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ST. MICHAELS, Ariz.—City of Grants officials will now address human rights violations against Navajo citizen in a new government to government initiative.

Since the brutal beatings of Navajos almost year ago, the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission has engaged the City of Grants and the police department to address the human rights violations.

With the assistance of the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service Consolation Specialist Grace Sage Musser, Ph.D., the NNHRC was able to negotiate a Memorandum of Agreement with the City of Grants. According to the Community Relations Service website, “The Community Relations Service is the Department’s “peacemaker for community conflicts and tensions arising from differences of race, color, and national origin.”

“Together the COMMISSION and the CITY intend to move forward by acknowledging that racism and other destructive actions were inflicted upon the Navajo and other indigenous peoples and minorities,” as stated in the MOA preamble. Then continues, “Those actions and ideas must be eliminated now and forever at every level of government and eventually in the hearts and minds of peoples.”

“This is a historic action by the City Council and Mayor Murrieta as no other city adjacent to the Navajo Nation has approved such an MOA,” said NNHRC Executive Director Leonard Gorman.

Grants’ Mayor Joe Murrieta signed the MOA on April 29, 2010 after City Council approved the MOA on April 27, 2010.

Navajo Nation officials will sign the formal agreement on a date to be determined.

“We appreciate the City of Grants for taking on this initiative,” said NNHRC Chair Duane H. Yazzie. He said, “It’s obviously very significant and hopefully represents a new day in relationships between Native people and border towns.”

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