



Navajo Nation recognizes May 5 as National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

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PHOTO: On May 2, 2016, 11-year-old Navajo girl Ashlynn Mike was murdered near the Shiprock pinnacle. A Virtual Run is being hosted today by her mother, Pamela Foster, and encourages the public to participate by dedicating a run or walk to honor missing and murdered relatives today, May 5, 2020.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council recognized today, May 5, as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Naabik'iyáti' Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty and Law and Order Committee Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton encouraged Navajo Nation citizens to take part in raising awareness and sharing the stories of missing and murdered Navajo relatives.

“This day recognizes the stories of our sisters, mothers, LGBTQi2S, and male relatives who have gone missing or lost their lives to violence — an issue that touches and affects nearly all families throughout the Navajo Nation. In solidarity, we need to stand with our communities, advocates, and families who have been entrenched in this work and fight to continue raising awareness for missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, trans, and two-spirit relatives,” said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty added that it is important to recognize that the issue of Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) is not an epidemic. Rather, it is an ongoing crisis dating back to the initial colonization of the American southwest. She said that historical genocidal policy and systemic violence created a culture that targeted Native women violently and continues today.

In March 2019, Delegate Crotty co-founded the MMDR movement on the Navajo Nation. She will be engaging in a social media campaign this week to highlight the stories of missing and murdered Navajo people. She stated that the spirit of MMDR's work is derived from Ashlynnne Mike, an 11-year-old Navajo girl who was kidnapped, sexually assaulted, and murdered in May 2016.

"We lost an exceptional angel who had a love for music, art, creativity, and fun. We made a commitment to her, to the families, and to Navajo communities that we would implement change to raise awareness, protect our Diné, and provide support. It has been over a year since we established our working group and much has been done, but we are not anywhere near finished," said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Charles-Newton also emphasized the importance of the awareness day. She stated that the MMIWG is a longstanding issue throughout Indian Country and expressed gratitude for leadership recognizing and honoring victims. She stressed the importance of supporting affected families.

"It is commendable that an awareness day is set aside to recognize all our mothers, sisters, aunts, and nieces who have not been found or were murdered. However, this day of memory, of awareness, should be every day. Families who are missing their relatives did not grieve for one day, they continue to feel the grief and anguish of not knowing where their beloved relatives are or did not receive justice for murdered loved ones. For many of us, we have hope and continue to pray for the families and those who are missing, that they will one day return home," said Delegate Charles-Newton.

Today, Ashlynnne's mother Pamela Foster is encouraging the public to take part in the Ashlynnne Mike Virtual Run. Participants can wear yellow or purple and dedicate a run or walk to honor missing and murdered indigenous relatives.

At the 2019 AMBER Alert in Indian Country Symposium, Foster talked about Ashlynnne's murder and advocated for the implementation of AMBER Alert throughout Indian Country. "On this day a part of me died, and life has never been the same," said Foster, "I made a promise to [Ashlynnne] that I would do my part to fix the loophole that exists in the system. I would fight for an AMBER Alert for Indian country."

In 2018, Congress passed the Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act, which enhances training and technical assistance to tribes and paves the way for access to state AMBER Alert plans. The Act allows tribes to integrate their AMBER plans with those of the state or region and would have oversight and control to issue their own AMBER Alerts. The Act allows the Navajo Nation to obtain its own mass notification software system to issue their own emergency alerts.

Today, Congresswoman Deb Halaand and Sharice Davids introduced legislation to recognize May 5 as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

For more information or to support the work of Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives, visit <https://www.navajommdr.com>. You can also find MMDR on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NavajoMMDR/> and on Instagram: @navajommdr.

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