



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 16, 2024

MMDR Task Force calls for systemic reforms and federal accountability at Tuba City Boarding School



Chair of the Missing and Murder Diné Relatives Task Force (MMDR) Amber Kanazbah Crotty

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) Task Force convened to address urgent concerns surrounding a recent child abuse case at Tuba City Boarding School. In response to the systemic failures within the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) system, the Task Force, alongside parents and tribal leaders, called for federal accountability and comprehensive reforms to protect Diné children within these boarding schools.

Chair of the MMDR Task Force Amber Kanazbah Crotty emphasized the importance of addressing these failures. "Our children's safety must be the top priority. The ongoing negligence and lack of accountability within the BIE system have allowed harm to continue unchecked, and we cannot afford further delays in justice," Crotty said.

Parents of the affected students demanded a thorough federal investigation into the systemic failures of the BIE, particularly in holding faculty and administrators accountable for not reporting incidents of abuse. They highlighted the urgency of prosecuting the teacher involved, at the federal level citing the need for legal precedents to deter future misconduct.

"The pain and trauma inflicted on our children must not be ignored," said Bijiibah Begaye MMDR Taskforce community representative "We need real consequences for those who failed in

their duty to protect our kids.”

The meeting highlighted the complexities of jurisdictional authority between federal, tribal, and state entities, which often delay justice in cases involving child abuse. The Task Force called for clarity and collaboration among these authorities to expedite legal proceedings and protect children.

Parents proposed the establishment of independent reporting systems to ensure swift and unbiased responses to future abuse claims, free from institutional influence.

Begaye highlighted the case of a former teacher at Tuba City Boarding School, who despite previous reports of misconduct was able to resign and find another teaching position. This former teacher is now being held in Tennessee on a \$10 million bond for sexually assaulting a student at an elementary school. This case underscores the urgent need for a national reporting system to track teachers with abuse allegations, preventing them from moving between schools undetected.

Deputy Chief Silversmith provided updates on law enforcement’s efforts but acknowledged the difficulty in sharing information with the public during ongoing federal investigations. Parents expressed frustration over the lack of communication regarding the case and the whereabouts of the perpetrator, stressing the need for timely public notifications to alleviate fears and restore trust.

The Navajo Nation’s Division of Children and Family Services outlined mental health support services for the affected children and their families, including both traditional healing practices and counseling. However, due to jurisdictional limitations, coordination between social services and BIE schools remains a significant challenge. The Task Force emphasized the need for stronger collaboration to ensure immediate crisis response and sustained mental health care.

The MMDR Task Force proposed several action items to address safety concerns in BIE schools. First, a formal letter will be sent to Tony Dearman, Director of the Bureau of Indian Education, requesting clarification on the procedures for community notification and policies related to sexual misconduct incidents. The second recommendation was to have the Office of the Navajo Nation President and Vice President collaborate with federal authorities to strengthen communication and ensure that community safety measures are prioritized. Lastly, authorities will investigate reports of a teacher allegedly threatening students, further heightening safety concerns within the community.

The Task Force will continue its collaboration with federal agencies and Navajo Nation leaders to secure the necessary protections for the most vulnerable members of the community.

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