



24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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Council Mourns Passing of Char James, Champion of Healing and Prevention for Navajo Youth and Families

WINDOW ROCK, Az. – The Navajo Nation Council extends its condolences to the family of Char James and the persons impacted by her life's work to encourage more people to conduct their lives in beauty, heal trauma, prevent substance abuse, and perpetuate traditional Navajo teachings to empower youth and families.

Char James was born in Ft. Defiance, Az. in 1952 to Emma K. Joe and Charlie Watchman. A traditional Navajo woman, she made the Querino area her home her entire life. She was Naasht'ézhí dine'é Táchii'nii, born for Tábaqhá. Her cheii hastiin was Kinyaa'áanii and her nali hastiin was Díbélzhíní.



Char James, courtesy of family.

James was an outspoken educational, family, and community health advocate committed to combatting youth drug and alcohol abuse, preventing gang recruitment and proliferation, and battling the scourge of domestic violence and child abuse across the Nation.

Additionally, she was a frequent contributor to Culture Night on KTNN and interwove traditional teachings into her counseling, establishing a firm sense of identity and place for those with whom she worked.

Across a multi-decade career, James worked with the community health representative program, starting as a CHR and rising to the program's acting director position. She also worked for the Dept. of Behavioral Health Services and the Division of Social Services Navajo Treatment Center for Children and Their Families.

Influenced by personal experience, James reoriented her career to focus on direct meth and suicide prevention field work. Accordingly, she became a certified prevention specialist with the Methamphetamine Suicide Prevention Initiative.

Among her achievements was spearheading the Renewal of Hope Task Force seeking the closure of the three border town alcohol establishments Red Barn, Lee's Liquor, and Hooch's.

"We will remember Char James as a valued community leader and strong advocate for Navajo children and families," stated **Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr.** (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahat'a Dził, Tsé Si'áni, Wide Ruins). "She recognized both the material influences of trauma and the personal power each of us possess to love one another and ourselves in order to heal and empower."

"Char James inspired countless youth to find the power within to love themselves and avoid drugs, alcohol, and gang life," stated **Speaker Seth Damon** (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh). "As a community leader and Navajo Nation employee, James powered her work with traditional wisdom, empathy, and compassion. We must make our lives a living memorial to her work by fueling our endeavors with the values that drove her."

James is survived by her younger brother Junior Joe and children Raymond Tso, Jr., Carlotta Tso, Savoy Yazzie, Carenda Yazzie, and Cherylyn Yazzie. She is predeceased by husband Irvin K. James and son Jamie Yazzie.

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