



25th Navajo Nation Council

# 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Task Force enhance law enforcement collaboration and community support.**



**PHOTO: (L to R) Lieutenant Robert Williams, oversees Missing Persons Unit within the Navajo Nation's Division of Public Safety and Chair of MMDR Task Force, Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty.**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — On Thursday, August 22, the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) Task Force conducted in a hybrid format meeting with both virtual and in-person attendance, focused on enhancing collaboration with law enforcement agencies, reviewing case studies, and discussing strategic initiatives to improve the response to critical cases.

“The Task Force is committed to ensuring that every missing and murdered Diné relative received the justice they deserved,” said Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Chair of the MMDR Task Force. “This meeting marked a crucial step in strengthening our partnerships with law enforcement and community advocates, as we worked together to bring closure and support to the families affected by these tragedies.”

Lieutenant Robert Williams, who oversees the Missing Persons Unit within the Navajo Nation's Division of Public Safety, attended the meeting along with various representatives from local law enforcement agencies, including Coconino, Navajo, and Apache Counties.

A central theme of the meeting was the ongoing effort to strengthen collaboration between public safety entities and surrounding law enforcement agencies. Janet Deschinny, a Task

Force member, presented a detailed report that examined the processes by which different law enforcement agencies initiated and managed missing persons cases. The session highlighted both the strengths and gaps in current practices, emphasizing the need for standardizing procedures across jurisdictions.

One significant challenge identified was the inconsistent use of the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system, with agencies entering data at various stages of an investigation. This inconsistency underscored the need for a unified approach to ensure timely and accurate information sharing.

The Task Force also discussed the potential application of advanced investigative tools, such as the Diplomatic Security Intelligence-Driven Security and Law Enforcement (DISEL) tool, to enhance the effectiveness of investigations. However, it was noted that the Navajo Police Department's access to these tools remained uncertain, highlighting another disparity in the process.

The critical importance of developing written policies and protocols to guide the collaboration between the Navajo Nation and surrounding law enforcement agencies remains a priority of the Task Force. By formalizing these partnerships through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs), the Task Force aims to establish a framework that ensures consistent communication and cooperation.

MOUs underscore a unified approach to addressing the crisis of missing and murdered Diné relatives, providing clarity and structure to the collaborative efforts between different entities. To maintain the momentum of their initiatives and strengthen the relationships among all involved parties, the Task Force recommended the regular scheduling of both in-person and virtual meetings. These gatherings were designed to keep all stakeholders engaged and informed, ensuring continuous progress in the resolution of Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) cases.

Recognizing the vital role that victim advocates and community resources play in supporting affected families, the Task Force stressed the importance of early involvement of these entities in missing persons cases. Such engagement is essential for providing comprehensive support to families, ensuring that their needs are met throughout the investigative process.

Task Force member Reycita Billie stressed the importance of open communication and the continuation of collaborative meetings. "We have to ensure that our strategies are not only effective but also inclusive of the voices of all stakeholders, especially the families who have been affected," Billie stated.

The MMDR Task Force moved forward remains committed to formalizing partnerships, enhancing data-sharing agreements, and expanding public outreach efforts. The Task Force will incorporate feedback from every meeting into its ongoing work, ensuring that all efforts are both transparent and accountable to the communities served.

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