



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation honors Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives at PRCA rodeo recognition event



Families and survivors of missing Diné relatives standing in solidarity to bring justice for their loved ones.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Sunday, at the Home of the Navajo Pro Rodeo, families of missing and murdered Diné relatives were honored in a powerful recognition ceremony during the final day of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) event held at the Dean C. Jackson Memorial Arena in Window Rock.

Families of Donnie Wade Barney, Zachariah Juwaun Shorty, Duane Thomas, Latisha Candice Desiderio, and Ranelle Bennett were escorted through the rodeo grounds on a ceremonial carriage, surrounded by supporters wearing red to symbolize solidarity and remembrance. With signs bearing the names and faces of their loved ones, families turned grief into action, calling for justice in a crisis that continues to devastate Diné communities.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Chairwoman of the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) Task Force, played a critical role in coordinating the event with the Navajo Division of Health (NDOH) and the PRCA Rodeo organization. Delegate Crotty expressed gratitude to PRCA rodeo organizers and the NDOH for bringing visibility to the issue.

“The MMDR Task Force was invited to help bring this recognition to life and to call attention to the crisis of missing Indigenous people,” said Delegate Crotty. “This event gave families a platform to share their stories and spread awareness. Their strength is what keeps this movement alive.”

Each family's story was highlighted during the recognition. The families of missing loved ones have never stopped demanding justice. Zachariah Juwaun Shorty's mother, Vangie Shorty, has used her voice to bring justice—not only for her son but for other families facing the same heartbreak.

Throughout the ceremony, rodeo participants, community members, and leaders stood in solidarity with the families. Speaker Crystalayne Curley and Delegate Crotty accompanied the families during the recognition, pledging the 25th Navajo Nation Council's support to bring justice and healing.

"The 25th Navajo Nation Council established the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Task Force to respond to this crisis in collaboration with families and advocates," said Speaker Curley. "The Council's commitment is not symbolic—it's structural. We are building long-term solutions with the people most impacted."

The MMDR Task Force assists with these cases, supports families, and leads community-based prevention efforts. The Task Force is finalizing its Tribal Community Response Plan—a strategy focused on equipping rural communities with tools for response, prevention, and healing.

The recognition event was not a moment of closure—it was a moment of truth, declaring that the lives of missing and murdered Diné relatives matter, and their stories will not be forgotten. The call to action is clear: stand with these families and demand justice for missing Diné relatives.

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