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NAVAJO NATION LOSES A BROADCAST LEGEND IN GEORGE WERITO



Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye was one of several speakers who remembered the life of Navajo broadcaster George Werito during his funeral services that were held at the Farmington Civic Center last Thursday, Jan. 24.

FARMINGTON-Over a thousand friends and family gathered on Thursday, Jan. 24 at the Farmington Civic Center to honor and pay their last respects to Navajo radio broadcast legend, George Werito.

The civic center was filled to capacity and the overflow crowd stood outside watching the services on monitors placed outside the venue.

Werito's radio program on the Farmington-based KNDN station was regionally renowned for his ability to articulate political and social issues using the Navajo language. Many who spoke at the services said Werito was the true voice of the Navajo Nation.

Master of Ceremony, Daryl Blackhorse said when Werito would broadcast along the route for the Shiprock Marathon, many people would come to the event just to see and hear him.

"It was his voice. It brought attention," he said.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye was a special speaker at Werito's services. The broadcaster was a close friend and the President said he often sought his advice.

"If you made George your friend, he was a friend for life and he always had your back. He spoke on your behalf and defended you in correcting people for what he knew was true. That's the kind of friend he was, a true friend," he said.

Many of those who spoke remembered Werito as being a source of encouragement and motivation. President Begaye remembered how Werito encouraged him in his campaign for presidency.

"You can be the next president, he told me," President Begaye said.

The President commended the family for their support of the broadcaster and encouraged them to carry on his legacy in every aspect of their lives. He told the family that his teachings would live on through them.

Vice President Jonathan Nez presented a honorary Navajo Nation flag and a Pendleton blanket to George Werito's wife, Irene. He urged everyone to continuously check on the Weritos because in the days following his services, the family would be returning to their daily routines in his absence.

"I know you will miss him and it will be hard," he said. "On behalf of the family, I want to thank you all for being here. It shows how much he was loved and it shows how much you enjoyed hearing the voice of the Navajo Nation, George Werito."

The services also featured speakers such as Farmington Mayor Tommy Roberts, County Manager Kim Carpenter, KNDN Station Manager Kerwin Gober and a closing prayer by Navajo comedian and longtime friend James Junes.

Navajo Nation Speaker of the 23rd Council, Lorenzo Bates and Honorable Delegate Tom Chee sat with the assembled dignitaries on the stage.

George Werito's burial services were conducted in Aneth, UT, and his reception followed at the Aneth Chapter House.

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