

10 police officers graduate from Navajo Police Academy

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CROWNPOINT, N.M. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and First Lady Phefelia Nez had the honor of attending the graduation ceremony to recognize and congratulate the Navajo Nation Police Training Academy Class 57, comprised of 10 Diné men and women who received their Navajo Nation Police badge during the event held at Navajo Technical University on June 18.

“Today is a very special occasion for the 10 men and women who are taking on the tremendous challenge of serving and protecting our people and communities,” Nez said. “They are now our frontline warriors who will take on the risks and sacrifices to lessen the burden on our people. I am very proud of each and every one of the graduates and their families for completing the

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police academy training.”

Nez asked the people in attendance of the graduation to pray for the graduates.

Serving in the line of duty will be a physical, emotional, and mental challenge for you and your loved ones, but through prayer and the support from your families and fellow officers, I am confident that you will serve and protect our communities well. Together, we pray for their physical and mental health and for protection from any harm. Congratulations to the graduates of Class 57,” Nez said.

During his remarks, President Nez also highlighted the recent steps taken to improve public safety including working with federal agencies to increase salaries to help recruit and retain Navajo Police Officers and increasing funds to secure additional K-9 units to help with drug busts and other criminal activities in various communities.

Last October, Nez also signed into law the Diné Action Plan, which uses the traditional Navajo planning model of Nitsáhákees (thinking), Nahat’á (planning), liná (action), and Siihásin (reflection) to help address public safety, violence, substance abuse, suicide, and missing and murdered Diné relatives.

Within the last year, the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety also created the Proactive Criminal Enforcement Program comprised of K-9 units, the Drug Enforcement Unit, and commissioned police personnel that conduct field operations to uncover and stop or disrupt crimes related to drug use/sales, bootlegging activities, and violent crimes. In addition to federal funding, Nez authorized the allocation of an additional \$500,000 to the Navajo Police Department to support the drug enforcement efforts and other public safety operations, which have led to multiple seizures of large quantities of drugs, alcohol, and illegal firearms and the arrests of violent offenders.

First Lady Phefelia Nez also congratulated the 10 new officers and spoke about the importance of supporting early childhood education and programs to increase crime prevention later in the lives of children. As the First Lady of the Navajo Nation, she continues to work with and to support early childhood and care development advocates and agencies.

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With their family members nearby, the graduates took the oath of honor administered by Navajo Nation Judge Leonard Livingston during the ceremony. The new officers include:

- Jay Jay Garcia
- Stetson Johnson
- Elias Ramone
- Antwan Gray
- Nora Allen
- Roberta Clitso
- Shawvon Levi
- Andrew Wauneka
- Wyndham Largo
- Arlin Manygoats

Each of the 10 new officers successfully completed the 28-week police academy training in Chinle, Ariz. The academy trained the graduates to uphold respect, self-discipline, accountability, academic achievement, integrity, and professionalism. Class 57 completed training in academics, firearms, emergency and non-emergency driving, defense tactics, crime scene management, de-escalation techniques, physical and mental conditioning, communications, and others. The academy is also the only police training entity to integrate the Diné Fundamental Law, the Navajo Nation's Criminal Code, as well as state and federal laws.

Navajo Police Chief Daryl Noon commended the graduates and noted that 32 cadet candidates began the academy last December and many soon learned that it was not a walk in the park.

"Today, stands true warriors before you. The seven months of training that you have received was intense, grueling, arduous, exhausting, but very high-caliber. The training you have received is second to none and it was all to prepare you for the road ahead. You have been pushed mentally and physically, you have been challenged to the brink of your limits, and

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beyond time and time again. Yet, you are here triumphant and ready,” Noon said.

“May God watch over and protect each one of the new officers as they begin a new journey to protect and serve. The honor of becoming a law enforcement officer comes with great responsibility and challenges,” Vice President Myron Lizer said.

Lizer also prayed for the new officers’ safety.

“We pray that God gives them the strength, courage, and perseverance to endure the danger, stress, and adversity that is expected. Bring them home safely to their loved ones after each shift. We ask for prayers for our first responders and we honor them and all of their loved ones,” Lizer said.

Also in attendance was Deputy Police Chief Ronald Silversmith, 24th Navajo Nation Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton who chairs the Law and Order Committee, Navajo Police Academy Coordinator Joshua Jeffery, Navajo Police Lt. Donnie Kee, Navajo Technical University official Virginia Edgewater, and Navajo Technical University Provost Dr. Colleen W. Bowman who provided the keynote address.

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