



Name of Property: Klagetoh (*Leeyi'to* or Leegito) Chapter House
City, State: Klagetoh, Arizona, Navajo Nation
Period of Significance: 1963–1979
NHL Criteria: 2
NHL Theme: IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
2. Governmental Institutions
4. Political Ideas, Cultures, and Theories

Previous Recognition: None

National Historic Context:

NHL Significance:

- The complex is nationally significant for its association with the productive life of celebrated Navajo political leader Annie Dodge Wauneka (1910–1997), influential member of the Navajo Tribal Council, groundbreaking health care advocate, and respected tribal emissary to Washington, DC.
- A vanguard, Wauneka became the second woman elected to the Tribal Council in 1951 and served on that body until 1979. Her tenure on the council (the Navajo equivalent of the US Congress) occurred during a period in American history when few women held high elected political office.
- Appointed Chair of the Tribal Council health committee in 1953, Wauneka worked tirelessly in the battle against tuberculosis on the reservation. She studied the disease and identified the need for cross-cultural coordination of patient care offered by medicine men, government physicians, and a group of Cornell Medical College doctors who offered their services and an effective new drug. She also developed methods of conveying medical information and treatment that respected traditional beliefs and customs and helped alleviate distrust of Western medicine.
- Wauneka gained widespread recognition for her successful public health efforts. In 1963, President Kennedy selected her for the prestigious Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest peacetime civilian honor. Her wide-ranging work included efforts to combat alcoholism, promote education, and empower other aspiring women politicians. She made dozens of trips to Washington to present tribal views to congressional committees, federal administrators, and presidents. Senator John McCain of Arizona



remarked: “I have known her for many years. I think she can be described accurately as a spiritual leader of the Navajo people. She has been responsible for the eradication of disease and for efforts at preserving the unity of families on the Navajo Reservation.”

- Wauneka served Klagetoh Chapter for twenty-eight years, holding various positions and honing her political skills. From the completion of the chapter house in 1963 to the time she left office in 1979, Wauneka attended chapter meetings, reported to her constituents, and attended social and other events at this community center and seat of decision-making. No other place is more strongly associated with Wauneka’s service.
- The chapter house conveys a Navajo architectural aesthetic through its stone masonry, hogan-inspired features, and interior simplicity; its design and materials resulted from Wauneka’s influence. She personally led fellow chapter members in their rejection of a money-saving, streamlined modern building first proposed by the tribal government, demanding a local expression informed by historic Navajo architecture.

Integrity:

The Klagetoh Chapter House retains excellent historic physical integrity, displaying locally quarried sandstone walls and no additions. Principal alterations include installation of standing-seam metal roofing and replacement windows and doors.

Owner of Property: Navajo Nation, Window Rock, Arizona.

Acreage of Property: 0.4 acres

Origins of Nomination: As part of the National Park Service’s Women’s History Initiative, the National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites (NCWHS) identified Annie Dodge Wauneka as a significant figure in community and public health meriting recognition under the NHL program. In 2014 staff of the NPS Intermountain Office, Heritage Partnerships Program, visited the Navajo Nation to gather information about historic resources associated with Wauneka. In 2015 the NCWHS sponsored preparation of this nomination under an award from the NPS. Wauneka family members, including her daughter Irma Wauneka Bluehouse, believe the chapter house is the resource most closely associated with her life of service that is appropriate for designation, in conformance with the Navajo (Diné) preference of recognition for a community rather than an individual.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- Designation would recognize the life and achievements of Annie Doidge Wauneka, an innovative Navajo political and public health leader, whose varied humanitarian efforts on behalf of her people brought positive improvements in their daily lives.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of):

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation:

Advisory Board Recommendation: