



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

MEDIA CONTACT:

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 5, 2025

Council Delegate Charles-Newton advocates for continued support of forensic DNA services for Office of Justice Services



Law and Order Committee Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton successfully passed legislation urging continued support for Othram forensic DNA services.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Tuesday, during the quarterly meeting of the Coalition of Large Tribes (COLT), held June 2–3 at Eagle Crest Resort in Redmond, Oreg., Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton successfully passed legislation urging continued support for Othram forensic DNA services in coordination with the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services (BIA-OJS) and its Operation Spirit Return initiative.

“Time and time again, our justice system has failed Indigenous families. But with advancements in DNA technology, we now have tools that can finally bring answers—and closure—to those who have waited far too long. When our missing loved ones are identified, it shows that action is being taken,” said Delegate Charles-Newton. “We must continue supporting these efforts to bring our relatives home and help families begin to heal.”

Othram is a specialized forensic laboratory that combines cutting-edge DNA science with advanced software to support law enforcement investigations. By helping agencies overcome longstanding forensic barriers, Othram has played a critical role in solving cold cases and identifying missing persons across the United States and internationally.

During Police Week in May, Delegate Charles-Newton met with BIA-OJS officials and heard from Othram founder and CEO David Mittelman, who highlighted the company’s ability to

generate DNA profiles from human remains as old as 200 years. This capability has contributed to solving cases that had remained unresolved for decades.

At the COLT meeting, Oglala Sioux Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out asked whether Othram's technology is being used in Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) investigations.

Delegate Charles-Newton confirmed that Othram is actively supporting BIA-OJS through Operation Spirit Return, a national initiative led by the BIA's Missing and Murdered Unit. The program focuses on identifying unknown human remains discovered in or near tribal lands—believed to be American Indian or Alaska Native—and reuniting them with their families and communities.

"This effort began under U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland's leadership and deserves to continue," said Delegate Charles-Newton. "We need to support technology that provides critical progress in solving cases that have gone unresolved for years. This is a valuable resource for Indian Country. Othram's forensic technology has been critical in solving cold cases."

Council Delegate Casey Allen Johnson, who also attended the quarterly meeting, voiced strong support for the continued use of advanced forensic DNA technology in addressing the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous people. He emphasized that innovative tools like those provided by Othram are essential in helping tribal communities seek justice and hold perpetrators accountable.

The legislation directing COLT to issue a letter of support to BIA-OJS for the renewal of Othram's contract passed unanimously with a vote of nine in favor and none opposed.

###