



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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MEDIA CONTACT:

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

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Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Task Force receives an update report from 4 Corners K9 Search and Rescue



Left to Right: Missing and Murdered Diné Relative Task Force Chair, Amber Kanazbah Crotty and Task Force member Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Thursday, Nov. 13, the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) Task Force received an operations update from 4 Corners K9 Search and Rescue (4CK9SAR), a long-time partner in the effort to locate missing relatives across the Navajo Nation and throughout the Four Corners region.

“This work demands consistency, compassion, and the willingness to show up when families are living through their hardest moments,” said MMDR Task Force Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty. “4 Corners K9 Search and Rescue has proven repeatedly that they are committed to our relatives, no matter the terrain or the distance. Their dedication helps us understand what is improving, what remains broken, and where we must focus our efforts to build a response system that does not fail our people.”

CEO and Founder Bernadine Beyale delivered the detailed update, describing the nonprofit’s search operations, training work, and growing regional responsibilities. She informed the task force that 4CK9SAR remains a fully volunteer organization that deploys trained canine units, often across remote landscapes where communication and resources are limited. She noted that her team travels thousands of miles each year and maintains close relationships with families from the first call through the end of each case.

“Our team shows up because our families deserve to be found, and they deserve to be supported,” Beyale said. “Our handlers are committed, our volunteers are committed, and our K9s are just as committed to this mission as we are. We work until the work is done, and we will continue to do everything we can to bring our relatives home.”

Beyale explained that the organization’s responsibilities have expanded across New Mexico, Arizona, Washington, and Oregon, along with support to smaller tribal communities that are building their own search and rescue capacity. She also highlighted that the team assists with human trafficking awareness efforts, community education, and cross-agency coordination with law enforcement partners in the Four Corners.

The report highlighted growing collaboration with the Farmington Police Department, San Juan County Sheriff’s Office, Southern Ute Tribe, and other regional partners, strengthening training networks and providing crucial support during searches. Despite these partnerships, Beyale stated her team struggles to communicate with the Navajo Police Department (NPD). Beyale described how delays in communication, inconsistent use of Arizona and New Mexico Turquoise Alerts, cause gaps in data collection, and leave families unsure why alerts are not issued even in urgent cases, adding confusion at a moment when clarity matters most.

As a nonprofit, 4CK9SAR continues to provide services without a stable funding source. Beyale noted that gear, fuel, training, and equipment are covered through donations, small fundraisers, and personal contributions from team members. During the Fiscal Year 2026 Comprehensive Budget, the 25th Navajo Nation Council allocated \$250,000 for operational services to continue their efforts in search and rescue.

Beyale closed her presentation by honoring Trigger, a veteran K9 who passed away in 2024 after years of service to the Navajo Nation and surrounding tribal communities. She said his legacy guides the team’s goal to train more Navajo volunteers in search and rescue work, so communities can develop the skills needed to respond when time is critical.

Task Force members discussed the long-standing gaps in the Navajo Nation’s alert system and the shortage of personnel within the NPD’s Missing Persons Unit. Members agreed that these issues within the NPD Missing Persons Unit are affecting families and called on the NPD to address these standing issues to ensure families are receiving critical services.

Task Force member Renae Swope shared ongoing frustrations from families who continue to encounter misidentification of LGBTQ relatives and stressed the need for accuracy, cultural competence, and timely communication as the Nation works toward meaningful reform.

The Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Task Force will continue its work through coordination with law enforcement partners, updates to the Tribal Community Response Plan, creation of a victim advocacy directory, and expanded outreach to state and federal agencies.

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