



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Madam Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty joins Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham for approval of bills on behalf of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives across New Mexico

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PHOTO: Madam Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Senator Shannon Pinto, Representative Pamela Hendon, Senator Linda Lopez look on as sponsors of Senate Bills 12 and 13.

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Yesterday, Madam Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty of the 24th Navajo Nation Council was joined by families across the Four Corners region alongside Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham to enact legislation to address and prevent cases of missing and murdered Indigenous people across New Mexico. The governor signed Senate Bill 12 and 13 into law at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque, N.M. .

Chairwoman Crotty stood with Attorney General Hector Balderas, Indian Affairs Secretary Lynn Trujillo, Senator Shannon Pinto (D-Dist. 3), Senator Linda Lopez (D-Dist. 11), Representative Pamela Hendon (D-Dist. 28), and members of the New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force for the signing ceremony.

“When our relatives experience violence or go missing, it deeply hurts our communities. This is an ongoing crisis deeply impacting Indian Country where hundreds of our women are going missing and are never found. We stand here on this sacred land knowing that 154 years ago, our people walked through these streets after the Navajo Long Walk to our homeland. We are here to reclaim their memory, the stories and songs, and say loudly that enough is enough. The Navajo Nation needs to be a leader in the MMIWR movement and finally embrace our families affected

by this crisis,” said Madam Chair Amber Kanazabh Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley, Tsé’ahnáoozt’í’í, Sheep Springs, Beclabito, Gad’ii’áhí/Tó Ko’í)

Senate Bill 13 creates an annual event to support New Mexican families with missing relatives by bringing together federal, state, and tribal law enforcement to one location to assist families with filing and updating missing person reports, submitting DNA records to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, and opportunities to meet with investigators to discuss cases.

As of January, according to the Missing Persons Clearinghouse, there are 946 active missing persons and 20 unidentified persons reported across New Mexico in the National Crime Information Center.

“We will continue to march and demand justice for the victims of this ongoing crisis as we search for our missing relatives. This a fight for the lives of the Navajo people and all tribes across Indian Country. These senate bills create laws that will protect us. We honor the hard work of the state task force members, the leadership of our state legislators, and Councilwoman Amber Crotty for being a champion for our families. My grandfather, the late John Pinto, would be proud of all the women behind this movement who are bringing honest justice for our families,” said Senator Shannon Pinto.

As the sponsor of Senate Bill 12, New Mexico will create a Missing Persons Specialist position in the Office of the Attorney General. The bill also ensures effective case management with specialists trained in cultural competency, law enforcement reporting, and missing persons casework.

Meskee Yatsayte is the creator of the Navajo Nation Missing Persons Update page on Facebook that has more than 20,000 followers. The goal of the group is to bring awareness and give a voice to families affected by this silent epidemic. She added, “Since 2013, I have volunteered as an advocate fighting alongside our sisters to seek answers and to demand justice. It is the families of the victims and survivors that made our experiences a national issue. We should not be fighting this hard to be seen. Our brothers and sisters have gone missing or were murdered in the communities of Gallup, Farmington, Shiprock, Albuquerque, Gamero, Tohatchi, Dulce, Belen, China Springs, Kirtland, Naschitti, Vanderwagon, Casamero Lake, and much more. Our hope is that one day we will finally have closure and move forward with Hozhó.”

New Mexico Indian Affairs Secretary Lynn Trujillo leads the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force that was created in 2019 by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham. She added, “I am grateful to the governor, our state legislators, tribal leadership, our MMIWR Task Force members, and the countless relatives who support this movement. These bills complement each other to ensure we are doing everything possible to bring our relatives home and ultimately bring justice and healing.”

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham added, “New Mexico is taking action to bring together critical resources for families of our missing and murdered indigenous neighbors, helping to deliver justice for victims, bring their loved ones closure, and prevent these tragedies from happening to families. While these measures will not on their own bring an end to this crisis, they are important tools in our continued fight to deliver answers to families across the state and hold those responsible accountable. I thank the members of New Mexico’s Missing and Murdered

Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force for their continued dedication to identifying solutions and delivering answers.”

The Navajo Nation Council supports the establishment of the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) Task Force that is developing a framework for a proposed MMDR data institute and the development of a missing persons community action toolkit to empower communities. Madam Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty is a renowned advocate that is a champion for Indigenous women, the elderly, young people, and the LGBTQ+ community.

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