



– JOINT PRESS RELEASE –

Navajo Nation honors the life of Humanitarian and
Children’s Rights Advocate Karis N. Begaye

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation leaders offer their condolences to the family and friends of the late Karis N. Begaye, a former Navajo Nation attorney, children’s rights advocate, and humanitarian. She is the daughter of former Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye of Shiprock, N.M.

Born June 23, 1976 in Fort Worth, Texas, she attended Woods Elementary, Boles Jr. High, and graduated from Martin High School. A graduate of North Georgia State University, she earned her Juris Doctorate from Whittier Law School in Southern California.

“On behalf of the Navajo people, our thoughts and prayers are with President Russell Begaye and his family. Words cannot express our appreciation and gratitude to the late Karis Begaye and her family for their service and contributions to our Nation. She was a very intelligent and caring person and was

very instrumental in many initiatives that continue to benefit many of our Navajo people to this day. May her family and friends take comfort in knowing that she is now with God,” said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez.

Ms. Begaye interned with the Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation and upon graduation, returned to work for the Navajo people within the Department of Justice overseeing business contracts. In 2015, she served as the chief legal counsel for the Office of the President and Vice President with the Begaye-Nez Administration.

“Ms. Begaye was a diligent and respected community leader who helped so many families across the country defending abused or neglected children in courtrooms. Just this year, she was honored by the New Mexico State Bar Association as an elite attorney who successfully defended cases that



PHOTO: Karis N. Begaye

saved the lives of our children. As part of her Christian faith, Ms. Begaye spent most of her younger life volunteering as a youth mentor in Panama, Central America. She is forever remembered as a humble, caring daughter, granddaughter, and aunty. During this time, the Navajo people send our prayers to give strength to her family and former Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh).

At a young age, Ms. Begaye volunteered to work with children on the San Blas Islands in Panama. This led to years of service to her community where she is now honored in Arlington, Texas, for establishing after-school programs to help young people attend college.

“I offer condolences to former President Russell Begaye and family, friends, and colleagues of Karis Begaye on her recent passing. The loss of a person often brings us back to reflect on our Diné teachings. Karis achieved and succeeded in the study and practice of law on behalf of the Navajo people. She championed causes for our people. Her work, as an attorney for the Navajo Nation will always be cherished and etched into the justice system. She was dedicated to her profession and represented Diné values in court,” said Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne.

Navajo Nation leaders will present a Navajo Nation Flag to the family to honor her decades-long public service to the Navajo people.

Vice President Myron Lizer added, “On behalf of Second Lady Dottie Lizer and I, we offer our condolences and prayers to the Begaye family. Karis was a blessing to our people and her contributions will not be forgotten. Her spirit lives on. We will continue to pray for former President Begaye, their family, and community.

Karis Begaye is survived by her father, President Russell Begaye, and is preceded in death by her beloved mother Helen Shoemaker Begaye.

“We are all saddened by the loss of a true public servant whose advocacy and resiliency as a Diné woman uplifted the Navajo Nation. No parent should ever have to lay to rest their child and the loss of Ms. Begaye breaks all of our hearts. The Navajo people offer their prayers of protection and comfort to President Begaye and his family during this time. We are a resilient Sovereign Nation because of our strong, intelligent women. Ms. Begaye will be remembered as a champion for our children,” added Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown.

The family will hold a private service this week. Online condolences may be made at craddockfuneralhome.com

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