



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Navajo Nation Missing and Murdered Diné Task Force addresses critical updates to protect the Diné people



Chairwoman of the Missing and Murdered Dine' Relative Task Force Amber Kanazbah Crotty address the latest update of the Tribal Community Response Plan.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo Nation Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) Task Force continues to address the crisis of missing and murdered Diné relatives. The Task Force is focusing on updating the Tribal Community Response Plan (TCRP), enhancing interagency coordination, and advancing the development of a comprehensive MMDR database.

During the recent MMDR Task Force meeting, members shared significant updates on ongoing efforts to protect the Diné people and support impacted families. Discussions centered around improving the TCRP, updating contact information, clarifying the roles of various advocacy and law enforcement programs, and establishing better tracking of the response plan's implementation.

"We are working diligently to strengthen partnerships, update our Tribal Community Response Plan, and build a sustainable MMDR database that reflects the needs of our people," said Chairwoman Amber Kanazbah Crotty. "Our families deserve action, transparency, and coordinated care. The work we do here honors every missing and murdered relative and the families who continue to seek justice."

Advocates Laurelle Sheppard, Program Director for Victim Witness Services for Northern Arizona, and Tonya Grass, Victim Advocate Supervisor for Utah Navajo Health Systems, reported on the urgent need to update the TCRP to reflect current services and contact information. They

emphasized the need for consistent collaboration among programs such as victim advocacy, social services, and law enforcement.

“It is vital that our Tribal Community Response Plan accurately reflects the realities on the ground,” said Laurelle Sheppard, MMDR Task Force member. “Advocates must be engaged from the very beginning of a missing persons case. Our families need timely support, and our systems must be prepared to work together from day one.”

Tonya Grass, MMDR Task Force member, stressed the importance of ensuring that services respond to the evolving needs of families.

“Too often, our advocates are only brought in after critical time has passed. We need a unified approach that activates all available resources the moment a loved one is reported missing,” Grass said. “By updating this plan, we can close the gaps in service and provide the compassionate, coordinated care our people deserve.”

The Task Force also received an update from Dr. Jason Arviso, Vice President of Operations at Navajo Technical University (NTU), who reported on the development of the MMDR database. This initiative aims to centralize and secure information about missing Diné relatives, support research, promote cultural sensitivity, and improve communication across jurisdictions.

“Our priority is ensuring that families’ privacy is protected, cultural protocols are respected, and that accurate data is accessible to support both investigations and healing,” said Arviso, adding that the database will be an essential tool in raising awareness, accountability, and coordination for MMDR cases.

“Our families have waited far too long for justice, answers, and support,” said Chairwoman Crotty. “Through this work, we are building lasting systems of care rooted in our Diné values, where no missing person is forgotten, and every family has a place to turn.”

The Missing and Murdered Diné Task Force encourages everyone to participate in the Candlelight Prayer Vigil to honor the life of Emily Pike, in collaboration with the family of Emily Pike, the San Carlos Apache Nation, and the Arizona Missing Child Taskforce. The Candlelight Prayer Vigil will be held at 1718 N Mesa Drive, Mesa, AZ 85201, at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 6.

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