



25th Navajo Nation Council

# 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Task Force discusses report from BIA Missing and Murdered Unit**



**PHOTO: Missing and Murder Diné Relatives Task Force Chair, Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — On Thursday, Sept. 12, the 25th Navajo Nation Council's Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) Task Force received a comprehensive report from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Missing and Murdered Unit (MMU).

The report was presented by Dinah Lee, Acting Regional Agent for Region Three, alongside victim advocacy specialist, Darlene Hall. Region Three includes Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico.

MMDR Task Force Amber Chair Kanazbah Crotty reaffirmed the Task Force's commitment to bringing justice and healing to the Navajo Nation.

"Our commitment is to bring justice and healing to our communities, to ensure that every missing and murdered relative is never forgotten, and to transform the silence into a movement for safety and understanding. We stand united, determined to turn the conversation from fear to action, from grief to change," said Chair Crotty.

Agent Lee spoke said the unit is comprised of skilled investigators, intelligence analysts, evidence technicians, and victim services personnel who work collaboratively with federal, state, and tribal agencies.

The BIA Missing and Murdered Unit's mission primarily focus on solving unresolved homicide cases, addressing human trafficking within Diné communities, and enhancing the capabilities of tribal law enforcement agencies through training and technical support.

Lee highlighted the jurisdictional complexities that pose significant challenges for the MMU. "It's like entering someone's house without permission; it's unacceptable, just like overstepping jurisdiction in law enforcement," she said.

During the meeting, Lee discussed the MMU's criteria for accepting or denying cases and the necessity for improved coordination among different jurisdictions. The Task Force emphasized the importance of a collaborative, multi-agency approach to effectively addressing the crisis.

Darlene Hall, an experienced advocate with nearly 25 years in direct victim services, is currently in her third year with the MMU and has played a critical role in bridging the gap between Native American communities and system-based advocacy.

Hall helps families navigate the complex process of reporting a missing loved one and provides access to essential services, such as grief counseling and support groups. She highlighted the importance of a victim-centered approach, ensuring that both primary and secondary victims receive support, regardless of whether they choose to engage with law enforcement.

"Victim services should always be about empowering those who have been affected by crime, providing them with choices, support, and a voice in their own journey to healing," said Hall.

Missing or Murdered Indigenous Person Assistant United States Attorney for Southwest Region, Eliot Neal, highlighted the crisis as significant issue demanding immediate federal intervention.

The presentation emphasized the systemic failures that have over 84% of Indigenous women and 81% of men to experience violence in their lifetimes—most often at the hands of non-Indians.

The task force addressed the challenges in collecting accurate data, which have hindered the effectiveness of current responses to the MMIP crisis. Misclassification of race in missing persons databases and discrepancies between statistics from various sources have contributed to the complexity of the issue.

Factors such as poverty, unemployment, lack of resources, and generational trauma were identified as contributing to the ongoing crisis, alongside the unique legal and jurisdictional challenges that complicated efforts to address MMIP cases effectively.

The reports focused on improving communication, coordination, and data accuracy across federal, tribal, and local law enforcement agencies. Efforts are being made to engage with affected communities through listening and training sessions to ensure a more responsive approach to addressing this crisis.

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