23rd Navajo Nation Council
Office of the Speaker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 14, 2017

MEDIA CONTACTS
Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Delegate Crotty and Navajo Sexual Violence Prevention Workgroup unveils policy brief regarding sexual violence on the Navajo Nation

WINDOW ROCK – Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'i'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz't'I'í), chair for the Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee, will be unveiling a policy brief regarding sexual violence on the Navajo Nation with the intention of educating and garnering support from Navajo Nation Council members.

The policy brief entitled "Protect Navajo Children: The Impact of Sexual Violence," was developed with the aid of the Navajo Sexual Violence Prevention Workgroup, explains the current status of sexual violence on the Navajo Nation, offers a summary of statistical insight, and provides recommendations to Council.

Delegate Crotty said that violence against children is a violation that deeply affects thousands of Navajos nationwide. According to the Indian Health Service and the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control, it is estimated that at least one-in-four Navajo children experience some form of sexual abuse, and one-in-three Navajo women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.

"Sexual violence is an urgent public health problem that impacts women, children, and men each year. This brief describes the gaps in services for the victims of sexual violence, provides data on the rates of sexual violence, and underscores the need for coordination between federal, state, and tribal law enforcement, school districts, and health care providers to effectively prevent sexual violence," said Delegate Crotty.

She added that there is a paramount need to ensure that victims receive much needed services and are provided the necessary resources and support to address their traumas to promote their healing process.

Delegate Crotty and Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St, Michaels) co-sponsored legislation to form the SAP Subcommittee in May 2016 through Naabik'íyáti' Committee resolution NABIMY-33-16. The subcommittee has been working to develop a sexual assault prevention plan, policy, and partnerships to address sexual assaults on the Navajo Nation.

Delegate Crotty said the brief is an opportunity for not only Council to begin the discussion regarding sexual violence, but it would encourage Navajo communities to begin talking openly about sexual assault, abuse, rape, and violence, and to end the stigma that these are "taboo subjects" that should not be discussed publicly.

"I am pleased to have this policy brief published. It is the first of its kind on the Navajo Nation," said Delegate Crotty. "This brief puts the spotlight on an issue that we ignore, but it is the beginning for us to say, 'No, we will not let this happen to our sisters, brothers, and most especially to our precious children.'"

In conjunction with the unveiling of the policy brief, the SAP Subcommittee is kicking off its "Start by Believing" campaign on Monday, April 17 at 10:00 a.m. during the 2017 Spring Council Session, which seeks to change the response to sexual assault and to end the cycle of silence to encourage victims to come forward, and inspire Navajo communities to be an integral support system to sexual assault survivors.

In addition, the workgroup will also launch a public website, www.DineWomen4Change.org, that would allow the public to stay informed of the progress of relevant legislation, how to get involved in advocacy, and offer resources to parents regarding sexual violence prevention and personal safety for their children. One of the highlights of the website will include the "Start by Believing" campaign with material available for local communities.

"This policy brief, website, and campaign puts the spotlight on the issue of sexual violence, which we too often ignore. The effort is a step in the right direction as we seek to promote the well-being and safety of the Navajo children in our communities," said Delegate Crotty.

The policy brief will be available during the 2017 Spring Council Session in hardcopy and electronic format. For more information regarding the policy brief, you may contact the Office of the Speaker at (928) 871-7160.

# # #

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council

PROTECT NAVAJO CHILDREN: THE IMPACT OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

"We recognize that from the time an áwee' yazhi is born and offers their first breath, we begin our responsibility to protect, provide, and defend."

INTRODUCTION

Paramount to the well-being of every healthy and happy Navajo child is safety and security.

Dine' bi beenahaz'aanii 1 N.N.C. § 201, the Navajo Nation government has the responsibility to provide protection to the Navajo people; and, Dine' bi beenahaz'aanii declares the importance of providing sanctuary to Diné life and culture, and the right of every child to a healthy physical and mental environment that is free from all abuse; and, Dine' bi beenahaz'aanii affirms the right of all children on the Navajo Nation to be protected from all forms of violence, neglect and exploitation which is a fundamental human right.

Violence against Navajo children is a violation that deeply affects thousands of Navajos nationwide. According to the U. S. Indian Health Services, it is estimated that at least 1 in 4 Navajo children experience some form sexual abuse. According to the most recent estimate from the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education, sexual violence is a particular concern within school systems serving the Nation. Historically, the Navajo health services has focused heavily on providing support services for survivors. However, there is an increasing recognition of the need for interventions that prevent violence before harm is done.

ISSUE

The Navajo Nation is one of the most violent reservations in the country and Navajo children are extremely vulnerable to this violence. In 2013, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigations from 2008-2012, more rapes were reported on the Navajo Nation than in San Diego, Detroit and several other more populous U.S. cities. Navajo children experience sexual assault, kidnapping, murder and other types of violence at rates higher than those off reservation.

A 2017 report from the department of Diné Education confirmed that sexual violence is a concerning topic across the Navajo Nation. Confidential surveys of students attending high school on or near the Navajo Nation illustrates that 1 in 10 girls and 1 in 20 boys report having been forced to have sexual intercourse against their will.

Navajo Nation Law Enforcement records also demonstrate alarming rates of sexual violence, with over 300 rape cases each year accounting for more than half of violent crime reported in 2013 and 2014. While other violent crime has steadily decreased over the past 10 years, rape cases have continued to be the most frequently reported violent crime on the Navajo Nation, with an average of six rapes per week reported to police. Reports from the Navajo Department of Family Services show an upward trend in numbers of sexual assault cases reported to their agency. In 2014, nearly 22% of children receiving services were seen for sexual abuse/assault treatment. Based on information from medical providers and the U.S. Indian Health Services, it is estimated that at least 1 in 4 Navajo children have experienced some form sexual abuse.

In 2016, the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission noted that the Navajo people also continue to suffer from boarding school traumas, in which many children were victims of sexual assaults. The commission also cited the lack of reliable data and information as evidence of the need for a coordinated data management system on

Navajo Sexual Violence Prevention Work Group
Attn: Honorable Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Council Delegate
23rd Navajo Nation Council
P.O. Box 3390
Window Rock, AZ 86515

Phone: (928) 871-6380
Email: acrotty@navajo-nsn.gov
Website: DineWomen4Change.org

PROTECT NAVAJO CHILDREN: THE IMPACT OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

and off the Navajo Nation that might provide a comprehensive overview of the extent of sexual and gender based violence.

IMPACT

Experiencing sexual abuse can have serious short- and long-term repercussions for children. For example, individuals with a history of child sexual abuse are at higher risk for alcohol and substance use, suicidal attempts, risky sexual behavior, and mental health difficulties, such as depression or posttraumatic stress disorder.

On the Navajo Nation, immediate and long-term costs of sexual assault are incredibly high. The effects in the community, home-life, and government reflect the social and economic costs. These include, but are not limited to, the immediate and long-term physical and psychological consequences, including disability preventing children from excelling in school, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and attempted or completed suicide. These critical issues call for an increase in costs for medical, mental health, social and emergency services; insurance; legal costs; and lost productivity, wages, and fringe benefits. The legal costs directly affect the Navajo Nation government.

Further, the effect on family life includes strained relationships with family, friends, and intimate partners, and lower likelihood of marriage. In other words, the sexual assault directly challenges the system of K'é.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Form a Navajo Nation Sexual Assault Prevention Coalition involving Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico stakeholders, including those in the field of education, legal, law enforcement, health care, nonprofit organization experts, and others to address sexual violence prevention on the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Nation Sexual Assault Prevention Coalition would seek to use a collaborative process with a multi-sector approach that is comprehensive and integrated.

2. Create a comprehensive and effective "America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER) Alert Program" and collaborate with multiple stakeholders, including Navajo Nation Law and Order Committee, Navajo Nation Health, Education and Human Services Committee, Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, Navajo Nation Department of Justice, child advocates, local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, transportation, educational institutions, faith leaders, media, community members and others to effectively recover endangered or abducted children.

3. Develop a Navajo Nation-wide child abuse and neglect data system to gather data from Arizona, Utah and New Mexico regarding reports of child sexual abuse and neglect. Data can be used to examine trends in child sexual abuse and neglect cases across the Navajo Nation and report key findings to the public.

4. Enact a comprehensive child sexual abuse prevention tribal code to support prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution and treatment activities with regard to U.S. Code Title 42, Chapter 67. Mandate key Navajo tribal code addressing child sexual abuse and neglect to support research, evaluation, technical assistance, and data collection activities.

5. Address the deeply entrenched social and cultural norms that perpetuate violence against Navajo children and engage Navajo communities to provide sexual violence prevention education. Reinforce participation in school-based child sexual abuse prevention programs that are designed to reduce the occurrence of sexual abuse in children and adolescents.

We recognize that from the time an áwee' yazhi is born and offers their first breath, we begin our responsibility to protect, provide, and defend. We invite all people who reside on the Navajo Nation to participate and dedicate your heart, mind and soul to reinforcing Hózhó to promote a more enriched society by focusing on the safety of Navajo children.

The Navajo Sexual Violence Prevention Work Group is group of policy professionals formed under the leadership of Navajo Nation Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty including authors Moroni Benally, Christine Benally, Yolanda Francisco-Nez, Jolene Holgate and Alana Kindness.

Navajo Sexual Violence Prevention Work Group
Attn: Honorable Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Council Delegate
23rd Navajo Nation Council
P.O. Box 3390
Window Rock, AZ 86515

Phone: (928) 871-6380
Email: acrotty@navajo-nsn.gov
Website: DineWomen4Change.org