



# 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council

## Office of the Speaker

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Navajo Nation Council Commends President's May 5th MMIW Proclamation, Calls on White House and Congress to Reauthorize VAWA and Fully Fund Trust Obligations**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — On Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Awareness Day, the Navajo Nation Council calls on President Donald Trump and the US Congress to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act and fully fund trust obligations for public safety and justice services in Indian Country.

“The Council is encouraged by the President’s proclamation to designate May 5th as Missing and Murdered Indigenous People’s Day,” stated Speaker Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh). “Though it is important to recognize that the federal government has significant trust obligations that it must meet to confront the epidemic and create healthy, sustainable, and self-governed tribal communities, where opportunity is available to all Native women, children, and families.”

“Recently, the Navajo Nation received an award from the Office for Victims of Crime to develop and implement novel programming to fill in the gaps of victim support services on the Nation,” stated Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz’t’l’i). “Navajo women, children, and families deserve fully-funded, culturally appropriate services that protect them and empower their communities. Combatting this epidemic and empowering our people requires the federal and state governments to fund and support programs that enhance tribal self-determination.”

The Nation was awarded two awards of up to \$2.65 million to be used over a three-year performance period.

Use of this funding source would directly empower the Navajo Nation to address unmet needs for all victims of crime, including strengthening existing domestic violence and sexual assault services and implementing further on-reservation services to support unserved Native crime victims, as well as non-Indians.

Specifically, the proposal seeks to establish Victim Witness Advocate positions under the Navajo Department of Criminal Investigations and Prosecutor's Office, as well as expand existing personnel and resources under the Strengthening Families Program. The proposal

also requests funding to support subawards to third-party service providers who provide additional services both on and off reservation.

“Federal programming, when fully-funded and designed to empower tribal sovereignty and self-determination, can have potent impacts on the livelihoods of Native peoples,” stated Speaker Damon. “In addition to BIA Public Safety and Justice programming, all services to Indian Country need to be funded at their levels requested by tribal governments in order to seriously confront the inequities between Indian Country and the rest of the United States.”

In his FY2019 budget, the President proposed a 7% reduction in Bureau of Indian Affairs Public Safety and Justice programming. For FY2020, the President proposes reducing the same budget by \$24.9 million.

Within Dept. of Justice programming available to Indian tribes, funding would be increased overall by the President’s FY2020 budget via a 7% set-aside for “tribal assistance” through the Office of Justice Programs. Additionally, several programs critical to combatting the MMIW epidemic are budgeted at their FY2019 request levels.

- \$4 million for implementation of special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction through the Office on Violence Against Women.
- \$1 million for research on violence against Native women.
- \$500,000 for a national clearinghouse on sexual assault in Indian Country.

“I thank the President for elevating this issue and ask him to follow up his support of the MMIW epidemic by supporting the VAWA reauthorization passed by the House of Representatives,” said Delegate Crotty.

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