President’s line-item veto authority is attempting to be removed. This is contrary to the initiative passed by the Navajo people,” said Vice-President Jonathan Nez.

“I understand the legislation was the result of long hours in developing title two amendments to address and clarify Legislative processes. However, to limit and amend the President's line-item veto authority was never part of those discussions but instead, it was introduced on the Council floor. I respectfully ask the Council to withdraw the override legislation and to re-introduce the legislation as this Administration supports those efforts,” said President Begaye.

If the Council wants clarification on the Navajo people’s initiative, the question should be posed to them. We have not seen one chapter resolution nor any support to limit the President's line-item veto authority. In fact, we have received many messages from our People stating that this is for the People to decide not the Council nor the President.

“The Vice-President and I will continue to fight and protect the voice of the Navajo people. For it is the Navajo people who have elected and entrusted us to be their voice, to represent them and to advocate on their behalf,” said President Begaye.
BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF HOPE TOUR KICKS OFF AT THOREAU HIGH SCHOOL

High rates of suicide across Native America and the Navajo Nation have warranted OPVP to address the epidemic by organizing the Building Communities of Hope tour. At Thoreau High School, Vice President Nez reinforced that the students are loved and important.

THOREAU-The Building Communities of Hope Tour, which is an initiative undertaken by the Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) and departments of the Executive branch, kicked off a six-day tour on Monday, Dec. 14 at Thoreau High School. The tour aims to bring suicide prevention awareness to schools and communities across the Navajo Nation.

As high rates of suicide across Native America and the Navajo Nation indicate, suicide is an epidemic that warrants immediate attention. OPVP has taken measures to address this epidemic through organizing the Building Communities of Hope Tour.

“Our youth will lead us into the future. We must do everything we can to let them know they are special and they are loved. We need to protect our youth and continue to instill positivity and self-confidence in them,” said President Russell Begaye.

As the tour got underway at Thoreau High School, Vice President Nez said, “In this six-day tour, we are hitting the road to show the Navajo people that we mean business. One life taken is one life too many in our eyes.”

Jessie McKenzie and TJ Anderson of the Department of Behavioral Health Service (DBHS) led the program with a presentation addressing questions and answers about suicide prevention and awareness.

McKenzie posed a direct question, “Are you thinking about hurting yourself or killing yourself?”

She went on to tell the students that if they are hurting, they really need to voice their pain and talk with someone they trust or feel they can confide in.

“Don’t be afraid to ask questions,” she said. “Speak up, reach out and know that you are not alone. Seek help from an adult you trust and don’t give up. Keep asking until someone helps you.”

Both McKenzie and Anderson recommended that the affected youth should speak with teachers, school counselors, nurses, parents or friends. In critical situations, those who are considering suicide, and those who know someone that might be considering suicide, should call the nearest Navajo Nation Police Department dispatch and provide adequate information.

Echohawk Lefthand, a motivational speaker from Red Mesa, said that suicide has been a big problem in the area where he comes...
from. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem, he told the students.

“We all go through problems and we all face difficult situations in our lives,” he said. “When we take difficult situations and turn them into positive things, we are able to grow through them.”

Lefthand shared that within the last two months, he lost one of his best friends to suicide. His friend was a positive person who had great charisma. He wasn’t someone who seemed like he would consider suicide.

“He told me that he had been thinking about suicide and I couldn’t believe it,” he said. “I asked him, ‘How can you think like this?’”

Ultimately Lefthand’s friend took his own life, which in turn caused Lefthand to fall into depression. The impacts of suicide among the victim’s family and friends can be lingering, deep-rooted and traumatic.

The tour’s presentation included support and counseling services for those who have lost loved ones. Lefthand talked about his need to seek counseling in dealing with the grief he was feeling. Resources are available and were part of the topics discussed.

“The only way to get over depression is to go through it. You’re going to cry but you have to go through it,” he said.

Dominic Romero, Head Principal at Thoreau High School, said the Building Communities of Hope tour was of critical importance as it let the students know that the Navajo Nation cares about them and that their lives are truly special.

“This is huge and it’s important because we don’t know what a lot of these kids go through with their families. Even though they might not be suicidal, possibly someone in their family has been affected by suicide. Bringing in the Navajo Nation and other Native Americans to talk about it is a huge part of awareness. Being able to have a child come in and talk with somebody is vital and it will save a life,” said Principal Romero.

Organizer of the tour and Executive Assistant with OPVP, Yvonne Billison said the numbers of suicides on the Navajo Nation are high and the OPVP hopes to affect these numbers by bringing them down.

“We are going to need everyone’s help to do this,” she said. “This
PLANTING SEEDS OF HOPE THROUGH COMMUNITY DIALOGUE ABOUT SUICIDE PREVENTION

NAVAJO NATION-Starting on Monday, Dec. 14, the Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) set out with several tribal programs and departments to initiate dialogue about suicide prevention awareness throughout Navajo communities.

The initiative known as the Building Communities of Hope tour made 13 stops across the Navajo Nation in schools, community centers and basketball games.

In addition to starting a community dialogue about suicide prevention and awareness, the tour’s intent was to spread hope by reinforcing positivity.

At the tour’s visit to Winslow High School, President Russell Begay asked the students to repeat positive statements about themselves.

“I am special. I am beautiful. I am valuable,” they repeated.

President Begay promoted the virtues of self-confidence and self-love against degradation and despair.

“Hope has so much value because it means that you’re looking beyond your current situation,” he said. “Hang on to hope and you will cherish your life.”

The need for dialogue about suicide prevention was reinforced by Superintendent of Kayenta Unified School District, Dr. Bryce Anderson. The superintendent said the community had suffered the terrible tragedy of a murder-suicide only two days before the tour’s stop in the town.

The tragedy underscored the critical need for the tour’s messaging and available resources to be brought into the community.

“This is an epidemic that is not often spoken about and we need to tear down these walls and communicate about it,” he said. “It’s going to be critical to build on these resources from here.”

For many Navajo people, talking about suicide is taboo.

“There is a cultural reluctance by the Navajo people to discuss death, especially taking your own life. We must break down this barrier and bring suicide prevention to the forefront if we are to save lives on the Navajo Nation,” Vice President Nez said. “The discussions need to begin at home.”

The intergenerational connection between elders and youth must be strengthened, he added, noting that Navajo teachings hold human life sacred. These cultural teachings will only fortify the bond between Navajo elders and youth, especially since the winter season is the time for Navajo creation stories.

Yet as the dialogue is ignored, the Navajo Nation continues to lose people to suicide. The vice president said not knowing how to address suicide could only further harm communities.

At every stop on the tour, a local professional, counselor or doctor would present tools and strategies to facilitate discussion and offer local resources, counseling services and contact lists.

In Thoreau, Jessie McKenzie and TJ Anderson of the Department of Behavioral Health Service said when dealing with a troubled individual, it’s best to ask direct questions while being understanding when listening to them. The team reinforced not being judgmental or blaming.

“You’re not a loser because you are hurting,” McKenzie said. “Seek help from people you trust and keep asking until someone helps you. Don’t give up.”

Navajo comedian and motivational speaker, Pax Harvey joined the tour at Navajo Pine High School and continued through the final destination of the Coca Cola Classic basketball tournament at the Wildcat Den in Chinle, Ariz.

In Kayenta, he spoke seriously about dealing with grief and depression from his own experience in having recently lost his brother to suicide.

“You don’t know what grief or sorrow is until you’ve lost a
loved one,” he said.
When grief struck hardest, Harvey said the teachings of his grandmother helped to carry him through. His grandmother in-stilled in him the virtues of getting up early and running to the east before the sun rose. She told him this discipline would prepare him for difficult times in his life.
Beyond traditional teachings, Harvey also encouraged seeking help in combating depression.
“Depression can sneak up on you. We’re taught that you’re not supposed to cry or be emotional. That’s how some of us were raised,” he said. “Don’t be ashamed to ask for help. The only way to get through pain is to hit it dead on. You have to go through it and deal with it”
OPVP Executive staff assistant and organizer of the tour, Yvonne Kee Billison said addressing suicide at the community level is tough, yet the impacts it has on communities can be devastating.
“We need to bring the numbers down because right now the numbers are high. To do this we are going to need everyone’s help,” she said. “We have choices and we can make everything better for ourselves. Each of us needs to know our lives are worth living.”
Because even the loss of one life is one too many, Billison said she and several assisting departments would continue to schedule presentations from requesting school and communities across the Navajo Nation. For more information please contact Yvonne Kee-Billison or Christopher Bahe at (928) 871-7000.

Members of OPVP’s Building Communities of Hope tour worked alongside students from the Ganado High School Student Council to help facilitate the event at the school. The student council were instrumental in assisting with the presentation’s discussion.

Navajo comedian and motivational speaker Pax Harvey utilized comedy and audience participation exercises to address both suicide prevention awareness and reinforcing hope within communities. The tour brought its message of hope to the Winter Classic Basketball Tournament in Ft. Wingate.
Hundreds of students lined the sidewalks outside of the Whalen Gymnasium before Fort Lewis College’s Winter 2015 Commencement was set to begin on Saturday, Dec. 19. Navajo student Wilhelmina Manheimer graduated and received a bachelor of arts in anthropology.

NAVAJO STUDENTS AMONG GRADUATES AT FORT LEWIS COLLEGE’S WINTER 2015 COMMENCEMENT

FORT LEWIS COLLEGE—Before the winter commencement ceremony began at Fort Lewis College (FLC), Wilhelmina Manheimer stood with her class in anticipation outside of the Whalen Gymnasium.

Manheimer was one of many Navajo students who would graduate on Saturday, Dec. 19 at FLC’s Winter 2015 Commencement held in Durango, Colo. She received a bachelor of arts in anthropology.

On behalf of the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez attended the commencement ceremony and said he was proud to see so many Navajos among the graduating class.

In emphasizing the importance of higher education, Vice President Nez said a bachelor degree has become a standard requirement to gaining employment.

“Continuing your education provides you tools that reinforce your skill set while broadening the scope of your abilities,” he said. “The Begaye-Nez administration supports continued education as a way to continually move the Navajo Nation forward.”

The college was originally established in 1911 as an agricultural high school. Currently, it is a public liberal arts college that offers tuition-free education to Native Americans. FLC offers 32 baccalaureate programs and a masters of arts in education program.

Karen Wilde, Board of Trustees for FLC, noted that the college’s alumni include Acoma Pueblo writer Simon Ortiz and Congressman Scott Tipton.

“Never give up,” she said. “You had a vision that brought you to our school. Now follow it.”

Dr. Lee Frazer, Assistant Professor of the Department of Adventure Education delivered graduation remarks. His advice for students was to think outside the box and “not be bound by your studies”.

“Let your life speak by recognizing and following your interest and passions. There is an importance in taking risks as life begins at the edge of comfort zones.”

When FLC President Dr. Dene Kay presented the candidates for graduation, she asked the class to stand and cross their tassels from right to left signifying their recognition as the College’s 2015 winter graduates.

This year’s 53rd graduating class totaled 215 students.

Among the Navajo graduates was Amanda McNeil who received a bachelor of arts in psychology. McNeel thanked her parents for their support.

“I’m so happy to be done,” she said.

When the 2015 Winter Commencement was over, FLC’s cannon fired a shot from the school’s lawn to celebrate the graduating class.

While crowds of families gathered outside the Whalen Gymnasium for photos, Vice President Nez took the opportunity to congratulate many Navajo graduates.

Both President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez extend their congratulations to the 2015 winter graduating class of Fort Lewis College.

###
Dec. 23, 2015

For Immediate Release

On Tuesday, Dec. 22, 2015 the Gallup Independent Newspaper published an article with inaccurate information titled “Budget befuddlement: St. Michaels Chapter approves wrong carryover budget, moves forward (Dec. 22, 2015);” which is misinforming the St. Michaels Community.

The Housing Committee budget was not passed. It was tabled at a community member’s request. There was no reason stated for the motion to table the budget but the voting members of the community supported the motion.

News Reporter Marley Shebala claims to have retrieved the budget from Chapter Secretary/Treasurer Gloria Smiley; which was attached to a resolution. However, the policy and procedure according to the Navajo Nation Code, Title 26, is to submit the budget with a passed resolution in a package along with the minutes from the meeting.

The Records Management Policies and Procedures states that the Chapter “Secretary/Treasurer shall turn over to the St. Michaels Chapter Manager, within ten (10) working days, any official actions by the St. Michaels Chapter Membership, including all resolutions, minutes and other official documents, for proper record keeping and for carrying out any St. Michaels Chapter directive(s).”

There are no supporting resolutions supporting the Housing Committee budget.

The Chapter Administration budget for $830,422.33; which is the carryover for the General Fund and Special Revenue Fund, did pass with majority vote. The vote to pass this budget is have the chapter move forward with payments.

For more information and/or to schedule an interview please contact St. Michaels Chapter Community Service Coordinator Donna Whitehair at 928-871-7842 or e-mail stmichaels@navajochapters.org.
WINNER ROCK-On Wednesday, Dec. 30, the Navajo Nation Council will hold a special session with the intent to override the Navajo Nation President's line-item veto authority granted through referendum by the Navajo people. The legislation is sponsored by Honorable Alton Joe Shepherd.

This legislation was previously vetoed by President Begaye on Nov. 12 as it attempts to amend the President's line-item veto authority.

On December 15, 2009, the Navajo People voted on an initiative that would empower the Navajo Nation President with line-item veto authority. The text of the initiative is as follows:

"The President of the Navajo Nation will be authorized to exercise line item veto authority over budget items contained in the annual Navajo Nation Comprehensive Budget or supplemental appropriation approved by the Navajo Nation Council. Budget line items vetoed by the President of the Navajo Nation will not be subject to Navajo Nation Council override....If approved, this initiative may be repealed or amended by the initiative process only."

In 2009, the intent of the line-item veto initiative was to protect the government from wasteful spending and ensure governmental fiscal efficiency and responsibility. Nowhere in the language approved by the Navajo people does the initiative state that the president's line-item veto authority is limited to numeric dollar amounts.

As such, the line-item veto authority encompasses all aspects of the budget and not just the immediate appropriations, but also those budget items with a future impact, such as conditions of appropriations (COA).

President Begaye has stated that COAs can be manipulated to earmark or direct the Executive Branch to appropriate funds without placing numerical figures to them.

"In one instance, percentages were used in an ambiguous way to appropriate dollars to a COA. Without the line-item veto, this spending percentage for a certain project would have remained. For us to exhibit fiduciary responsibility based on the voice of the people, the President's line-item veto authority helps us to exercise more financially sound and responsible spending."

In a press release issued by the Office of the Speaker, the Naabik'iyati Committee stated the proposed legislation seeks to clarify the president's line-item veto authority, streamline the legislative process by amending the President's line-item veto authority "only to the numeric appropriated dollar amount".

President Begaye said this is completely contrary to the plain language of the initiative passed by the Navajo people. The initiative clearly states "budget items" in the "Navajo Nation Comprehensive Budget and supplemental appropriations" are subject to "line item vetoes". It does not say "numeric dollar amounts".

"Only the People can limit and clarify this authority," said President Begaye. "This is not a question for the
Navajo Nation Council. This is a question that only the Navajo people can answer."

Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lorenzo Bates has called upon OPVP to find a reasonable solution.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez have previously proposed a compromise by agreeing to sign into law Title Two amendment’s legislation as originally recommended and submitted by the Title Two Subcommittee. Vice President Nez said that Council’s reluctance to consider the compromise is evident in moving the legislation forward to Wednesday’s meeting.

The Begaye-Nez administration continues to support the voice of the Navajo people and would like to thank the Council delegates who also voted in support of the voice of the Navajo people as it pertains to the line-item veto authority.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 28, 2015
For additional information, please contact:

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Mr. Arlando S. Teller Appointed to Arizona Transportation Board

Window Rock, AZ - State Senator Carlyle W. Begay (Legislative District 7) announced the selection of Mr. Arlando S. Teller to the Arizona State Transportation Board. Board members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate with Arizona’s transportation districts each represented by a board member. Mr. Teller, the Program Manager for the Navajo Division of Transportation (Navajo DOT) Department of Airports Management, will represent District 5, which covers Apache, Coconino, and Navajo Counties. The Arizona State Transportation Board is responsible for establishing a complete system of state highway routes in Arizona; awards construction contracts; determines priority program planning with respect to transportation facilities; annually adopts the five-year construction program; and distributes monies appropriated from the State Aviation Fund for planning, design, development, land acquisition, construction, and improvement of publicly owned airport facilities.

A six-year veteran of Navajo DOT, Mr. Teller worked as a senior transportation planner prior to assuming the management of the Nation’s airports. Among his proudest accomplishments is his role in strengthening the ADOT/Navajo DOT partnership with counties, neighboring tribes, and regional planning organizations. He also worked with legislators to amend an Arizona statute allowing tribes to participate in the state’s Aviation Improvement Program. Prior to assuming his responsibilities for Navajo DOT, Mr. Teller was a Native American liaison and transportation planner for the California Department of Transportation. Mr. Teller has a diverse and varied transportation background. His experience includes working for Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and Mesa Falcon Field Airport, in addition to inter-city transit planning in the San Francisco Bay Area. Mr. Teller possesses a comprehensive grasp of multi-modal transportation planning systems, which he uses to significantly enhance the planning, management, and development of northern Arizona’s rural transportation infrastructure.

Through the encouragement of his family, Arlando left the reservation to pursue his Bachelor of Science degree in Aviation Business Administration from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. He is the first Navajo graduate of the university and among the first American Indian graduates. He is a descendant of a Navajo Code Talker, and he is educated in traditional Navajo culture and language.

When Senator Begay announced his appointment at the Navajo Nation Western Agency Council Meeting, Mr. Teller shared, “I am humbled for this opportunity and sincerely appreciate the support from the Arizona Capitol to my mother’s fireplace.”

###
WINDOW ROCK- President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez were in prompt attendance at 10 a.m. for today's special session of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council that addressed legislation in which Council was attempting to override and amend the presidential line-item veto authority.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez waited nearly an hour for the meeting to be called to order but had to leave soon after to attend to previously arranged obligations.

In an unusual turn of events, Speaker of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, Lorenzo Bates excused himself from his role as Speaker to actively vote in favor of the legislation. In his absence he delegated Honorable Jonathan Hale as Speaker pro tem.

Yet the legislation failed with a vote of 10 yea, 12 nay and 2 not voting.

“We want to express our deepest appreciation to the people of the Navajo Nation who today defended their right to speak, be heard and not be overwritten by their elected officials,” said President Begaye.

The Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) would like to extend their appreciation to the twelve delegates that stepped forward and stood with the people by voting against the legislation. By doing so, these delegates have reaffirmed their support of the people who elected them into office.

“This, twelve delegates acknowledged that the voice of the people supersedes anything that any elected official does. This includes council delegates themselves,” said Vice President Nez. “We express a deep appreciation for those delegates that supported the people’s voice.”

As OPVP moves forward, the Office will continue to support the efforts of the Navajo people in moving the nation forward.

“Again, today the people won,” said President Begaye. “They stood strong, they united and continued to demand that their voices be heard by their delegates. It is from the Navajo people that we should always generate any type of decision that we make.”

In his introductory remarks, legislation sponsor Alton Joe Shepherd called into question President Begaye’s usage of the line-item veto authority in legislation requesting funding for St. Michael’s Special Education Schools.

“When the St. Michaels group brought the proposal over, we went through it with them. I told them that the Navajo Nation does not normally fund non-profit organizations because they, as non-profits, have access to multitudes of funding sources that the Navajo Nation government entities do not,” said President Begaye.
President Begaye and Vice President Nez told them specifically that they would approve certain items they felt were pertinent to the continued operation of the school. They also told them specifically which items they would disapprove of.

"I reassured them that I would not sign off on every item that was in the proposal. That was the understanding we developed before they left."

Therefore, when line item veto transpired, St Michael's administration was well informed.

"In fact, I approved more items than I originally said I would. So I gave them several hundred thousands of dollars more then I said."

Delegate Shepherd also said that despite council's request to meet about the line-item veto override legislation, no meetings ever transpired.

Vice President Nez said he indeed had met with Speaker Bates and Delegate Shepherd to specifically address the line item veto override and discuss any possible compromises.

"We had met to specifically discuss the line-item veto. When they asked, ‘What's the compromise?’, I asked them what they wanted. There was no response,” said Vice President Nez. "I said I guess there is nothing to talk about then. Also, we gave them a compromise in the letter we sent to the Naabik'iyati (NABI) committee meeting."

The letter dated Dec. 17 was delivered to NABI by OPVP ambassador Peterson Zah. It responded to Speaker Bates' Dec. 7 letter asking to find a resolution or compromise in moving the amendments to the Title Two legislation.

The letter clearly states, "I agree to sign into law the Title Two amendment's legislation as originally recommended and submitted by the Title Two Subcommittee."

On a positive note, President Begaye said, “Vice President and I had the opportunity to go back to our former place of service, the historic Navajo Nation Council Chambers. We had an opportunity to talk with a number of delegates and have very cordial exchanges on various issues.”

“We want to thank the public for protecting their voice on the authority given to the Navajo Nation president to override irresponsible spending of Navajo Nation monies,” President Begaye said. “We also appreciate the delegates that stood behind the voice of the people.”

###
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 31, 2015

HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

As we near the end of 2015, both Vice President Jonathan Nez and I would like to send our heartfelt holiday greetings and appreciation to the staff of our administration, the three branches of government, all of the Navajo Nation Employees and the greater Navajo Nation. We thank you, we truly appreciate your assistance to our administration this year and most importantly, we love you.

Since we took office back in May 2015, our commitment toward bettering the lives and communities of the Navajo people has been diligent and consistent. We have traveled across the Navajo Nation visiting chapters and communities while listening to requests for services and infrastructure needs.

We have taken legislation directly to chapters for signing ceremonies because we know how hard the community members, delegates and chapter officials have worked to bring funding to their communities to make positive changes. We feel it’s important to personally acknowledge these endeavors and support them wholeheartedly.

We recognize the needs to renovate chapter houses and community buildings to accommodate larger capacities and bring buildings into safety code and regulations. These buildings often provide safe places for youth activities and elders. Our administration values both youth and elders in providing for our future and preserving our culture and traditions.

We see our people residing in rural areas that have lived without water or electricity for years. The roads they travel need repair and we hear their calls for road improvement in getting our Navajo children to school safely or our elders to the store for supplies and for emergency services to our people. These concerns are being addressed.

As we’ve listened and observed, we have also assessed and evaluated. We have brought these concerns back to the Capitol to discuss them with the Executive Branch divisions to develop plans to bring tangible change to these issues.

Our efforts to bring change, development and improvements to the Nation have taken us across the Navajo Nation, every state the Nation encompasses and Washington D.C. to meet with Senators, Governors, Congressmen and even President Barack Obama to advocate on behalf of Navajo issues and rights.

Our interactions with key politicians have been meaningful and opened doors for us to improve programs on the Nation that affect each and every one of our lives. We lobby and advocate for the issues you’ve brought forth and we will keep the intent of our travels to be purposeful and directed.
Our purpose remains to create tangible change for the livelihood of the Navajo People.

As we look back on this year, we see the many great strides we’ve made which have been the culminated efforts of multiple departments, programs and divisions. This support is critical and appreciated.

Looking forward, we know there is much work still to be done and our efforts will remain diligent, productive and consistent. That is our commitment and responsibility to the Navajo People.

We ask that you please make time before year end to visit your relatives and elders across the Nation. Check up on your grandparents and elders to make sure they have enough wood for their stoves and water for themselves and their livestock. Take them to the store. Let them know they are loved and not forgotten.

Sometimes all our elders need is a little attention and that carries them a long way.

Also, take some time to bring everyone in the home together around the dinner table to talk about what is happening within each other lives. Put away the cell phones, tablets and gaming devices for one meal to talk and listen to one another.

Winter is our storytelling season, so it is very appropriate to share stories with one another and even have grandma or grandpa hand down some traditional knowledge. Let’s listen to one another and share our love and camaraderie with each other during this season.

Let’s always remember to honor our K’é and live according to Hozhó. Happy New Year from the Office of the President and Vice President!

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Mihio Manus  
Public Information Officer  
Office of the President and Vice President  
The Navajo Nation  
(928) 871-7728
December 31 – Window Rock, AZ

Yesterday, in a 14-1 vote without debate, the Navajo Nation Council confirmed Garret Silversmith as the new Director of the Navajo Division of Transportation. Mr. Silversmith will replace Darryl Bradley, the Division’s Principal Engineer who has been serving as the acting division director since May.

Mr. Silversmith comes from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Chinle Agency Transportation/Roads Program, where he has worked since 2012.

Over the course of his career Mr. Silversmith has worked as a project engineer for the Navajo Housing Authority; a staff engineer with Nations Gas Technologies; a civil engineer for Bighorse Engineers; and a supervisory highway engineer for the Chinle Agency BIA.

Mr. Silversmith has cultivated an intimate knowledge of the Navajo Nation’s infrastructure and has extensive experience with many of the Nation’s existing transportation partners, including state and federal agencies.

A resident of Keams Canyon, AZ, Mr. Silversmith understands the importance of working with local communities to understand and address their infrastructure needs. He has represented the Chinle Agency Transportation Program at chapter meetings, as well county, state, tribal, and federal engagements. When he reports to work on January 11th, he will emphasize community engagement on day one.

In addition to his community outreach, Mr. Silversmith has a broad range of engineering experience across projects ranging from highway and housing subdivision design to airport runway and site design.

Mr. Silversmith earned his B.S. in Civil Engineering in 1993 from New Mexico State University. He enjoys spending time with his wife and three daughters as well as reading history topics, watching NFL games, and horseback riding.

###
Public Service Announcement
Public Hearing

For Immediate Release

December 31, 2015

GALLUP – The Navajo Nation Department of Veterans Affairs and the Office of the President and Vice-President will be hosting a follow-up Public Hearing regarding the Navajo Nation Veterans Act 2016.

The University of New Mexico-Gallup
College Drive
Student Services and Technology Building
Conference Room
Gallup, NM 87301
Thursday, January 7th, 2016
10 AM to 2 PM

For more information contact Jamescita Peshlakai jpeshlakai@navajo-nsn.gov Phone: 928-871-7907 Fax: 928-871-4025 or your Agency Commander
Your comments are important and we strongly encourage your attendance

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