



# THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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## Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., recognized as distinguished alumnus by Abilene Christian University

**GALLUP, N.M.** – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., has been recognized as a distinguished alumnus by his alma mater, Abilene Christian University.

The presentation of a distinguished alumni citation, given to four alumni each year, was made Sunday to the President in the presence of his family, Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly and his wife Martha, friends, and the congregation of his church, the Gallup Church of Christ.

“We have more than 86,000 former students at ACU and many go on to do great things,” said ACU Alumni Outreach Officer Mark Lavender. “But a few stand out, and Dr. Shirley is one of those exceptional alums.”

The Distinguished Alumni Citation reads, “In recognition of your distinguished personal and professional achievements which merits the praise of your colleagues and bring honor to your Alma Mater.”

The awards are given “to alumni who change the world in their workplace or in their communities. They bring honor to themselves and to their alma mater, to the work that they do and to the way in which they live their lives,” Mr. Lavender said.



*Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., is honored by his alma mater, Abilene Christian University, as a distinguished alumnus during a special presentation to him at the Gallup Church of Christ on Sunday, Nov. 4. Making the presentation was ACU Alumni Advisory Board member Phil Cheves, left, and ACU Alumni Outreach Officer Mark Lavender. The Distinguished Alumni Citation reads, “In recognition of your distinguished personal and professional achievements which merits the praise of your colleagues and bring honor to your Alma Mater.”*

Nominations are received from ACU faculty, staff, alumni and friends around the world, he said. The ACU Alumni Advisory Board makes the final selection.

Clifton Tuggle, an elder of the Gallup Church of Christ and a longtime friend of the President, said he met him in July 1970 when he moved to the Chinle-Many Farms area.

A group was meeting in the home economics department at Chinle High School for worship services when they determined they needed a building, he said. Because they couldn't afford a lawyer, President Shirley served as their legal advocate to help them obtain a 99-year land lease for a church.

"We are very proud of the things that our brother, Joe Shirley, has done for the church," Mr. Tuggle said.

The citation was presented to the President by ACU Alumni Advisory Board member Phil Cheves.

President Shirley said he was honored by the recognition and considers his attendance and graduation from ACU as a highlight in his life.

He said being a leader of a tribe of 300,000 people with a land base of 27,000 square miles is tough but that ACU is what prepared him to have come this far, personally and professionally.

"They trained me to stand going through the difference challenges in life, and that's why I regard it as a high point in my life," he said.

Abilene Christian University was established in 1906 by members of Churches of Christ and has been closely affiliated with this body for nearly a century. ACU is a private institution of higher education and a nationally recognized Christian university. It is independently

governed by a Board of Trustees consisting of members in good standing of congregations of Churches of Christ. The university is committed to biblical principles. Historically, it believes these principles were reaffirmed through the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement begun in early 19th-century America and expressed today through Churches of Christ.



President Shirley was baptized at the Church of Christ at Magic Valley Christian College in Albion, Idaho, in 1966. He graduated from Chinle High School in 1966, and received an AA degree from Magic Valley Christian College in 1968.

He received his BS in business from ACU in 1973. He received a master's degree in social work from

Arizona State University in 1978, and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Northern Arizona University in 2005 for his 37 years of leadership and effectiveness in elective office.

The President was a professional social worker for 12 years and served as director of the Navajo Nation Division of Social Services. He was an Apache County supervisor for 18 years. He served on the Navajo Nation Council representing Chinle for 12 years. He is now serving his second term as Navajo Nation president and is the first president to be re-elected to two consecutive terms in 28 years.

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