



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Council members receive report regarding suicides among Navajo youth**

**WINDOW ROCK** – Last Wednesday, the Navajo Nation Council received a report from Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) and the Utah Navajo Health Care System regarding recent suicides in the community of Montezuma Creek and an attempted suicide in Monument Valley.

According to Delegate Brown, the suicides sparked community efforts to investigate the occurrences and to promote suicide awareness. The suicides occurred in close-knit communities and have deeply impacted youth and families within the area, according to Delegate Brown.

“They’re all related, they are all working together – they are all hurting,” said Delegate Brown. “We are in the process of developing a suicide intervention team that would aid community members and young people who may be having difficult issues at home or in school.”

He added that the team would focus on suicide prevention through counseling programs, preventing youth from having access to violent material such as video games and websites, and providing them resources for support.

Council Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock) said he was very saddened to hear the news of the recent suicides, and said in his past experience as an educator he found that some Navajo students felt disconnected from their cultural identity.

“We stress K’é to our children, but do they really know what it means if we are not teaching them about it?” asked Delegate Chee. “Many of the issues that our people face is the loss of language, loss of traditions, and loss of culture – resulting in feeling the lack of belonging.”

Delegate Chee added that suicidal tendencies can be combatted through community intervention by holding events such as sports or horseback riding activities that allow youth to interact and provide positive support.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) agreed with Delegate Chee and recommended that Navajo elderly begin to gain knowledge of newer technologies to communicate more effectively with the younger generation.

“We have become too dependent on the western answers. We need to refer back to tradition – through sheep herding and growing crops. We had grandmothers and grandfathers teaching them about Navajo life, but we need to adjust to today’s technologies as well. It is what our Navajo youth are interested in,” said Delegate Tsosie.

At the conclusion of the report, Delegate Brown said that it is also important for other youth to speak with their troubled peers, which would likely result in a more positive response and allow a more comfortable atmosphere to share one’s thoughts and feelings.

He added that the Council will need to play a major in aiding suicide prevention, such as drafting legislation to strengthen current programs and to provide additional funding to promote suicide awareness throughout the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Nation Council voted 15-0 to accept the report.

On Tuesday, Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) issued a message in recognition of National Suicide Prevention Week. The message will air on local radio stations later in the week. For further information regarding suicide prevention, please visit [www.itgetsbrighter.org](http://www.itgetsbrighter.org).

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