



## NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission holds Public Hearings in Northern Navajo Nation Border-towns

**St. Michaels, Ariz.** – In light of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his dedication to civil rights, the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission (NNHRC) conducted its second series of public hearings in LeChee and Page, Ariz. and in Bluff and Blanding, Utah this week, to coincide with the celebration of Dr. King's feats.

The five NNHRC Commissioners, Duane H. Yazzie, Clarence Chee, Steve Darden, Dr. Rena Yazzie and Irving Gleason, appeared at LeChee Chapter and at the Quality Inn in Page to hear community members testify on issues pertaining to discrimination.

Testimonies presented to the Commission included topics ranging from land disputes on the boundaries of the Navajo Nation, Education, Employment, improper business practices regarding tax preparation services and harassment of Navajo inmates or street inebriates.

Page Resident and Dine Communities for Equality in Education (DCEE) Spokesperson Wally Brown presented testimony to



**Page Resident Wally Brown presents testimony on education before the Commission.**

the Commissioners on the state of the education system in the Page Unified School District and the presence of segregation between two elementary schools. Immediately following his presentation, Inscription House resident Margaret Goodman told Commissioners reasons why she recently withdrew her daughter from school in Page, located 65-miles away from her home, to put her in boarding school.

Goodman emotionally explained that her daughter's teacher never bothered to inform her that her child was failing, despite constantly going to the school asking for progress reports.

"If a teacher gives a child a failing grade, they're failing the child, they're failing to communicate with that child." Goodman said.

Two individuals employed with Tuba City Regional Health Corporation and Zachary, located in Page, gave testimony at the public hearing in LeChee. The Navajo Zachary employee stated the safety of their workers was being compromised for the sake of faster productivity and told of welding accidents and the exposure to toxic fumes. He explained that if someone gets hurt, they tough it out and continue working in order to keep their jobs.

The Tuba City Regional Health Corporation employee told Commissioners that there's an air of intimidation at his workplace and feared he might not have a job to go back to if they heard he testified in front of the Commission. He explained everyone complains about the non-Navajos promotions that are more common than Navajos and the low morale in their work environment.

The NNHRC was established under the legislative oversight of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee of the Navajo Nation Council in October, 2006.

The purpose of the commission is to educate their citizens of discrimination issues and collect data regarding discrimination acts against Navajo Nation citizens by private citizens, businesses, organizations and foreign governments within and outside the Navajo Nation.

The NNHRC will conduct public hearings throughout fiscal year 2009 in the border-towns of the Navajo Nation which will include Cortez, Farmington

and Gallup. Please visit the NNHRC website at [www.nnhrc.navajo.org](http://www.nnhrc.navajo.org) for updates on the hearing schedule or to download a complaint form.

For more information about services the Office of Navajo Human Rights Commission provides, contact NNHRC Public Information Officer Sheree Peshlakai at (928)871-7436.

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