23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Sexual assault awareness and child safety highlighted at the start of Spring Council Session

Photo: Speaker LoRenzo Bates, Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Navajo Nation programs, advocacy groups, and community members led a Sexual Assault Awareness Month walk to the Navajo Nation Council Chamber on Monday, April 16, 2018 in Window Rock, Ariz.

WINDOW ROCK – Prior to the official start of the 2018 Spring Council Session on Monday, the Navajo Nation Council, in coordination with the Navajo Department of Family Services' Strengthening Families Program, held an early morning awareness walk in recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Awareness Month.

Speaker for the 23rd Navajo Nation Council LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T'iis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland), Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito,

Cove, Gadi'i'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz't'l'í), former Navajo Nation District Court Judge Geraldine Benally, 2017-2018 Miss Navajo Nation Crystal Littleben, staff members, and community members, gathered at the Window Rock Navajo Shopping Center where the awareness walk commenced. The group then made their way to the Navajo Nation Council Chamber carrying signs to raise awareness and prevention.

Upon arriving to the Council Chamber, Speaker Bates commended the Naabik'íyáti' Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee for continuing to raise awareness regarding sexual violence and human trafficking, and noted that through the leadership of Subcommittee chair Delegate Crotty, these critical issues have come to the forefront of the Council's priorities.

"Madam chair, Honorable Crotty, brought these important issues from where it was back then where many people were not educated on sexual violence, to where it is today, in bringing it to the Navajo public. Looking back, there was not much awareness made on the Nation. Without her leadership, we wouldn't be doing what we are doing today," said Speaker Bates.

Photo: Speaker Bates and participants walk to the Council Chamber to raise awareness for sexual assault prevention on April 16, 2018 in Window Rock, Ariz.

Across the country, the month of April is designated as Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and was also recognized by the Navajo Nation last year through a proclamation issued by the Office of the President and Vice President.

In conjunction with sexual assault awareness, SAP Subcommittee member Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta), noted that sex trafficking is a problem on the Navajo Nation. Delegate Brown stated that he would be attending the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York City later this month to advocate and spread awareness of human trafficking occurring on the Navajo Nation.

Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Łichíí, Steamboat), also spoke at the event, conveying issues relating to the protection of Navajo children by ending child abuse to ensure their successful development into adulthood.

"As a leader, as a father, as a brother, as an uncle, and as a grandfather, the men that are out there, look out here and you'll see a lot of women here. For the last three years I have been dedicating a lot of time and effort to our youth, just recognizing that a lot of them don't have a father figure in their life," said Delegate Shepherd. "Today is a new day and this is where I challenge our menfolk to be there for their children, it takes a lot to be a father and we need to stop making excuses and start living up to our responsibilities for our women and children."

Delegate Shepherd thanked Speaker Bates and the SAP Subcommittee for their leadership in advocating for sexual assault awareness, and said it was also important to thank the children,

mothers, grandparents, and their families for taking time out of their schedule to participate in the awareness walk.

In April 2017, the SAP Subcommittee collaborated with the Navajo Nation Sexual Violence Prevention Work Group to develop a policy brief entitled "Protect Navajo Children: The Impact of Sexual Violence." It was found that Navajo police receive an average of six reports of rape per week, 22-percent of Navajo children receiving health services were seen for sexual abuse/assault, and it is estimated that one-in-four Navajo children have experienced some form of sexual abuse.

At the conclusion of the event, participants provided information on sexual assault services, information from the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women, and SAAM awareness promotional items. For more information regarding sexual violence information and prevention, please visit www.csvanw.org and www.dinewomen4change.org to view the policy brief.

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