



## The 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

Contact: Michael Wero, Communications Director

Phone: (928) 871-7160

Cell: (928) 255-3428

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[nncpress@gmail.com](mailto:nncpress@gmail.com)

[www.navajonationcouncil.org](http://www.navajonationcouncil.org)

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### **Council Delegate Urges Public Education on Burial Options**

*Topic often considered too culturally sensitive to mention*

**St. Michaels, AZ** – During Friday’s Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission (NNHRC) meeting, Navajo Nation Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie presented a report on funeral services provided by businesses in border towns. His concern was that many families are not educated on the options available when considering a final resting place for a loved one.

“I’m addressing this difficult issue because I’ve had several elderly constituents approach me to talk about their experiences even know they knew they shouldn’t,” said Yazzie. “They felt that when they faced these final decisions they didn’t get all the facts.”

Yazzie believes that providing public education is a first step in understanding the process of how to handle one’s final wishes. Often, said Yazzie, suffering families are unaware they have rights on deciding how or where one can be interned.

“I’ve heard that traditional burials can cost much less than a more common mortuary funeral,” continued Yazzie. “This difference could very important for those families with little or no resources.”

This is not the first time the NNHRC has approached the topic of final resting plans. Previously, the staff did a report on the financial impact burials had on individuals or families.

But as Commissioners agreed more public education is needed so families know what is available to them, a stronger directive would be helpful as the NNHRC currently works on protecting Navajo traditional burial rights and repatriation. Other agencies touch on matters of consumer rights, family rights, burying the deceased on Navajo Nation, and funeral assistance.

However, all agreed that this is a very sensitive subject and should be approached with great care.

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