

Burnt Corn residents celebrate new multipurpose building for community members

Written by By Rick Abasta For the Sun
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BURNT CORN, Ariz. - About 100 residents of *Naadaá Díílid* filled the new multipurpose building to officially take ownership of the new facility during the Nov. 7 building dedication.

They were joined by chapter officials, tribal leaders and surrounding community members.

A Pendleton blanket with the Great Seal of the Navajo Nation covered the doorway as Navajo prayers and chants filled the space within.

The celebration began with the posting of colors by Tachee-Blue Gap veterans Jackie Burbank and Eddie Yazzie. Shalaya Begay, Miss Cottonwood Junior Princess, provided the Pledge of Allegiance and Bobby Tullie sang the Flag Song.

Murray Construction Solutions, Inc. of Chinle, Ariz. presented the certificate of ownership and occupancy before Navajo medicine man Rex Lee Jim began the traditional Navajo blessing.

Jim sat upon a sheep skin and prayed for the community members and for favorable use of the new building. Hot ashes coalesced upon a steel lid that served as the altar for the ceremony.

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“Think of (this building) as a living entity,” he said. “Like the land, air, water and fire. These songs and prayers are for people to connect with each other and for relationship building. It’s to bring the people together.”

Corn pollen was passed throughout the crowd four times during the ceremony, for residents to bless themselves and their families. The predominately Navajo elder audience visibly enjoyed this portion of the building dedication.

Clarene Hosteen served as the patient for the ceremony on behalf of the Burnt Corn community.

The 2,100 square feet new building is Americans with Disabilities Act compliant, featuring a ramp for wheelchairs, wide doors, ADA-compliant bathrooms with rails for men and women, an industrial kitchen, and a large meeting space.

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee-Blue Gap, Tselani-Cottonwood) expressed appreciation to the members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, Navajo Hopi Land Commission, and to Speaker Damon for their support of the facility.

Speaking in Navajo, he said, “My relatives and family, it will be upon you again to take care of this building. Please take good care of it. We set up this building with electricity and running [water] for you. There were also prayers and blessings done for Burnt Corn to move forward.”

Begay thanked former speaker Johnny Naize (project manager) for doing the legwork on the project and said the Navajo Hopi Land Commission was instrumental in getting the building funded.

Aaron Yazzie, Tachee-Blue Gap Chapter President, said other projects were on the horizon.

He primarily spoke Navajo throughout the agenda and said the building would become a place

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of planning for residents.

“Those of you from Burnt Corn, whatever needs to be done in the community, whatever plans are needed, will now be done in this building,” he said. “We face many challenges such as the enforcement of grazing permits, to the maintenance of roads that lead to homes. We set up this building for that purpose.”

Elmer Murray, president of Navajo-owned Murray Construction Solutions, commended the Tachee-Blue Gap Chapter and emphasized that they developed the project.

He noted space restrictions at Blue Gap Chapter prompted the effort to provide a new building to residents of Burnt Corn.

“At one point, they were meeting in a nearby hogan in the community,” Murray said. “They finally got the money together and put a building here for them.”

The total cost of the building was \$323,974.20 which came from multiple funding sources, including \$151,022.92 from Navajo Nation Capital Improvement Project; \$72,951.22 from the Tachee-Blue Gap Chapter project funds; and \$150,454.52 from the Navajo Hopi Land Commission.

“The building took about eight weeks of construction time. And as the building was being constructed, the site was being done as well. All together it took about 14-weeks to finish,” he said.

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