



Missing & Murdered Diné Relatives

“Together, We Heal”

The Missing & Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) Task Force is a collective of passionate and dynamic community members intent on calling for justice and centering the voices of our MMDR families, relatives, and survivors. In 2016, the tragic loss of baby girl Ashlynnne Mike spurred an outcry from families who were demanding their voices be heard and expressed the need for support to families. So, we got to work.

In March 2019, the MMDR task force was established through the leadership of Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty who brought together a group united in finding solutions to support Diné families. Our task force membership is comprised of volunteers—community, families, public health experts, college students, public safety, and college/university partners. This update report is to illustrate our milestones and our continued work in motion. We invite you to join this journey with us as we engage in movement building and community solutions – we all have a part in creating safe and healthy Diné communities.

MMDR Data Institute

The Missing & Murdered Diné Relatives task force have continued planning the development a data institute that would hold the stories and knowledge from community to help us understand the accurate scope of the issues and to develop solution-based pathways for healing and justice. This data institute would be unique in that it would collect and offer community-based knowledge that would foster healing through wrap around services, programming, and prevention.

Our accomplishments on the planning for the data institute includes:

- A grant proposal that names the needs to set the foundation for the database
- Objectives have been identified
- Engaged in a new partnership with Navajo Nation Peacemaking Program and Navajo Nation Judicial Branch
- We operate using the Navajo Wellness Model
- Identified the hardware needed to maintain the database
- Recorded testimonies from families of MMDR

Pieces that are in progress for the data institute:

- Developing an overall strategic plan for the institute
- Drafting a plan of operation
- Continue community relationship-building
- Creating a research design and identifying the type of data collection
- Incorporate historical and intergenerational trauma

Additional areas that need attention to move the data institute forward:

- Identify data use plan and who will have access
- Identify entities for MOUs for data sharing
- Identify a coordinator to carry out the work
- Articulate the MMDR Institute working staff and leadership
- Begin to develop and analyze the data

As our community-based work moves forward, we understand that this work cannot be carried alone without key stakeholders who have the expertise and honor their responsibility to serve our Navajo communities. Through their support on this journey, we know we get closer and closer to having a self-determined pathway to having ownership over our stories and restoring balance within our Navajo communities.

Here are our key partners:

- Diné College
- Navajo Nation Mission Persons Updates
- Navajo Epidemiology Center
- Navajo Area IHS
- Arizona State University
- Navajo Nation Police Department and Criminal Investigations
- Navajo Department of Health
- John Hopkins University – Wendy Shields
- New Mexico Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force
- Tribal Coalitions: Restoring Ancestral Winds and Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women

As we move this work forward, we continued to hold community forums virtually despite the pandemic to ensure we receive community input while providing education and awareness. The importance of spreading knowledge to our communities allows MMDR families and Navajo relatives to be better informed and understand how they can be a part of the solution.

Here are events that we held in 2020 and 2021:

- October 2020: “Domestic Violence as a Contributor to the Missing and Murdered Crisis on the Navajo Nation
- January 2021: “Not Invisible: Understanding Human Trafficking on the Navajo Nation”
- April 2021: “Exploring the MMDR/NMPU Missing Persons Community Action Toolkit”
- May 2021: “Understanding the Trials Navajo Families Face”

Along with the data institute, here are other areas of work that are moving forward:

- MMDR Missing Persons Toolkit – soft release date: October 29, 2021
- MMDR Report: illustrate the missing and murdered crisis issue as it intersects with domestic violence, sexual violence, sex trafficking, and impacts of the covid-19 pandemic
- Sustaining our work: MMDR is in the process of becoming a nonprofit and is in dialogue with nonprofit orgs who may serve as a fiscal agent while we establish our roots
- Providing aid to families who are on active searches: donations and coordination
- Internal ALERT team: in the near future, we are seeking to become advocates that would walk families through the process of filing missing persons reports, gaining access to resources, and calling for accountability of agencies and entities that are responsible for direct services
- We have created a platform and engage in community organizing with MMDR families so their voices are heard and their cases garner attention

The MMDR task force is intent to continue taking a dynamic approach to the missing and murdered crisis on the Navajo Nation. In addition to the data institute, the task force seeks to elevate our advocacy efforts for families, expand partnerships, and seek sustainable ways to move our work forward. Ultimately, we will continue to call for justice on behalf of Navajo families and work towards recovering our missing relatives. We keep moving forward in the spirit of healing. We welcome you to join us.

Ahéhee’!

MMDR Task Force

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