



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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The Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Task Force hosts training to strengthen child abduction response



Several departments, divisions, and agencies participated in the Child Abduction Tabletop Exercise, as well as grassroots advocates and state representatives.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Sept. 19, the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) Task Force hosted a vital Child Abduction Tabletop Exercise (CATE), bringing together Navajo Nation programs, departments, schools, and community advocates to enhance preparedness in the event of a child abduction.

"This isn't just about training; it's about protecting the sacred. Every child we save is a future we preserve," said Task Force Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty. "When our programs, schools, and law enforcement work together, we create a force that no jurisdictional gap can weaken. We owe it to our children to be relentless, united, and prepared."

The exercise was conducted in collaboration with the National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC) of Fox Valley Technical College, a key national partner working to build capacity in Indian Country. The session was led by David Chewiwie and Mishelle Bowen, both tribal members and professionals in tribal law enforcement with firsthand experience handling missing and abducted child cases across multiple jurisdictions.

The tabletop exercise simulated the disappearance of a 12-year-old Navajo girl near Window Rock, an area that spans multiple jurisdictions and state lines. Participants navigated a realistic, multi-agency response scenario, addressing immediate reporting protocols, investigative strategies, deployment of resources such as K9 search teams and Amber Alerts,

and the process of recovery and reunification. A key focus was placed on cross-jurisdictional communication, victimology, and the timely use of the National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

Several Navajo Nation departments, divisions, and agencies participated in the Child Abduction Tabletop Exercise, as well as grassroots advocates and state representatives.

The CATE training highlighted the urgent need for standardized protocols, timely reporting, stronger use of digital tools, and community-based victim support. Participants completed after-action reports to identify gaps in coordination, offer recommendations, and build more effective partnerships with law enforcement.

“This exercise created a space where trust, transparency, and collaboration could grow,” said Andrea Beyal, MMDR Task Force member and 4CK9SAR Certified K9SAR Volunteer. “Our mission is to ensure no department or advocate is left out of the response system. Lives depend on that unity.”

Key outcomes and priorities discussed included:

- Establishing a “train-the-trainer” model to expand localized safety education.
- Creating standardized checklists, forms, and operating procedures for missing child cases.
- Strengthening partnerships between dispatch, investigators, and victim advocates.
- Enhancing educational outreach on child safety and online risks.
- Providing trauma-informed support for first responders and families.

The tabletop training highlighted ongoing challenges—such as a shortage of officers, fragmented communication across jurisdictions, and the need for better resources. It also showcased the strength of a community ready to respond, protect, and heal together.

The MMDR Task Force expresses gratitude to all participants, partners, and communities for their unwavering commitment to the safety of Diné children and families.

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