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**Nez-Lizer recognize Navajo NASA engineer Aaron  
Yazzie's vital role in Mars 2020 Perseverance rover landing**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer congratulate and recognize NASA mechanical engineer Aaron Yazzie, a member of the Navajo Nation, for his role in designing NASA's Mars 2020 Perseverance rover, which was launched on July 30, 2020 and traveled over 126 million miles before successfully landing on the planet Mars on Thursday.

NASA describes the Mars 2020 Perseverance Mission as the most sophisticated rover NASA has ever sent to the red planet, to collect carefully selected and documented rock and sediment samples for future return to earth, search for signs of ancient microbial life, characterize the planet's geology and climate, and pave the way for human exploration beyond the Moon. The mission also includes a helicopter named Ingenuity, the first aircraft to attempt powered, controlled flight on another planet.

"We are very proud of one of our very own, Aaron Yazzie, who is playing a vital role in NASA's Mars 2020 Perseverance Mission. Thursday's successful landing gained worldwide attention and it's wonderful to know that a member of the Navajo Nation is part of this historic mission. Aaron is an inspiration for all of our Navajo people, especially our young people who are pursuing their education working hard to fulfill their lifetime goals. We congratulate him, his family, and all of his colleagues for their great work. As the mission continues, we offer our prayers for continued success," said President Nez.

Yazzie is Áshjįhi and born for Tódich'ii'nii. He was born in Tuba City, Ariz. and graduated from Holbrook High School before earning a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering from Stanford University. He currently works at the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, CA, designing mechanical systems for NASA's robotic space research missions. For the Mars 2020 Perseverance Mission, he helped to design the drill bits that are drilling into the surface of Mars to collect rock and sediment samples.

"Today I am overwhelmed! Overwhelmed with pride for my team. Overwhelmed with the response from people everywhere [especially] my home community. Overwhelmed with

gratitude, for the coworkers, friends, and family that make days like today possible. We landed on Mars!” stated Yazzie on social media on Thursday.

Before the Mars 2020 Perseverance Mission, Yazzie worked on projects that studied Jupiter, Earth, and other missions to Mars including the Mars Science Laboratory Rover Mission, the Mars InSight Lander Mission, and the Mars 2020 Rover Mission. He is also a member of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, who devotes time to higher education and STEM outreach activities for students, including Native Americans.

“The Mars 2020 Perseverance Mission is an exciting opportunity for everyone and my hope is that having a Navajo person, Aaron Yazzie, involved in the mission will create even more interest and inspire more young Navajo students to pursue higher education and careers in the STEM fields. Words cannot express how proud we are of Mr. Yazzie. He is clearing the path for young Navajo professionals. Congratulations to him and his team at NASA,” stated Vice President Lizer.

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