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WINDOW ROCK, ARIZ. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer congratulated the students, educators, school board, and community members of To’Hajiilee, N.M. in a press release published on Dec. 23 for securing $90.4 million within the FY2023 Omnibus Budget to construct a new To’Hajiilee Community School facility.

The To’Hajiilee Community School is a tribally-controlled school with a mission to integrate Navajo language and culture for quality academic achievement and success for all K-12 grade students. The school was built in 1935 and throughout the years experienced flooding, shifted walls, and deterioration.

“This is a monumental achievement for the To’Hajiilee community, teachers, students, and school board. This milestone took many years of advocacy and planning of parents, local leadership, and students at the local and federal levels,” Nez said.

He thanked Rep. Melanie Stansbury, D-N.M., and Secretary of Interiror Deb Haaland for their help in updating the school.

“Most importantly, we thank U.S. Representative Melanie Stansbury and U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland for addressing the safety concerns of many Bureau of Indian Education schools in tribal communities, including To’Hajiilee,” Nez said. “Now, our students and educators can look forward to a safe school that will provide many more opportunities for growth and achievement.”

The existing To’Hajiilee Community School was built in a flood plain. Frequent flooding has been problematic for decades, which hindered student instruction and achievement. On many occasions, classes had to be canceled or shut down due to extreme weather and safety protocols.

“Our school board and school administrators are excited and thankful for this funding. We appreciate Congresswoman Stansbury & former Congresswoman Haaland for making numerous site visits to our deteriorating campus and advocating relentlessly on our behalf in Washington, DC,” To’Hajiilee Community School Board Vice President Paulene Abeyta said. “Our belief that every student deserves and can have the best education in a safe environment on the Navajo Nation has always been at the forefront of this project. This is true government-to-government collaboration. Ahe’hee!”

To’Hajiilee’s school board and administration plan to build a new school above the floodplain. The allocation will provide funding for architectural design and construction for the new facility.

“I am truly overjoyed to have helped secure this funding after years of work by the community. This $90 million will enable To’Hajiilee to build a state-of-the-art school, rooted in the values, culture, and language of the community that will serve families for generations to come,” Stansbury said.

Stansbury thanked everyone who was involved in gathering the funding.

“Persistence, leadership, and community partnerships matter. I have been honored to fight alongside To’Hajiilee Chapter and community school leadership and am grateful to Secretary Haaland, Leadership in the House and Senate, House Appropriations Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, our Congressional delegation, BIE leadership and staff, and the many dedicated public servants who saw this injustice and have been working to correct it,” Stansbury said. “As we celebrate this huge victory, we continue the fight to fund Tribal and BIE schools across the country. We have a lot of work ahead.”

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