

PRESS RELEASE

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“\$1.3 million Restoration”

Window Rock, AZ – The Navajo Nation’s most recognized historic landmarks are being restored for \$1.3 million. The Recreation Hall is recognized as one of the most significant historic and cultural buildings on Navajo Nation, second only to the one-of-a-kind Navajo Nation Council Chambers building. According to the museum archives, the building was built in the late 1930’s under the direction of John Collier, U.S. Indian Superintendent, as part of the establishment of a Central Navajo Agency Headquarters. The two story rectangular sandstone building (4,500 sq. ft.) was utilized as a community center for social events (non-poetical). The government employees hosted many potlucks and gathering for the visitors to the Navajo Nation. On the main floor was a theater and in the basement comprised of two large bowling lanes, government employees were allowed to bowl once a week and on weekends, the theater featured movies with a .50 cent admission. The building was also utilized to entertain the congressional dignitaries from Washington, D.C.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) utilized the recreation center to store archives of tribal records. In 1994, the building was officially transferred to the Navajo Nation during the former administration of Navajo Nation President, Peterson Zah. Thereafter, the bowling lanes were removed to open space for a public library for after school reading programs.

With the lack of funds to upkeep the facility, the recreation building was vacated and due to an unstable roof and environmental hazards the building was officially shut down. For more than 10 years, the building was vacant and seasonal moisture slowly weathered and deteriorated the parapetted roof, the huge wooden vigas, making severe damages to the detailed interior wood work such as the beams and wooden floors.

The building was assessed by the Historic Preservation Department (HPD) in March 2002, when Navajo Abandoned Mine Reclamation Department expressed interest in remodeling the building for its administrative office. According to HPD, the building is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The building is eligible under both Criteria “a” and “c”. Under criteria “a” for its association with important event in the broad patterns of U.S. history, John Collier’s effort to bring self-determination to the Navajo, and “c” because it embodies “distinctive characteristic of type, period, or method of construction”. The building was designed and built in a unique architectural style related to the so called Pueblo Revival style that was developed in Sante Fe, New Mexico.

Navajo AML is funding the restoration project at approximately \$1.3 million, restoring the landmark building to occupy 15 staff by December 2004. The building will endeavor a majority of its original décor and the exterior red sandstone masonry walls will be salvaged and sealed. 100% of the roofing material was deteriorated leaving only the option to replace with new material and partial replacement of the first floor. Extensive ventilation and lighting will also be installed to provide natural light and aeration to the building. With an extravagance to the stairwell, an elevator will be installed in the basement where a large conference room will accommodate more than 40 people and provide a storage space for AML/UMTRA archives. Because the building is a historical building, the architect will compliment the original designed in accordance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (1995).

The project will preserve this land mark and remember the importance of the historic building and provide for its continuing use while meeting the needs of the AML/UMTRA program.