



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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MMDR Task Force addresses the crisis of missing relatives



PHOTO: MMDR Task Force

TWIN ARROWS, Ariz. - On Wednesday, Apr. 24, 2024, the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) Task Force held a work session at the Twin Arrows Casino and Resort to assess proactive measures that address the crisis of missing and murdered Diné people.

Under the leadership of Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley Tse'alnaozt'i'i; Sheepsprings, Beclabito, Gadiiahi/To'Koi), Delegate Steven Arviso (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), Delegate Cherilyn Yazzie (Dilcon, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone, Greasewood Springs), and Delegate Helena Nez-Begay (Coppermine, K'aibii'to, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake, Bodaway/Gap) the team collaborated to implement strategies and solutions for the ongoing issue of missing and murdered Diné relatives on and off the Navajo Nation.

The MMDR Task Force, initiated in March 2019, is comprised of members from various organizations and agencies including the Navajo Nation Missing Persons Updates, Navajo Nation Office of the Speaker, Navajo Nation Police Department, Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President, and other local advocacy groups. Their efforts focus on creating a comprehensive data institute, developing community action toolkits, and implementing

proactive measures to support affected families.

“Today’s meeting was a crucial moment in our continuous effort to strategize against the disappearance and violence that our people face,” said Delegate Crotty. “It is essential that we gather here, rooted in the strength of our traditional Diné teachings, to find solutions that reflect our community’s values and the urgent needs of our people.”

During the session, discussions took place with Arizona law enforcement and investigators, focusing on sensitive topics such as abuse, child neglect, and the nuances of gender identity within the missing persons data. A report revealed discrepancies in the current data collection methods, particularly concerning the identification of LGBTQ members within the Diné community.

Delegate Andy Nez highlighted the importance of accurate and respectful data handling.

“Thank you for this report. It helped us to understand how to move forward with this issue. I want to know, who is tracking our LGBTQ relatives? Most of the people who are missing are labeled men, but this list contains both cisgender men and transgender women. I don’t think it’s appropriate that we mislabel and misidentify our LGBTQ relatives,” Delegate Dr. Nez said.

During the session, the task force introduced the Missing Person Toolkit - a vital resource designed to empower the community and families with information and guidelines on reporting missing persons. This toolkit is a living document, readily available on the MMDR Task Force’s website, ensuring that community members have access to critical resources.

“This initiative is a testament to the strength and resilience of the Navajo people, aiming to heal and protect the community against this crisis,” said Speaker Crystalne Curley.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council, the Office of the Speaker and the MMDR Task Force reiterated their commitment to addressing the safety and well-being of all Diné people.

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