



25th Navajo Nation Council

# 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Law and Order Committee Addresses Community Safety Concerns at Whitehorse High School Public Hearing**



**PHOTO: (L to R) LOC Committee members Council Delegate Nathan Notah, Council Delegate Steven Arviso, and LOC Vice-Chairwoman Cherilyn Yazzie listen to reports regarding school safety issues.**

**ANETH, UT** – On Monday, during a public hearing held at Whitehorse High School, the Law and Order Committee (LOC) convened to hear reports by stakeholders, including the San Juan School District and Facilitators of Innovative Education, Leadership, Development, and Sustainability (FIELDS) representatives, regarding efforts to combat the escalating trend of violence within the community, particularly within the school system. The school is located in Montezuma Creek, UT.

“The Law-and-Order Committee remains dedicated to safeguarding Navajo communities and empowering youth to realize their full potential. Through collaborative efforts and community engagement, we strive to build a safer, more resilient future for all,” said LOC Vice Chair Cherilyn Yazzie.

Superintendent Christine Fitzgerald and Principal Kim Schaefer of the San Juan School District delivered a candid reported on the disturbing rise in violent incidents resulting from the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Superintendent Fitzgerald emphasized the need for law enforcement within the community,

citing difficulties in securing a resource officer due to competition in law enforcement and jurisdictional issues for state law enforcement.

Discussions are underway at the Utah state legislative offices regarding a potential mandate for school resource officers, but compliance may be challenging without collaboration between Navajo Nation, schools, and the state.

Principal Schaefer shared statistics regarding drug-related incidents and violence within the school environment, post-Covid-19, stressing the importance of having a resource officer present to address these issues and ensure student safety.

In response to the challenges discussed, the Law and Order Committee underscored the need for collaborative efforts between schools, chapter houses, and law enforcement to protect the community's future.

LOC member Council Delegate Nathan Notah (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'a'a), emphasized the importance of proactive outreach to at-risk youth and leveraging local governance structures for community empowerment.

Despite the challenges, initiatives like the FIELDS program offer hope for the future by equipping Navajo youth with the skills and opportunities for success. The FIELDS program, spearheaded by dedicated individuals Jerry Williams, Collin Warner, and Doyle Anderson, offers vocational training and career opportunities to Navajo youth, aiming to empower them and foster a safer, more prosperous future.

Navajo Police Chief Daryl Noon addressed the community's concerns about the lack of law enforcement presence in Navajo-Utah, attributing the challenge to hiring and competitive wages offered outside the Navajo Nation for police officers. Chief Noon encouraged community support for law enforcement recruitment efforts and highlighted the need for programs to provide training and resources for young scholars to pursue careers in law enforcement.

"I don't need money, I need people. We have the money, but some of these things we discussed like bonuses and increased wage, we are trying to implement. The problem I am facing is having to ask permission to carry out these initiatives," Chief Noon said.

Delegate Notah provided an update on plans for a new police substation within the Aneth community, acknowledging the critical need for law enforcement support in the area.

The LOC thanks the Aneth community for their participation in the meeting and reiterated the Committee's commitment to addressing community safety concerns.

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