



## **NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**P.O. Box 1689**

**Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona) 86515**

**Phone: (928) 871-7436 Fax: (928) 871-7437**

**[www.nnhrc.navajo-nsn.gov](http://www.nnhrc.navajo-nsn.gov)**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**February 18, 2011**

**CONTACT: Rachelle Todea**  
**[rtodea@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:rtodea@navajo-nsn.gov)**

---

### **NNHRC ISSUES AN “INEBRIATES HAVE RIGHTS” CAMPAIGN**

ST. MICHAELS, Ariz.—The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission launched its latest public education campaign, “Did You Know Inebriates Have Rights,” today.

The campaign informs the public that all people whether sober or inebriate have rights protected by the New Mexico Human Rights Act, the New Mexico Civil Rights Act, the Arizona Civil Rights Act, U.S. Civil Rights Act, the American Disability Act, the U. S. Constitution in the citizenship clause and in the equal protection clause.

“Far too long have street inebriates been maltreated by individuals who ignore the law and civil rights,” said Leonard Gorman for the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission. “No one has the right to harm anyone.”

This campaign first explains and the sequence of events that lead to the inception of the office like "Indian Rolling" in Farmington in 1970's and the fatal shooting of a Navajo man by a non-Navajo police officer in Farmington, N.M.

For example, according to the literature:

“The brutal crime of “Indian Rolling,” the practice of abusing Navajo street inebriates, in some cases resulting in death, occurred repeatedly in Farmington, N.M., mostly at the hands of white teenagers, during the 1970’s.

On June 10, 2006, the fatal shooting of a Navajo man in a Wal-Mart parking lot by a non-Navajo Farmington Police officer caused people to question the state-of-affairs between Navajos and non-Navajos in and around the Nation.

The sequence of these events, among others, led the 20th Navajo Nation Council to enact the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Act in October 2006.”

NNHRC's recognizes in its campaign literature that “alcoholism is a disease,” and strongly recommends that a person contact the appropriate authority when dealing with

an inebriated person, to wait until the appropriate authority arrives, and most importantly to remain a witness. The appropriate authority is the local police.

Some inebriated persons may become aggressive and violent.

“I will wait here until the proper authority can help you,” is a principle NNHRC encourages. “Each person has the responsibility to show a level of care to their fellow citizen,” states the Commission in their campaign literature.

Other statements include:

- “You need to sober up.”
- “You need to get to a facility.”
- “I will call the appropriate authority to help you.”

To help business owners, NNHRC states, “As an owner of a restaurant or store, you may be held liable. It is best to call the appropriate authority and wait until the authorized official arrives.”

The campaign then pinpoints alarming “Do not’s” like: do not spit on someone who is inebriated, or bully them, or threaten them, or talk trash to them, or beat them, or kick them, or shove them, or grab them, or brand them, or kidnap them, or say demeaning things to them, or harm them in any way.”

Doing so, NNHRC explains, violates their human and civil right. “Harming [inebriates] violates their human right and civil right. They may file criminal and/or civil charges against you.”

“It’s a sad state of affair when we must point this out to the public at large,” Gorman said. “Just because the person is drunk does not give anyone the right to hurt, scold or put down that person.”

Aside from this campaign, the staff of the NNHRC will continue to meet with city and county officials to resolve the street inebriate issue.

Said Gorman in an e-mail, “Street inebriates must be identified as having responsibility over their state of existence. They put themselves there which is the only reason this issue is a part of the community. It must be understood too that the inebriates have responsibility in this issue along with the community.”

Gorman explained that the Navajo dollar spent by responsible Navajo people has built a solid economic base for border towns and this issue can be addressed with money that flows from the Navajo Nation to border towns. He said, “There has to be realization by all parties that this is an issue not only in the border towns but in almost every community in the world.”

###