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Delegate Crotty addresses sexual violence and sex trafficking at Tribal Leaders Summit

Photo: Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty provided the keynote address and presented on sex trafficking at the Tribal Leaders Summit in Albuquerque, N.M. on March 20-21, 2018.

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – Last week, 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) was invited to provide the keynote address and present on sex trafficking prevention at the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women's Tribal Leaders Summit in Albuquerque, N.M.

The two-day summit provided several presentations to tribal leaders to aid them in developing policy approaches to address sexual assault and domestic violence within their communities to strengthen their home programs and organizations, implement initiatives and prevention, identify

needed changes to their tribal criminal and health laws, and to elevate advocacy methodologies at the tribal, state, and federal levels.

On the first day of the summit Delegate Crotty, who serves as the chair for the Naabik'íyáti' Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee, discussed how commonalities between tribes should be used as strengths in sexual violence prevention.

"I ask that all of you have the courage to speak, to recognize the challenges of where your beginnings come from. Together we can create an avenue to not only have a common tie of violence, abuse, neglect, and trauma, but also to come together with the common thread of healing, compassion, love, and restorative justice," said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty commended the victim advocates in attendance and stressed that they are the frontline in aiding victims to navigate systems to aid in their trauma, healing, and justice. The victim advocates were immediately met with applause from tribal leaders and summit participants as Delegate Crotty asked them to stand to be recognized. Delegate Crotty called on tribal nations to invest in their victim advocate programs.

In addition to Delegate Crotty's keynote address, she was also asked to provide a presentation on sex trafficking entitled, "Addressing Sex Trafficking Within Tribal Enterprises From a Leadership Perspective," during the second day of the summit.

The presentation focused on illustrating how tribal governments can engage their enterprises such as gaming, natural resource extraction industries, and hospitality to begin educating their employees on sex trafficking and to develop internal policies to deter trafficking from occurring in their communities.

"When tribal leadership comes together, it is easy for us to talk about gaming, infrastructure, and funding opportunities, but when it comes to issues like sex trafficking, we fail to see how our own economic industries can be potential trajectories for trafficking to occur. We have to always be diligent in sexual violence prevention within our tribal enterprises," said Delegate Crotty.

She added that SAP Subcommittee member Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) collaborated with the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise to provide training for gaming employees to understand human trafficking, to be able to actively deter trafficking activities, and to recognize indicators of potential trafficking activities at the gaming facilities.

Sex trafficking occurs when someone uses force, fraud, or coercion to cause a commercial sex act with an adult, or causes a minor to commit a sex act. A commercial sex act includes prostitution, pornography, and sexual performance done in exchange for any item of value (i.e. money, drugs, shelter, food, clothing, and survival).

According to Native American data trends on sex trafficking, 80-percent of Native women that are trafficked become victims before the age of 18, the average trafficking age of Native youth is 14-16 years-old, 79-percent of victims were sexually abused as children, and an average of 40-

percent of women involved in sex trafficking are identified as Native American, Alaska Native, or First Nations. Although Native LGBT2S (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Two-Spirit) are heavily affected, there is currently no data for this particular population.

At the conclusion of Delegate Crotty's presentation, she provided recommendations and best practices for tribal leaders to consider as they begin tackling sex trafficking within their own communities such as being proactive in advocacy, assessing tribal codes that can be amended to fight human trafficking and to hold perpetrators accountable, and creating culturally appropriate responses to sex trafficking.

"We must realize that we bear the burden of this violence. It's not to victimize us or to say we are victims, but to understand that there needs to be a core component of healing. We really need to look at the trauma and be informed in every step we take and every word we make, because through grandma's teaching, words have the power to literally change the world. Words have the power to heal. Words have the power to continue generations," said Delegate Crotty.

She commended her SAP Subcommittee colleagues and said they continue to make important strides in bringing awareness to human trafficking, and thanked the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women for aiding in the effort to end sexual violence and sponsoring the summit to provide vital information to tribal leaders.

For more information on the coalition and sex trafficking awareness, please visit https://www.csvanw.org. For additional information on the Navajo Nation's human trafficking and sexual violence prevention initiatives, please contact the Office of the Speaker at (928) 871-7160.

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