



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Navajo Nation recognizes the month of April as “Sexual Assault Awareness Month” acknowledging victims, survivors, and advocates**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – On Thursday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, First Lady Phefelia Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, and Second Lady Dottie Lizer signed a proclamation to recognize the month of April as "Sexual Assault Awareness Month" to acknowledge victims, survivors, and advocates and to increase prevention of sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment.

The proclamation states that the Navajo Nation recognizes the physical, mental, and spiritual impacts that the crimes of rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment has on Diné people, families, and communities. Sexual assault includes any sexual conduct or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the individual.

"Sexual assault impacts far too many of our Navajo women and children. We must support one another, especially when an accusation is made – we must believe the victims and investigate to the fullest extent. Women and children are sacred, and supporting their healing and voicing their pain is central to ending violence. One of the strongest forms of support is to demand justice for victims and survivors and hold offenders accountable. Sexual harassment, assault, and abuse can happen anywhere, including online spaces. Each of us plays a role in protecting those we love, including our grandparents, parents, spouses, daughters, and sons. We must commit ourselves to ending sexual violence and supporting all survivors in order to begin the process of healing for the individuals and our communities," said First Lady Nez.

The Bureau of Indian Health reports that at least one in four Navajo children experience some form of sexual abuse. The Navajo Nation School Youth Behavior Survey found that one in 10 girls and one in 20 boys surveyed had been physically forced to have sex against their will. The crime of rape accounts for a large percentage of violent crimes reported to Navajo Nation law enforcement, with an average of one case reported every day.

Additionally, the National Institute of Justice survey found that more than one in two Native American women and more than one in four Native men have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. Navajo children, women, and LGBTQI/Two-spirit are at increased risk for sexual harassment and violence.

"If you or anyone you know is experiencing these types of abuse anywhere, including online or social media spaces, call the police and reach out to someone you trust. Sexual assault is a crime and is not something that should be taken lightly or ignored. Do not be afraid to speak out. One month is not enough to solve this serious issue, but we appreciate the grassroots organizations and groups, who support awareness and prevention year-round," said Second Lady Lizer.

The proclamation also calls on all Navajo organizations and community members to help prevent sexual violence and support survivors of sexual assault by promoting the values of healthy relationships, equality, and respect. Every Navajo Nation citizen has a right to be safe from sexual assault in their homes, schools, and places of business.

"Sexual Assault Awareness Month calls attention to the reality of sexual assaults and violence in our communities here on the Navajo Nation and beyond. The proclamation is a commitment to supporting victims, survivors, and advocates to help prevent sexual violence and to educate individuals and communities about prevention. We have many dedicated advocates including Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, chair of the Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee, and community-based organizers who are committed to addressing these issues in our communities," said President Nez.

Crimes of a sexual nature affect survivors' mental, spiritual, and physical well-being. They are not a single crime but repeated crimes inflicted on women, men, children, and the disabled.

"We can work together to raise awareness. It is a major public health, human rights, and social justice issue that requires more attention. Awareness activities can include walks, virtual educational programs, vigils, and prayer circles to honor victims and survivors. Talking about the issue is an important part of the healing journey for families and communities. Survivors also need to know that their community and leaders support them," said Vice President Lizer.

The month of April is also National Sexual Assault Awareness Month across the country. For more support, information, or advice, call the free and confidential National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1(800)-656-HOPE.

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## THE NAVAJO NATION

# *Proclamation*

### RECOGNIZING THE MONTH OF APRIL 2021 AS “NAVAJO NATION SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH”

The Navajo Nation hereby recognizes the month of April 2021 as “Navajo Nation Sexual Assault Awareness Month” to acknowledge victims, survivors, and advocates and to raise awareness and increase prevention of sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment in our communities.

**WHEREAS**, the crimes of rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment cause undeniable and ongoing harm to Diné people, families and communities; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bureau of Indian Health Service reports that at least 1 in 4 Navajo children experience some form of sexual abuse; and

**WHEREAS**, the Navajo Nation High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 1 in 10 girls and 1 in 20 boys surveyed at had been physically forced to have sex against their will; and

**WHEREAS**, the crime of rape accounts for a large percentage of all violent crimes reported to Navajo Nation law enforcement, with an average of 1 new case reported every day; and

**WHEREAS**, a survey conducted by the National Institute of Justice found that more than 1 in 2 (56.1%) Native women and more than 1 in 4 Native men have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime; and

**WHEREAS**, Navajo children, women, and LGBTQI/Two-spirit are at increased risk for victimization and harm due to sexual harassment and violence; and

**WHEREAS**, Sexual Assault Awareness Month calls on all community members to help prevent sexual violence and support survivors of sexual assault by promoting the values of healthy relationships, equality, and respect; and

**WHEREAS**, the Navajo Nation has a right to be safe from sexual assault in our homes, schools, our place of business and within every walk of life; and

**WHEREAS**, Sexual Violence, Rape, Sexual Assault; Verbal Sexual Harassment and Intimidation is not within the teachings in our Dine’ culture; and

**WHEREAS**, the support of Navajo tribal leaders and Navajo community leaders, Navajo Nation programs and community awareness, we send the message that these crimes will not be tolerated; and

**WHEREAS,** Crimes of a sexual nature affect the mental, spiritual, and physical well-being of a survivor and they are not a single crime, but repeated crimes inflicted on women, men, children and disabled; and

**WHEREAS,** the Navajo Nation acknowledges and appreciates all of the grassroots organizers and groups that are committed to raising awareness and prevention of sexual assault crimes and cases in our communities.

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, JONATHAN NEZ,** President of the Navajo Nation, and **I, MYRON LIZER,** Vice President of the Navajo Nation, do hereby proclaim the month of April 2021 as “Navajo Nation Sexual Assault Awareness Month.”

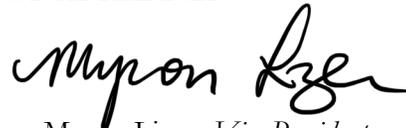
**PROCLAIMED THIS 1<sup>st</sup> DAY OF APRIL 2021**



Jonathan Nez, *President*  
**THE NAVAJO NATION**



Phefelia Nez, *First Lady*  
**THE NAVAJO NATION**



Myron Lizer, *Vice President*  
**THE NAVAJO NATION**



Dottie Lizer, *Second Lady*  
**THE NAVAJO NATION**