



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Task Force Highlights Urgent Issues on Missing and Murdered Indigenous People's Day



Photo: Missing and Murder Diné' Relatives Task Force stood in solidarity with the families of missing and murdered loved ones.

Farmington, NM – The 25th Navajo Nation Council's Missing and Murder Diné Relatives Task Force (MMDR) recently convened for an event aimed at connecting families impacted by the ongoing crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) with resources in seeking justice for their loved ones.

The gathering was part of a broader effort to illuminate the challenges facing families across the Navajo Nation and Indian Country. Families who have endured the disappearance or murder of loved ones shared their harrowing experiences, emphasizing the need for stronger communication within law enforcement agencies and increased community engagement.

Meskee Yatsayte, a member of the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Task Force (MMDR) and Navajo Nation Missing Persons Updates (NNMPU), also an active member of Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Coalition (MMDRC) recalled the inception of her advocacy work.

"In 2013, I started this initiative as a small Facebook page (NNMPU), and over 10 years later we are excited to announce that we are now a nonprofit," Yatsayte stated, underlining the growth and expanding mission of both the coalition and task force.

Reycita Billie from the Navajo Police Department and a member of the MMDR Task Force detailed significant progress in addressing unresolved cases, attributing successes to enhanced collaborative efforts.

“We have been actively engaging with families and improving our communication to provide them with the answers they need. Our goal is to ensure that families feel heard and supported throughout the investigation process,” Billie said.

Throughout the event, numerous families shared the stories of their missing loved ones, advocating for heightened collaboration between law enforcement entities and urging the community to disseminate information that could aid in resolving these cases.

The day they also commemorated the lives of Anthony McCants, 26, and Candrick Begay, 31, whose unresolved murders in San Juan County illustrate the ongoing systemic issues affecting Indigenous communities. The double homicide investigation by the San Juan County Sheriff’s Office continues, following their deaths at Highway 64 Auto Salvage.

The observance of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People’s Day in Farmington, NM, served as a powerful reminder of the critical need for heightened awareness and proactive measures to safeguard these communities.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council, the Office of the Speaker, and the MMDR have pledged ongoing dedication to advocating for these families, providing them with necessary resources, and fostering a safe space for expression and mutual support.

Monisha Black, whose sister Brigitte B. Johnson died under mysterious circumstances, reminded attendees, “Remember our faces, our names. Don’t forget about us.” This call to action underscores the importance of ongoing national efforts and stronger support mechanisms to address this crisis.

The MMDR Task Force has been instrumental in developing resources such as working with the MMDRC team to establish the Missing Persons Community Action Toolkit, a vital asset designed to support those grappling with these crises. This toolkit equips families with the necessary procedures to effectively search for missing relatives, facilitating better communication with law enforcement, and mobilizing community support.

MMDR Task Force Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty said the task force will continue to stand united, advocating for every missing and murdered individual.

“As we push forward, let us all remember that sharing a story, a post, or a flyer could lead to the breakthrough that brings someone home. Let’s amplify their voices and hold onto hope together.” Chair Crotty said.

For more information or to access updated resources, please visit the Navajo MMDRC website at <https://navajommdr.org/>

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