



Navajo Nation Council – Office of the Speaker

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Councilman Edmund E. Yazzie gives report to committee on behalf of the Thoreau Community Center

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Councilman Edmund E. Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, and Thoreau) and Juliana Ko, Executive Director of the Thoreau Community Center, gave a report to the Health, Education and Human Services Committee of the Navajo Nation Council.

“We are asking you for your support and your guidance in funding this program” Councilman Yazzie stated. “As you are aware, Thoreau has gone through a lot with suicide in our community.”

Councilman Yazzie was referring to a spike in suicides in Thoreau and surrounding communities that occurred between fall of 2009 and summer of 2010, during which fifteen teenagers committed suicide.

Juliana Ko, who originally came to the Navajo Nation as a mathematics teacher for Teach for America, started the community center as a direct response to the suicides.

According to a packet handed out at the committee meeting, the mission of the Thoreau Community Center is “to inspire hope, joy, and progress within Thoreau and the surrounding areas by providing resources and special programs focused on health/well-being, education, and recreation. Through this supportive and loving environment the Thoreau Community Center seeks to encourage youth and adults to engage in positive activities to uplift the community at large.”

“Our youth are very important and it is not enough to stop a suicide, but we also have to enrich their lives, educate them, and provide opportunities to explore new avenues,” Ko said.

The Thoreau Community Center currently provides services to 4,815 individuals from Thoreau, Baca/Prewitt, Smith Lake, Mariano Lake, and Casamero Lake.

“We would like to hear your opinions on what guidelines you would like us to take on this matter, which is the reason we are before you,” Councilman Yazzie commented. “We would like to have your support if legislation comes before you.”

The Thoreau Community Center will now follow the 2 N.N.C. §164 (A) as the next step in their efforts to receive funding.

For more information about the Thoreau Community Center call 505-862-7590.

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