



MMDR/NNMPU to unveil Missing Persons Community Action Toolkit to assist Navajo communities in recovering missing relatives

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — This week, the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) task force and Navajo Nation Missing Persons Updates (NNMPU) will meet with the Navajo Nation Police Department and Navajo Nation Peacemaking Program to discuss and finalize the MMDR/NNMPU Missing Persons Community Action Toolkit. The toolkit is set to be unveiled after all parties have completed a thorough review and recommendations have been added to the toolkit.

The toolkit will aid Navajo families through the process of locating a missing relative, filing a missing persons report, how to work with public safety, mobilize a community search and rescue safely, and to support families in crisis with the ultimate goal of recovering missing relatives.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadii'ahi/Tó Ko'í, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé Ałnáozt'i'í), who has been working diligently with both community groups, said the team took the route to work with families and communities to develop a toolkit that would support them in finding a missing relative while being mindful of the needs of families who are in crisis. Crotty also chairs the Naabik'iyáti' Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee of the Navajo Nation Council.

“MMDR and NNMPU worked directly with families who continue to search for loved ones. We felt it necessary to create this missing persons toolkit to help guide them on their journey. This community-grown toolkit is the first step to provide holistic support to families. Our hope is that this is a living document that will continue to evolve and serve families for many years to come,” said Crotty.

Crotty stressed that every minute counts when a person goes missing and the toolkit will help in reducing issues during a “confusing time,” such as checking places the relative may frequent, how to keep track of a communication log, collecting demographics of the missing relative and how to mobilize a community command post with or without immediate public safety support.

Work on the toolkit began in August 2019 when MMDR and NNMPU determined it was time to create a guide that would support Navajo families. The toolkit would also support public safety and emergency management services by consolidating and centralizing important information they need for investigation and search and rescue efforts.

Recently, the Navajo Nation Police Department and Navajo Nation Peacemaking Program reviewed the draft to ensure that the toolkit also supports their communication with families. The group also shared the toolkit would help give agency to Navajo families to in all aspects of the process and empowers Navajo community members to engage with the toolkit to recover their missing relatives.

Meskee Yatsayte, founder and volunteer advocate for NNMPU, expressed her gratitude for the development of the toolkit. Yatsayte, also a founding member of MMDR, took an active role in developing the toolkit utilizing her many years of experience and advocacy working with families.

“It’s a great blessing to be a part of the work in creating this Missing Persons Community Action Toolkit. With the help of hearing from the family stories and working with many collaborators, we were able to bring this toolkit together for families that will need guidance if their relative goes missing. This is only the beginning of many things we have planned for helping our Nation with our Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives. Thank you to all the families and colleagues that were involved in making this toolkit possible,” said Yatsayte.

MMDR task force project manager Jolene Holgate also urged the public to take part in an upcoming virtual forum that will focus on the toolkit and will include a panel discussion with an opportunity to answer questions from community members.

“Throughout this entire process, we always felt it to be important to include community in these discussions. Efforts like this cannot move forward without complete transparency and involvement of our Diné relatives and families. This toolkit was truly a labor of love and we are excited to unveil this toolkit in the near future. In the meantime, please join us at our upcoming virtual forum to learn more about the toolkit,” said Holgate.

The MMDR task force and NNMPU continue collaborative work and will be holding the community virtual forum “Exploring the MMDR/NNMPU Missing Persons Community Action Toolkit” on Friday, April 2, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. (MDT) via Zoom. For more information on joining the forum, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/NavajoMMDR> or on Instagram (@navajommdr).

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