

Remarks to the People of the Navajo Nation in Shiprock, New Mexico April 17, 2000

Let me say *ya' at' eeh*—[applause]—William Jefferson Clinton *yinishye*—[applause]—Irish *nishle*. I am profoundly honored to be here within the four sacred mountains, especially on Navajo Nation Sovereignty Day. I want to thank young Myra Jodie. Didn't she do a wonderful job up here? [Applause]

Thank you, President Kelsey Begaye, for your strong leadership. Thank you, Congressman Tom Udall; the vice president, Taylor McKenzie; Chief Justice Robert Yazzie; Speaker Edward Begay; members of the Navajo Tribal Council; Shiprock Council Mayor William Lee; and we have with us today the president of the National Congress of American Indians, Sue Masten—thank you for being here; to all the honored Governors of pueblos and tribal leaders.

And I thank the people who have come with me today: the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Andrew Cuomo; the Interior Deputy Secretary, David Hayes; the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, Carl Whillock; and the person most responsible for working with you, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Kevin Gover—I thank him for all he has done; Federal Communications Commission Chairman Bill Kennard and Commissioner Gloria Tristani.

And I'd like to thank the people from the White House who are here, especially Gene Sperling, who put together this digital divide tour, and Lynn Cutler, who is my liaison to Indian country all over the United States. I thank them.

I want to thank four Members of Congress who made a long trip here today to express support for our goal: Senator Robert Bennett, who came from Utah; Representative Bill Jefferson, who came from New Orleans, Louisiana; Silvestre Reyes from El Paso, Texas; and Stephanie Tubbs Jones, who came from Cleveland, Ohio.

I want to thank my friend of more than 20 years now, your former Governor, Bruce King, and his wife, Alice, thank them for being here. Thank you. I want to thank the renowned basketball star Rebecca Lobo, who came with me today. And I thank Reverend Jesse Jackson for coming. I thank all the high-tech leaders who are here.

And there was one young man who meant to come with me today who could not come, a man I admire very much not only for his success but for the way he has handled adversity, Notah Begay. And I think we ought to give him a big hand. [Applause]

I also want to recognize two young women who are here, because they were in the First Lady's gallery at my State of the Union Address, members of the Navajo Nation and former volunteers for AmeriCorps, Christina and Justina Jones. Thank you for being here. I am very proud of them and all the other young Diné people who have served not only the Navajo Nation but our Nation as a whole as AmeriCorps volunteers.

Let me also express my deep gratitude to the Navajo Code Talkers who provided our—[applause]. Thank you, gentlemen. And I want to thank Senator Jeff Bingaman for working to ensure that you receive the national honors you so richly deserve.

All Americans should know of the exploits of the young Navajo men, some as young as 15, who enlisted in the Marine Corps in World War II, helped to develop an ingenious code based on your language, and became the communications link to and from the frontlines of the Allies in the Pacific war. One of our most enduring images of freedom is that of the marines hoisting the American flag over Iwo Jima. Well, there are many American military commanders from that conflict who will tell you that the United States might never have taken Iwo Jima or won countless other battles in the Pacific if it weren't for the bravery, the sacrifice, and the unbreakability of the code of the Navajo Code Talkers.

It is fitting that we begin this day by recalling their achievements. After all, there are few people in America who better embody the power of communication. In fact, if you think about it, the system the Code Talkers used has real similarities to the beginning of the worldwide network we call the Internet. Both systems were developed for sending information quickly, securely, and reliably during times of war. Both had the power to change the course of history. But there is a cruel irony here.

For more than 50 years after the Code Talkers were able to communicate with one another, over great distances in the Pacific, it is still hard to communicate between many parts of the Navajo Nation itself. In much of America, it takes just a modest amount of money and time to get someone on the Internet. But here, an astonishing 37 percent of the households are without electricity, about 70 percent without phone service, more than half without work.

I am here because I believe the new technologies like the Internet and wireless communications can have an enormous positive impact in the Navajo Nation. They can help you to leapfrog over some of the biggest hurdles to develop your economic and human potential. They can make great distances virtually disappear. They can be a vehicle for job growth, for education, for health care, for employment opportunities. They can be the greatest equalizers our society has ever known.

I know the Navajo Nation has already begun to see this potential, as President Begaye said. Here in Shiprock, the closest public library is more than 30 miles away. Yet, thanks to your new PowerUP partnership, children and parents now are able to browse some of the great libraries of the world simply by going to the Boys and Girls Club.

On the western side of the Navajo Nation, rural health clinics are now linked through computers to the finest medical specialists at the University of Arizona. Your new Navajo Able initiative, funded in part by the Department of Education, is providing technologies to help children with disabilities write and communicate on computers. At Diné College, even rural campuses have state-of-the-art computer labs, where students soon will conduct real-time teleconferences with professors all around the globe. But this is just the beginning.

Almost 30 years ago, when I was a young man, still a student with no money and no prospect reasonably of becoming President, for sure—[laughter]—I first drove across New Mexico. I fell in love with the land and the people. I had my first opportunity to buy for my mother and the girlfriend who became my wife some beautiful Navajo jewelry. Now, just imagine if all the remarkable silversmiths and weavers of the Navajo Nation could sell their work not only in local markets but in national and global markets as well. Just imagine if all remote health clinics were connected electronically to major

medical centers. Imagine if Diné could commute to high-tech, high-paying jobs in large cities just by getting on a computer here in Shiprock. Imagine if all your children had access to the same world of knowledge at the same instance as children in the wealthiest communities in America. The potential is staggering, and we have to seize it.

I am here today to pledge that the National Government will do its part in ways that honor your tribal sovereignty. Ever since I have been President, we have worked to try to empower the tribes of our Nation. I will never forget the day in 1994, when I had the chance to welcome leaders of more than 300 American Indian tribes to the White House, the first time this had been done since President James Monroe's administration, in 1822.

You know, when I was just a very young boy, I used to go to the county public library in my hometown in Arkansas. I can remember spending day after day reading histories of Native American tribes and biographies of famous chiefs. I remember once I read in the biography of Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé that incredible statement he made, "From this day, I will fight no more, forever." It was a noble, powerful, brave thing to do.

But as we all know, though many of your ancestors gave up fighting and gave up land and water and mineral rights in exchange for peace, security, health care, and education, the Federal Government did not live up to its end of the deal. That was wrong. And I have worked hard to change it. There is nothing more important to me than getting this government-to-government relationship right, but getting it right in a way that will empower you to lift yourselves and your children to fulfill your potential and your dreams, not a patronizing relationship but an empowering one, not a handout but a hand up, a genuine partnership so that your children can live their dreams.

As Congressman Udall said, I did ask in the State of the Union Address for the largest budget increases in history for new and existing programs to assist tribal nations. That is why I traveled last year to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, the home of the Lakota Sioux. That is why I made Indian country an important focus of our new markets initiative.

Let me tell you what that is. I believe the only way to keep this economy growing is to bring economic opportunity to the people and

the places who have been left behind. More businesses, more jobs, more incomes means growth without inflation for the rest of America. People in New York City and Los Angeles and Seattle and Dallas and Atlanta and Miami, they all have a stake in your economic success. And I am here to bring that message to you, and through our friends in the media, to them.

I want to give Americans who have money the same incentives to invest in underdeveloped areas in America we now give them to invest in underdeveloped areas of Latin America or Asia or Africa. I want Americans to look first to people here at home who need work and education, who need technology and opportunity.

And there is no better place to begin than by bridging the digital divide. Our E-rate initiative, to provide discount rates to schools and hospitals and libraries that could not otherwise afford them, an initiative pioneered by our Vice President, Al Gore, and championed by this administration for years, has helped to equip every classroom in the consolidated school district with computers and the wiring to connect to the Internet.

My new budget provides a major new initiative to prepare Native Americans for careers in technical fields. It provides \$2 billion in tax incentives to encourage the private sector to donate computers, sponsor community technology centers available to adults as well as children, and provide technology training for workers; \$150 million to train every single new teacher on how to use this technology effectively in the classroom; and \$100 million to create 1,000 community technology centers all across the country, to serve all the people of the community—the old, the young, those in between, those with disabilities, and those without education, everyone who can benefit from tapping into this new technology.

And I want you to know that I am joined here today by private sector leaders who are part of our national call to action. Hundreds of organizations, including all 32 tribal colleges, have answered this pledge. And I want to highlight just some of the public and private commitments being made to benefit the Navajo Nation and Native Americans all across our country.

First, and very important, our Federal Communications Chairman, Bill Kennard, is proposing to expand the Lifeline program to ensure

that every Native American who needs it will be able to get basic phone service for as little as \$1 a month. In this day and age, when we want every American to have access to the Internet, we must first make sure that every American has access to a phone, so there will be a line to hook into.

Second, Native American Systems, headed by Robert Rutherford, a Choctaw, is committing \$100,000 state-of-the-art satellite communications to the Red Rock Day School, to provide equipment to 30 other BIA schools in other parts of Indian country. Tachyon is providing satellite Internet access to Diné College and the Lake Valley School. Give them a hand. [*Applause*]

Compaq will provide \$500,000 to spur the TechCorps schools partnership, which uses the Internet and TechCorps volunteers to help teachers make the best use of technology in the classroom. Four Navajo Nation schools participated in the pilot of TechCorps schools. Today I'm proud to say that this new commitment will make it available to all Navajo Nation schools and all K-through-12 schools nationwide for Native Americans. Microsoft will provide \$2.75 million in software and technical support for the American Indian Tribal College program, which will directly benefit Diné College. Andersen Consulting has committed \$100,000 to support small business in Indian country, something we need more of. We need access to capital, training, technological support. The capacity to grow small businesses in Indian country is far greater than anything we have realized to date. Healtheon/WebMD will provide valuable Internet sources to the medical professionals at the Indian Health Service facility right here in Shiprock. Let's give all these groups a big hand. [*Applause*]

I began my remarks today by doing my best to introduce myself to you in the proper way, telling you my name and my family's clan, in your language, as best I could. Well, it's true we are from different clans. Your ancestors were here on this continent, here within the four sacred mountains, long before my ancestors even knew of the existence of this continent and this land we call America. But my friends, we are now all part of the same American family. We are all related, and it is time we acted like we were all related.

We have never had a better chance to build the right kind of relationship. We have never

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had a better chance to build new connections between people, between cultures, between nations. The Navajo Code Talkers gave us one of history's most stirring lessons on the power of communications. They showed us in the most concrete way that our cultural diversity in America can be our greatest strength. And that is why we must do everything in our power to allow all Diné to lend their talents and their skills to the great enterprise of building our future together.

Ahe' hee doo hagoane. Thank you, and good-bye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:50 p.m. at the Boys and Girls Club of Shiprock. In his remarks, he referred to Myra Jodie, student, Steamboat Navajo Nation, AZ, who introduced the President; President Kelsey A. Begaye and Vice President Taylor McKenzie of the Navajo Nation; Chief Justice Robert Yazzie, Navajo Nation Supreme Court; Speaker Edward T. Begay, Navajo Nation Council; William Lee, chapter president, Shiprock local government; Special Assistant to the President for Agriculture and Trade Carl S. Whillock, board member, Rural Telephone Bank Agency of the United States; and professional golfer Notah Begay III.

Message on the Observance of Passover, 2000 *April 17, 2000*

Warm greetings to all those celebrating Passover.

Each year, Jews across America and around the world celebrate this sacred holiday by gathering with family and friends to share a festive ritual meal and to retell the story of Passover.

As children read from the Haggadah, a new generation learns the ancient story of God's liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and of their arduous 40-year journey through the desert. By singing songs, reciting prayers, and sharing food and drink steeped in tradition and symbolism, children learn to appreciate the rich history of the Jewish people, the importance

of religious freedom, and the many blessings God brings to our lives.

This year, as families gather for the seder to once again tell the story of Passover and of the Israelites' journey to the Promised Land, let us all give thanks for God's grace in our lives and for the wonderful blessings of liberty. And let us pray for a future filled with peace, hope, and opportunity for all the children of the world.

Hillary joins me in extending best wishes for a joyous Passover celebration.

BILL CLINTON

Internet Video Conference in Shiprock *April 17, 2000*

The President. Thank you. That was interesting. You did a good job, and I think your Navajo is better than mine. [*Laughter*]

Participant. I'd like to ask some questions, if I may.

The President. Please do.

Participant. Do you like working with the Internet?

The President. I do. I especially like it when I don't have to think, I can just talk to you. [*Laughter*] I don't even have to click the mouse.

I've got it on you, though, right on your hand and microphone. So ask me a nice question. [*Laughter*]

Internet Access for Police Departments

Participant. Mr. President, our—[*inaudible*]—police department is not connected to the Internet.

The President. Your police department?