



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:  
Jared Touchin, Communications Director  
(928) 274-4275

Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer  
(928) 274-2758

[nnopvp.communications@gmail.com](mailto:nnopvp.communications@gmail.com)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 8, 2021

## President Nez joins Deborah Ann Begay as she becomes the first Native American to serve as Justice of the Peace for Moon Valley

**PHOENIX, Ariz.** – On Friday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez had the honor of administering the oath of office to Deborah Ann Begay, a member of the Navajo Nation, who became the very first Native American to be elected to serve as a judge with the Moon Valley Justice of the Peace in Maricopa County, during a ceremony held at the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors Administrative Building in Phoenix, Ariz. Judge Begay was joined by her three children, and longtime friends and supporters for the swearing-in ceremony, with CDC guidelines in place.

Deborah Ann Begay is from Lupton, Ariz. on the Navajo Nation. She is Mexican Clan born for Towering House Clan. She is Naakai Dine'é born for Kinyaa'áanii. Her maternal grandfather is Dził T'Y'ahnii and her paternal grandfather is Tódích'ii'nii.

"I thank Judge Begay for allowing me the honor of administering the oath of office on this historic occasion. Today, she makes all of our Navajo people proud as she makes history by becoming the very first Native American to hold a judge position with the Moon Valley Justice of the Peace. Her remarkable professional, military, and educational background

along with her community involvement and leadership will bring a new and diverse perspective to Maricopa County and serve the people well. I'm sure that all of our ancestors are very proud of Judge Begay and her family," said President Nez.

Judge Begay earned her B.A. in Native American History from the University of California, Berkeley, and her J.D. from Arizona State University's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law with a



**PHOTO:** Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez administers the oath of office to Deborah Ann Begay, to serve as a judge with the Moon Valley Justice of the Peace in Phoenix, Ariz. on Jan. 8, 2021.

focus on Federal Indian Law. Prior to attending to law school, Deborah worked in software project management in the Silicon Valley. She was a McNair Scholar while attending UC Berkeley. While in law school, she was a Udall Foundation Congressional Fellow, working for the White House Council on Environmental Quality. She is also a veteran of the United States Navy. She has proudly served 14 years in the Naval Reserves.

Miss Navajo Nation Shaandiin Parrish was also in attendance to offer her support and encouragement for Judge Begay and her family during the swearing-in ceremony.

“You are breaking barriers and another glass ceiling for our Navajo people today. It’s a beautiful event for all of us to witness and I look up to you as a young Navajo person myself. It’s wonderful to see you using your education and professional experience to move forward and I’m excited to see what you do next,” said Miss Navajo Nation Shaandiin Parrish.

She is a single mother of three children. Prior to winning her election for the Moon Valley Justice of the Peace, Deborah worked for the Arizona Department of Education, Policy & Government Relations as a Tribal Policy

Specialist. She is a sought after public speaker on matters concerning restorative justice, tribal sovereignty, LGBTQ+ inclusive practices in the workplace, theological perspectives as they relate to social justice and building diverse community partnerships.

Following her swearing-in, she thanked her supporters and also acknowledged the financial support that she received from the Navajo Nation that helped her complete her undergraduate degree from UC Berkeley and Juris Doctor from Arizona State University.

“The Navajo Nation has always been supportive of my education. As President Nez said, we are excited to see young people rise up in the ranks. Education is what will get you out of where you are and where you want to be. I’m honored to be the only Native American judge in Maricopa County. For the President to come here and bestow this honor upon me is very humbling and it’s also a reminder to me and other Diné that we have a voice. I take this role that I have very seriously and I intend to always bring honor to my people,” said Judge Begay.



**PHOTO: (left to right) Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Deborah Ann Begay with Moon Valley Justice of the Peace, and Miss Navajo Nation Shaandiin Parrish in Phoenix, Ariz. on Jan. 8, 2021.**

###

For the latest news from the Office of the President and Vice President, please visit <http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/> or find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.