



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FORT MCDOWELL YAVAPAI NATION VIRTUAL INAUGURATION CELEBRATION WELCOMES  
THREE TRIBAL COUNCIL MEMBERS TO NEWLY ELECTED POSITIONS**

*Vice-President, Secretary and Council Member take formal oaths of office as part of culture-rich evening of music, ritual and dance*

**FORT MCDOWELL , Ariz. – Feb. 11, 2022** – On February 8, the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation recognized the results of their 2022 General Election by welcoming Vice President Paul Russell, Secretary Verlene Enos and Council Member Albert Nelson to their recently named tribal council positions.

To keep tribal members safe during the still-pervasive COVID-19 pandemic, the inaugural celebration was live streamed from the We-Ko-Pa Casino Resort, a tribal-owned Enterprise. The festivities began with a welcome address by President Bernadine Burnette, followed by the posting of colors by the Fort McDowell Yavapai National Veterans Association and pledge of allegiance led by two members of the Youth Council. Antonio Armenta, U.S. Army, then conducted the invocation, after which Election Board President David McLevain shared the official election results.

Interim Chief Judge Kerry Passey then administered the oaths of office to Russell, Enos and Nelson, followed by traditional and Christian blessings bestowed by tribal elder Raphael Bear and Pastor Randall Ruiz, respectively.

A highlight of the virtual inauguration celebration was a video presentation featuring congratulatory remarks from Governor Doug Ducey and Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, recognizing the significant expertise and commitment that Russell, Enos and Nelson bring to these key leadership positions and the bright, exciting future that lies ahead for the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation. National Indian Gaming Association chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr. added his well wishes from the Cedar Lakes Casino Hotel in Cass Lake, Minnesota, owned by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe tribe.

Preceded by individual photo montages of them, their families and their community, Russell, Enos and Nelson gave inspiring inaugural speeches pledging to further advance the health, prosperity and happiness of the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation. A traditional song by the Maswade Drum Group and benediction by SAGU American Indian College president Dr. Jonathan D. Gannon closed out the memorable evening.

“Inauguration ceremonies aren’t just the formal introduction of tribal officers,” remarked Burnette. “They symbolize the peaceful transition of power, reflecting the political will of our tribal members. I know how seriously each member of our tribal council takes their responsibilities and how hard they all work for the Yavapai people.”

**About the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation**

The Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation is an 889-member Native American tribe that calls Central Arizona's upper Sonoran Desert home. Located to the northeast of Phoenix within Maricopa County, Arizona, the 40-square mile reservation is a small part of the ancestral territory of the once nomadic Yavapai people, who hunted and gathered food in a vast area of Arizona's desert lowlands and mountainous Mogollon Rim country.

The tribe operates a variety of successful enterprises including the We-Ko-Pa Casino Resort, We-Ko-Pa Golf Club, Fort McDowell Adventures, Eagle View RV Resort, Baja Gas, Yavapai Materials and the Tribal Farm.

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