

Written by Administrator  
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FARMINGTON — The Navajo Nation president last week signed final documents to take 405 acres of land into trust for the \$120 million Twin Arrows Casino near Flagstaff, Ariz. The action is the first time in 25 years that land was taken into trust for the Nation, a spokesman for Navajo President Joe Shirley Jr. said. Shirley's signature Thursday, along with Bureau of Indian Affairs Director Omar Bradley's signature, means construction can begin on the casino, the first on the Arizona portion of the reservation and the fourth on the 27,000-square-mile Nation.

Two casinos are operating on the New Mexico side of the reservation, with ground-breaking on the third expected as early as next month.

The newest casino means jobs for Navajo citizens and revenue for the Nation, Shirley said in a statement. The Twin Arrows development will include a gaming facility, a golf course and a hotel.

"We're moving forward as a Nation, a government and as a people," Shirley said. "About 1,000 families are going to be in a position to put food on the table, to put shoes on little feet, gas in the old jalopy out there, able to pay for the utilities, that's what it means to my people."

The land acquisition, made possible through the Navajo-Hopi Settlement Act, will connect the Leupp Chapter to I-40 and provide infrastructure to many Navajo citizens.

Leupp, the first designated chapter on the Navajo Nation, is located about 40 miles east of Flagstaff. Many residents live

without running water or electricity, a situation expected to change when the casino is built.

Leupp Chapter officials did not return phone calls seeking comment Monday.

The Nation can expect 768 new jobs created through casino development by 2012, Shirley said in the statement. About 550 jobs will be at the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino, and 220 in the accompanying hotel. The gaming industry uses Navajo preference in its hiring practices.

The Nation's gaming compacts with New Mexico and Arizona allow it to build six casinos. The Nation also has agreements with three Arizona tribes that will bring it another \$130 million over

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17 years, Shirley's spokesman said.

The Nation expects to earn about \$150 million per year from gaming and an additional \$20 million in repayment of the loan to the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise.

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