



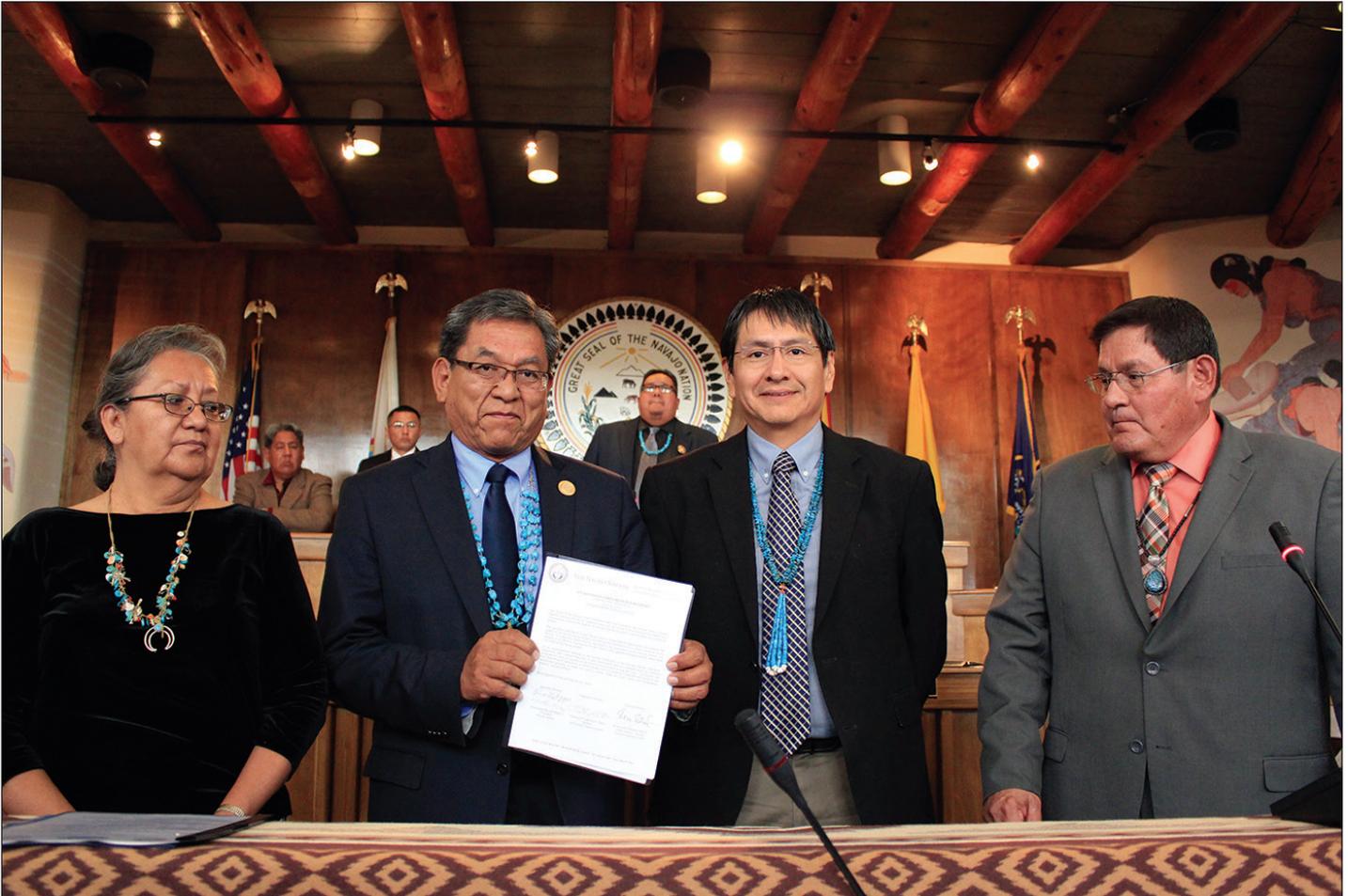
THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

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President Begaye, Vice President Nez sign three branch chief agreement



Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez signed the branch chief agreement before the start of the summer session with Chief Justice Eleanor Shirley and Speaker Lorenzo Bates on July 20. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW 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’yati*’ 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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Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Speaker LoRenzo Bates sign the agreement for the three branch chiefs. Chief Justice Eleanor Shirley prepares to sign the document. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez prepares to sign the three branch chief agreement, as President Russell Begaye looks on. Speaker Bates and Chief Justice Shirley finished signing. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



At the conclusion of the three branch chief agreement, the Navajo leaders paused for a moment for a photo opportunity for the media in attendance at the council chamber. (Photo by Rick Abasta)