



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 28, 2020

**Council confirms Ernestine Tsinigine as
Navajo Nation Supreme Court Associate Justice**



PHOTO: Hon. Ernestine Tsinigine takes the oath of office surrounded by family on Jan. 28, 2020. The 24th Navajo Nation Council unanimously confirmed Hon. Tsinigine, after which Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne administered the oath at the Navajo Nation Council Chamber.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The 24th Navajo Nation Council unanimously voted to confirm the probationary appointment of Honorable Ernestine Tsinigine as Associate Justice of the Navajo Nation Supreme Court. The seat was vacant for more than 10 years and with the Council's confirmation, the Navajo Nation now has an all-female Supreme Court.

Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie sponsored Legislation No. 0009-20 and said, "This is a position appointed by the Judicial Conduct Commission. I ask for your support and as you can see through her education, she is well qualified for the position." She was previously serving as Kayenta District Court Judge for the past two years.

Associate Justice Tsinigine will be appointed for a probationary period of two years and upon permanent appointment shall serve thereafter during good behavior, according to Title 7 of the Navajo Nation Code, Section 355(B). President Jonathan Nez, in a letter dated Jan. 6, 2020, appointed Associate Justice Tsinigine and cited her 11 years of work with the tribal court system.

In May 1985, Associate Justice Tsinigine graduated from Tuba City High School and studied liberal arts at Mesa Community College. She transferred to Arizona State University in Jan. 1989 and graduated with a bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1992. In May 2003, she graduated with a master's degree in Indigenous Nations Studies from the University of Kansas. She decided to attend University of New Mexico School of Law, where she graduated with a Juris Doctorate in May 2007.

Associate Justice Tsinigine recounted her work for the past two years as a probationary judge at Kayenta District Court. "It's a hard job and a lot of work," she said. "We have hearings all day, that's the schedule of a judge." She said the work experience in Kayenta enabled her to learn procedure and the law.

Her historic confirmation as Navajo Nation Supreme Court Associate Justice brought a lot of discussion on the Council floor. "I strongly support this confirmation, especially since you are from Coppermine," said Council Delegate Herman Daniels. He encouraged her to immerse herself in the Navajo language because that is primarily how Navajo elders communicate.

Council Delegate Thomas Walker Jr. said he served on the 20th and 21st Navajo Nation Council, where he confirmed Associate Justice Eleanor Shirley. "We saw her grow and develop to become the Navajo Nation's judge," he said. He spoke about the Navajo concept of *Nahat'áh* and the direction it provides in a person's life.

Council Delegate Otto Tso said Associate Justice Tsinigine came before the 23rd Navajo Nation Council for her probationary confirmation as district judge. "You have worked this long and now you are going to reach the next level. You're going to meet the qualifications for Diné Fundamental Law. Women provide life and your heart is good. You'll do well," he said.

Council Delegate Paul Begay said the Council must support Navajo youth. He was especially happy because Associate Justice Tsinigine came from his region. "When a person comes from your area, you feel great pride," he said. "We have a Navajo pro rodeo team roper from that same area, Aaron Tsinigine, and this judge is from that same family, a family of champions."

Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne administered the oath of office while Associate Justice Tsinigine's family joined her. Speaker Seth Damon congratulated her, along with members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council. She was inundated with hugs, photos and handshakes before the Council recessed for the second day of the 2020 Winter Session.

Information: www.navajonationcouncil.org.

###

MEDIA CONTACTS

Rick Abasta, Communications Director, (928) 530-8197.

Byron C. Shorty, Sr. Public Information Officer, (928) 287-2085.

nnlb.communications@gmail.com