

## Navajo families receive long-awaited electricity to their homes

Written by Staff Reports

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TONALEA, ARIZ. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Council Delegate Paul Begay joined residents and local leaders in Tonalea, Ariz. on Sept. 2, to mark the successful completion of powerline extensions to 18 homes for families that reside in the region known as Preston Mesa, many of whom have lived their entire lives without electricity.

In September 2021, Jonathan finalized a sub-grant agreement between the Navajo Nation and Navajo Tribal Utility Authority to begin the powerline extensions, which were funded through the Indian Community Development Block Grant program, Tonalea Chapter, and the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority.

“Progress and change are happening on the Navajo Nation. The completion of the powerlines is life-changing for the 18 families who now have electricity in their homes, the majority being elders,” Jonathan said.

He praised the people who were involved in the project.

“This effort began at the local level when residents, such as Angelita Nez, began the groundwork and advocated for the powerline extensions. They worked with Delegate Paul Begay and our Administration to make this happen. They exemplify the teachings of our elders, T’áá Hwó Ají Téego or self-reliance and self-determination. We are proud of this accomplishment and congratulate all of the families,” Jonathan said.

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Jonathan spoke about the importance of building and improving the Nation's infrastructure to provide long-term benefits for communities and families. In 2019, Jonathan and Vice President Myron Lizer also approved \$3 million for the design and construction of a new chapter house for the community of Tonalea, which was completed last year and now serves the community.

During the ceremony, several of the residents expressed their appreciation to the leaders, NTUA, and longtime resident, Angelita Nez, who was the driving force behind the project. Angelita recalled that after recovering from COVID-19 during the first wave of the virus, she returned home after being hospitalized and began researching and gathering documents to support the powerline project.

In November 2020, Angelita sent an email to NTUA officials and Jonathan describing the needs of the residents along with supporting documents including a past resolution from the Tonalea Chapter. Jonathan and NTUA responded to her email and continued coordinating the efforts with Angelita and Begay. NTUA crews began the groundwork in March and completed the 18 new powerlines in June.

Begay said the project is a blessing for the residents and community of Tonalea. He added that under current leadership, progress is being made with electrifying homes, connecting communities to water lines, and other improvements.

"This is a blessing for the elders who have lived in this remote area without power for far too long. I am very thankful to the residents, President Nez, and NTUA for coming together to deliver this service to our people. This is a very special day for the Tonalea community," Begay said.

Since 2020, over 1,000 homes on the Navajo Nation have been connected to electricity.

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