



The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Collaboration between Navajo Council's standing committees, key officials results in groundbreaking of Tuba City Justice Center

TUBA CITY, Ariz. – The 21st Navajo Nation Council's Judiciary and Public Safety Committees participated in the traditional Diné groundbreaking ceremony of a \$53.5 million Justice Center today as a result of collaboration efforts between the committees and key officials of the Navajo Nation tribal government.

Honorable Rex Lee Jim (Rockpoint), a member of the Public Safety Committee, conducted the traditional blessing ceremony for the Justice Center.

"The prayers and songs are for the growth and protection of the Justice Center," he said, explaining to the audience the reason for the blessing.



Honorable Hope MacDonald Lone Tree, member of the Public Safety Committee, emceeds at the groundbreaking of the Tuba City Justice Center as key officials of the collaboration effort look on. (Photo by Laphillda Tso)

Event attendees included members of the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee, Council delegates from other standing committees, the Office of the Speaker, the Indian Affairs Office of the Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr., Navajo Nation Chief Justice Herb Yazzie, and Honorable Raymond Joe (Tachee, Whipperwill/Blue Gap), chairman for the Public Safety Committee.

The construction of the 144,000 square foot Justice Center is slated to begin next month and is scheduled for completion by next November. The facility will consist of a detention center, district court and public safety programs in an effort to provide a safer environment in Tuba City, including surrounding communities of the Western Navajo Agency.

\$38.5 million from American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) will fund the detention center and \$15 million will finance the construction of the police department and district court. The \$15 million comes from a portion of the \$60 million KeyBank Loan that the Budget and Finance Committee secured after a two year effort. The Budget and Finance Committee also created a fund management plan for a one cent tax-set aside to acquire the finances needed to help construct the complex.

"The Judiciary Committee's efforts and the assistance of the Budget and Finance Committee and the Public Safety Committee have made the groundbreaking of this new public safety facility a reality," said Honorable Joe.

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"We are seeing the direct results of one of three ARRA grants given to the Navajo Nation," said Beth McGarry, Deputy Assistant Attorney General of the U.S Department of Justice. "Today, we can point to this project and say the stimulus act money was used to improve this Nation. When the community needed a boost, the Obama administration stepped in with the Recovery Act to provide such facilities, jobs and community improvements. This is a great effort to provide public safety."

"This is a testament of what can be done on the Navajo Nation," added Eric Descheenie, Legislative Staff Assistant to the Office of the Speaker. "It is very appropriate that we deal with matters that impact the people. It does require a lot of assistance from many entities to build a correctional facility. Thank you to all the Council delegates who have assisted with the project, to U.S. President Barrack Obama, and all who have assisted with making this event possible."

Before lunch was served to the public, more gratitude and acknowledgements were divulged to the audience.

Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley acknowledged the hard work of the Legislative branch, state officials, federal government officials, and everyone else who was affiliated with the Justice Center project.

Navajo Nation Chief Justice Herb Yazzie also addressed the audience and also thanked everyone involved.

"The laws of the Nation, the values of the Nation, these are the laws that will be implemented," Chief Justice Yazzie said. "Thank you to the Council, who has provided the finances for the court portion of the justice center, the Executive and Judicial branch and others who put this effort together. We started this effort actively, aggressively and we will administer justice with the system called restorative justice. This justice is humane treatment of all individuals in the courts, detention centers, and the public safety programs."

"Without the help of all the Navajo Nation officials, the Attorney General, the U.S. Attorney General's Office, we would not be here," added Honorable Joe. "With this groundbreaking it will change the direction we are going. We will see Tuba City with a correctional facility. The Council approved the \$60 million to create justice facilities. Thank you. I see for Tuba City new jobs, new ideas. New directions are what the Navajo Nation is about."

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