



## NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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### Navajo Human Rights Officials Immediate Response to Swastika Branding Hate Crime

ST. MICHAELS, Ariz.— Navajo human rights advocates contacted border town officials on May 10, 2010 to meet for an update and to make assessments about the city's efforts in the recent hate crime incident.

A 22 year-old Navajo man from Navajo, New Mexico was branded with a swastika symbol and had pictures and words drawn on his body by three individuals who work in Farmington, New Mexico on April 30, 2010, according to a court document, and the three suspects who are now in custody also shaved the back of the victim's head in shape of a swastika.

The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Chairperson Duane H. Yazzie, NNHRC Executive Director Leonard Gorman and two NNHRC staff members met with Farmington City Mayor Tom Roberts, City Manager Rob Mayes, Assistant City Manager Bob Campbell, Community Relations Commission Chairman David John, CRC Commissioners Art Allison and Emeterio Rudolfo in a collaborative effort to open communications on May 13, 2010 at City Hall in Farmington, N.M.

"We had a good dialogue and it was a productive meeting," said Gorman. It was the first meeting regarding the hate crime.

All parties agreed that the hate crime was atrocious and commended law enforcement for detaining the three suspects.

Currently, the three suspects are on a federal hold and are on cash-only bond while being detained in Farmington.

During the meeting, Gorman asked city officials whether they had developed a written policy or plan since its awareness of the race relations report written nearly 40 years ago.

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In 1975, The New Mexico Advisory Committee developed “The Farmington Report” in response to the brutal murder of three Navajo youths in 1974.

According to the NMAC report, NMAC conducted an intensive study “urging local and county officials in Farmington and San Juan County, in conjunction with Navajo leaders, to take steps to initiate concrete action to improve the treatment of Navajos living in the border areas of northwestern New Mexico.”

The response to the executive director of NNHRC was that no written plan exists.

But, efforts will be made to develop one and NNHRC will share its plan in that effort.

Moreover, city officials will review the Memorandum of Agreement, the one that’s pending legal review by the City of Farmington. NNHRC submitted the MOA to the City of Farmington officials last year to help address human rights violations on a government to government initiative.

In the meeting, NNHRC learned that the newly elected City of Farmington Mayor has read the MOA and convened two meetings regarding it.

The proposed MOA was sent to several border towns of the Navajo Nation a year ago. Only one city has signed the formal initiative to address human rights violations.

The City of Grants Mayor Joe Murrieta signed a MOA on April 29, 2010 and the City Council of Grants approved the MOA on April 27, 2010.

The MOA states, “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.”

Allowing transparency was also addressed, not only to admonish hate crimes or ensure law enforcement’s role but to reinforce that hate crimes have consequences when citizens act out.

A press conference will take place on Tuesday, May 18, 2010 at 12:00 p.m. at Farmington City Hall in the Executive City Conference Room in Farmington, N.M.

*If you feel that your human rights have been violated, be sure to document the incident, those involved, address it to officials involved and if still no resolve, please submit a complaint form. Forms are available on NNHRC’s website at [www.nnhrc.navajo.org](http://www.nnhrc.navajo.org).*

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