



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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Nation's leaders and Gaming Enterprise mark the grand opening of Navajo Blue Travel Center

LEUPP, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, and 24th Navajo Nation Council members gathered on Friday, to mark the grand opening of the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise's new 9,000 square-foot "Navajo Blue Travel Center," located next to Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort near Flagstaff, Ariz.

In July 2016, the 23rd Navajo Nation Council approved legislation sponsored by former Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie, adopting the Síhasin Fund Twin Arrows Travel Center Development Expenditure Plan to provide funding for the project. During the construction phase, the project created 200 jobs and with the start of the new venture an additional 47 workers will be employed full-time.

"The opening of the new Navajo Blue Travel Center is part of a broader vision for our communities, it represents our goal of Nation building. Creating jobs and stable incomes for

Navajo families is part of the foundation for strengthening our communities and inspiring hope in our Navajo people. I commend the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise Board of Directors, Chairman Quincy Natay, and CEO Brian Parrish for their persistence and dedication. Over the last few years, they had to clear several hurdles to reach this point. They are practicing the teaching of our elders known as T'áá hwó'ajít'éego, or self-reliance and self-determination, while also providing a great learning experience for our young Navajo professionals who were part of the development of the Navajo Blue Travel Center. Navajo Blue will be a great destination for visitors



PHOTO: Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer cuts the ribbon to mark the grand opening of the Navajo Blue Travel Center in Leupp, Ariz. on Sept. 18, 2020.

and our Navajo people,” said President Nez, who also thanked the Navajo Nation Council and former President Russell Begaye for approving the funds.

The Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise’s “Let’s Build the Business” Job Training Program utilized the expertise and creativity of young Navajo professionals from various colleges and universities, including Diné College, Navajo Technical University, Arizona State University, University of Arizona, Duke University, in the planning, design, construction, and marketing phases.



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez speaking during the opening ceremony for the Navajo Blue Travel Center in Leupp, Ariz. on Sept. 18, 2020.

“This is a great venture for the Navajo people and for our economy in terms of jobs, revenue, and the tourism industry. We believe in our young Navajo people and we are proud of their contributions to this initiative. When we work together, great things happen. I also want to commend the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise for everything they have done for all of their employees, and their families, throughout this entire COVID-19 pandemic. This is a remarkable accomplishment for the entire Nation. Buy Navajo, Build Navajo,” said Vice President Lizer.

The Navajo Blue Travel includes a gas station, convenience store, shower and laundry facilities and parking for semi-truck drivers, and a wide variety of food and beverage options including Navajo Beef and a new line of products such as “Navajo Fizz” soda being introduced by the Gaming Enterprise. The design and construction of the travel center also reflects Navajo culture and architecture.

“In addition to creating valuable jobs, Navajo Blue will allow guests of the Nation to enjoy an all-new dining and retail experience that can’t be found anywhere else along the I-40 corridor. This includes a fire pit to slow-roast premium-grade Navajo beef that is prepared a number of different ways to suit your unique tastes and preferences,” said NNGE Interim CEO Brian Parrish.

Former Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie was also in attendance to offer his support and appreciation. As a member of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, Tsosie sponsored the legislation to secure funding for the project and also served as chair of the Síhasin Fund Subcommittee. He recognized and thanked past and present leaders and attorneys for supporting the Nation’s lawsuit against the federal government over the mismanagement of trust assets, which led to a \$554 million settlement that helped to provide funds for the travel center.

“It’s due to the foresight of past leaders and our attorneys such as Dana Bobroff and others that we were able to receive the \$554 million settlement and establish the Síhasin Fund,” said Tsosie.

During Friday's opening ceremony, the Bird Springs Color Guard posted the colors, NNGE Executive Director of Government Affairs Phefelia Bradley served as the mistress of ceremony, the National Anthem and Navajo Flag Song was sung by Annabelle Smallcanyon, and the invocation was offered by Leupp Chapter President Valerie Kelly. 24th Navajo Nation Council members Thomas Walker, Jr., Mark Freeland, Otto Tso, Nathaniel Brown, and Pernell Halona, and Gaming Enterprise also offered remarks during the opening ceremony.

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