



**The Navajo Nation**  
Yideeskáądi Nitsáhákees

**DR. BUU NYGREN** *PRESIDENT*  
**RICHELLE MONTOYA** *VICE PRESIDENT*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Aug. 3, 2024**

**CONTACT: George Hardeen, Public Relations Director**

Email: [george.hardeen@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:george.hardeen@navajo-nsn.gov)

Cell: 928-810-9174

## Navajo Nation's oldest code talker, John Kinsel, Sr., 107, receives home renovations he's awaited for years

*'He's very excited, he's happy. He's more than appreciative for what he's been given.'*

**LUKACHUKAI, Ariz.** – The Navajo Nation's oldest code talker waited years to see the log home he built himself receive the renovations it needed.

he preferred to stay in the house he built from logs brought from the Lukachukai Mountains in a horse-drawn wagon with two large Clydesdales.

On Wednesday, Navajo Code Talker John Kinsel, Sr., 107, his family and the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration celebrated the turnover of keys to his newly renovated home that he built in 1950.

"Mr. Kinsel fought for all of us," President Nygren said to Mr. Kinsel by video. "He used our language to protect us and keep us alive to this day. He deserves these upgrades to his home. The renovations needed to happen a long time ago."

Last May, President Nygren joined Mr. Kinsel, his family and workers from The Sparrow Group for a groundbreaking when renovations began. An all-Navajo crew completed Mr. Kinsel's home renovations in eight weeks, just two weeks before Navajo Code Talkers Day on August 14.

Mr. Kinsel told the Veterans Administration he did not want the new home he was eligible for. He said



*Navajo Nation Veterans Administration Director Bobbie Ann Baldwin said it was an honor of a lifetime to present the keys to his newly renovated house to Navajo Code Talker John Kinsel, Sr., 107, on Aug. 1*

Veterans Administration Director Bobbie Ann Baldwin said it was an honor of a lifetime for the Navajo VA and the contractor team to renovate a home "for our *chei*, our patriarch, our national treasure."

"Oh, my goodness, it was amazing," she said. "For me, as a Marine, helping my brother Marine into a



*Ronald Kinsel, Mr. Kinsel's son and primary caregiver, said he would take out all of his buckets when they saw a storm coming.*

safe comfortable home is beyond words. As Marines, not leaving anyone behind, in a sense, this is the greatest sentiment of that – not leaving him behind.”

Director Baldwin said these kinds of projects are very near and dear to her heart, as was meeting Mr. Kinsel. She said the home he built with his own hands so long ago “was a fine home but it needed more amenities.”

“That’s what we wanted to provide because we know the home is where many of our healings begin, especially for us veterans,” she said. “Our healing begins in our home, especially if we know our home is safe, somewhere we can seek refuge.”

Ronald Kinsel, Mr. Kinsel’s son and primary caregiver, said before the house was renovated, he would take out all of his buckets when they saw a storm coming.

“We had two waterfalls inside,” he said. “One in the south and one in the west. Now we don’t have to worry any longer.”

Interim VA Deputy Director Olin Kieyoomia said that over the years many tribal leaders came by to promise Mr. Kinsel their help.

“All these years I would stop by, and it was really saddening that nobody ever came to help you,” he said. “It’s a real blessing that we can honor you with the simple necessities that every Navajo family wishes they can have – running water, electricity, a shower, a running toilet, a safe place, a kitchen.”

Many didn’t know that until now that Mr. Kinsel cooked his food on a tiny camp stove with a propane bottle, Mr. Kieyoomia said.

“Using the restroom was a task on its own,” Mr. Kieyoomia said. “But now he doesn’t have to worry about that. We really wish we could have done this for all the other Code Talkers that have passed. Unfortunately, we weren’t around then.”

But the Veterans Administration is here now, President Nygren said.

“I push my administration everyday so more veterans can have a home that will protect them the way they protected us,” he said. “I am just glad we were able to come together, myself, everyone from Sparrow Group, the construction workers, NNVA Director Bobbie Ann Baldwin and Interim Deputy Director Olin Kieyoomia.”



*Navajo President Nygren said, “Mr. Kinsel fought for all of us. He used our language to protect us and keep us alive to this day.”*



Alvira Teller, the Veterans Administration senior housing specialist, said that when the Nygren Administration came into office, the focus to serve veterans changed.



“When we first started here about a year ago, our main goal was to assist all the veterans and getting the homeless veterans into a home,” she said. “A lot of them were overlooked.”

She said the staff got together to find out who had been served and who had not.

“We sat down to make sure the ones overlooked for years were our first priority,” she said. “I looked through 686 housing files. That’s including the deceased files, closed files, the denied files, surviving source files, renovation files and new construction files. That’s just for Fort Defiance.”

A top priority of the administration, she said, was Mr. Kinsel.

“We were able to complete that goal within this past year,” she said. “With Mr. Kinsel, Bobbi Ann and Olin made sure he was taken care of. He’s very excited and he’s happy. He’s ecstatic. He’s more than appreciative for what he’s been given.”

###