



The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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June 10, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Navajo Councilwoman has mission to bring more attention to teen dating violence

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Navajo Nation Council Delegate Hope MacDonald-Lone Tree has a mission to bring more attention to national statistics regarding teen dating violence, a message she delivered at a press conference and town hall forum sponsored by the National Foundation of Women Legislators in Albuquerque, N.M. recently.

The town hall forum, sponsored by Liz Claiborne Inc.'s Moms and Dads for Education (MADE) Coalition and the Albuquerque Public Schools, attracted leaders from across the state of New Mexico, including Lt. Gov. Diane Denish, New Mexico Attorney General Gary King, State Reps. Anna M. Crook (R-Clovis), Eliseo Lee Alcon (D-Milgan), Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez and many other government leaders.

According to *Love is Respect*—a national helpline—teen dating abuse occurs among youth ages 10 to 24. The organization defines the act of violence to include the perpetration of power, control, technological, emotional, physical and sexual abuse from one dating partner to another.

The use of telephone and internet technology to threaten, stalk, harass and intimidate victims of teen dating violence garnered great concern at this year's forum.

"It is reported that one in five Native American females have been hit, slapped, shoved or forced into a sexual activity by a dating partner while in high school," MacDonald-Lone Tree said. "It is also reported that 76.3% of Native males and 81% of Native females experienced emotional and psychological abuse in a dating relationship."

"Sadly, most teens don't recognize it as dating violence or abuse," she added. "Native American females report the offender as an acquaintance in 34% of rapes or sexual assaults, and as an intimate partner or family member in 25% of rapes and sexual assaults."

"Dating violence is preventable," said MacDonald-Lone Tree, who serves at the vice-president of the National Order of Women Legislators. "It is our duty as parents, as teachers, as community leaders, and as citizens to educate our sons and our daughters, and to teach them that love is not abuse."

The American Bar Association reports victims of teen dating violence are at a four to six times greater risk for becoming pregnant and eight to nine times greater risk for attempting suicide, and are at greater risk for substance abuse, depression and anxiety.

"We ask for your support and hope that parents and educators will continue to find ways to talk to teens about dating violence," she added. "This will empower them through these conversations, so that they may serve as a resource for their peers."

State Rep. Anna Crook introduced New Mexico House Memorial 53, which requests the Public Education Department and the Department of Health convene a work group to study and develop recommendations regarding prevention of teen dating violence in the state of New Mexico.

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