



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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Valinda C. Shirley confirmed as the Executive Director for the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer commend the 24th Navajo Nation Council for unanimously confirming the appointment of Valinda C. Shirley to serve as the Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency, by a vote of 22-0 during a special session held on Friday. Shirley has served as the acting director since December 2020, when former Executive Director Oliver B. Whaley resigned to spend more time with family.

Valinda Shirley resides in Rock Point, Ariz., with her husband and children. She is Táchiinii and born for T'íízí tání. Her maternal grandfather is Bit'ahnii, and her paternal grandfather is Ta'neeshahnii. Before her appointment, she served as the Senior Remedial Project Manager for the Navajo Nation EPA Superfund Program, coordinating on-site environmental cleanup or remediation projects to ensure compliance with Navajo Nation and federal environmental laws, standards, and regulations, and requirements, including Diné Fundamental Law.



"On behalf of the Nez-Lizer Administration, we thank the honorable members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council for their support in confirming the appointment, and we thank Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. for sponsoring the bill," said President Nez. "With her upbringing, education, and professional experience, we are excited and confident that she will do a great job leading the Navajo Nation EPA. Her traditional upbringing combined with her formal education in

biochemistry provides for a unique and very knowledgeable perspective on many issues related to protecting our environment for generations to come."

Shirley earned a Bachelor's Degree in Biochemistry from the University of New Mexico and graduated as the valedictorian from Rock Point High School. Her previous professional experience also includes serving as an Environmental Compliance Technician with SWCA Environmental Consultants, Acting Business Manager and business consultant with Rock Point Community School, Environmental Specialist with the Navajo Nation EPA Waste Regulatory, Community Involvement Coordinator for the Phase 2 Removal Site Evaluation Trust, and the School Board Vice President for Rock Point Community School.

"Her appointment is a prime example of a Navajo Nation employee who worked hard and worked her way up within the division to reach this point. Shirley has proven to be a strong leader in the previous work she has done for the Nation. She has extensive experience in bridging partnerships and opportunities between the Nation and federal EPA. We look forward to the new direction she will provide for the Navajo Nation EPA," said Vice President Lizer.

In her previous role with the Abandoned Uranium Mines projects, Shirley spearheaded the Northeast Church Rock Mine Site and the Tronox sites in Cove and Tse Tah, Ariz. She also advised the U.S. EPA concerning Navajo Nation laws and Diné Fundamental Law as Applicable or Relevant & Appropriate Requirements (ARARs) used in the Mariano Lake's cleanup standards, Mac and Black Mine Sites located in New Mexico. She also coordinated with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on a Source Material License amendment for the United Nuclear Corporation mill site in the Eastern Navajo Agency.

"Thank you to the 24th Navajo Nation Council for their support. I look forward to working with the Office of the President and Vice President, the Council, and our communities to address environmental issues. I hold the Office of the Executive Director of the Navajo EPA in the highest regard, and I have the utmost respect for the agency and its employees. Since 1992, Navajo EPA has been the regulatory authority that safeguards Diné bikéyah dóó Nihookaa' Dine'é. In my experience working with the agency, it has served as an integral part of government by ensuring Nihimá Nahasdzaan dóó Nihit'aa' Yáidihíí are kept clean to the highest of standards for our seventh-generation grandchildren," said Shirley.

Shirley also extended her gratitude to her family and her colleagues for their support and guidance. She added that she will continue working hard to create positive changes to help the Navajo people through community involvement and Ké, and ensuring that currently funded AUMs progress to a level of cleanup with tangible results, and strategizing a way for the Navajo Nation to address the illegal dumping of refuse.

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