



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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President Nez and Navajo Police Chief
Francisco meets with the family of Ella Mae Begay



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez listens as the Navajo Police Department speaks to the family of Ella Mae Begay in Tólikan, Ariz. on July 22, 2021.

TÓLIKAN, Ariz. – On Thursday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez was joined by Navajo Nation Division of Human Resources Executive Director Dr. Perphelia Fowler, as he made good on his commitment to bring the Navajo Police Department and Criminal Investigations to the community of Tólikan, Ariz. to meet with the family of Ella Mae Begay, who went missing from the community and has yet to be located. The meeting was held at the remote residence of Robert Curley, who is the brother of Ella Mae Begay, with the immediate family and relatives.

Navajo Police Chief Phillip B. Francisco, along with several other Navajo Police Officers, spent several hours listening to the concerns and recommendations from the family members and relatives who also shared many of their personal experiences and challenges with law

enforcement and criminal activity in their community. The immediate family also received an update from Criminal Investigations regarding the ongoing investigation.

“We appreciate the invitation from the family of Ella Mae Begay, to come to their community and have a heartfelt conversation with them. We understand their concerns and their frustration, but with our visit I believe we are now on the path to healing. It’s good to hear directly from our people, to gain a better understanding of the problems in the communities. We are a large Nation, and we have unique issues in every region. Together, we continue to pray that Ella Mae is located and we ask God for strength and comfort for her family, friends, and her community. We will continue to provide updates and improve the lines of communication,” said President Nez.

On Thursday, the Navajo Division of Transportation also assisted the family with ground search efforts and supplied ATV’s, drones, and other equipment to help cover more ground. Other divisions previously donated water and other supplies to search groups as well.

During the meeting, Police Chief Francisco said that he understands the frustration and offered his support to continue working toward solutions that increase communications to keep families more informed about investigations, but also stressed the importance of protecting the integrity of ongoing investigations. He also stated that he has a plan and proposal to fund new dispatch equipment, to centralize dispatchers to improve communication and coordination, and to hire more dispatchers to improve communication and response times to emergency calls. He added that in many cases, the lack of rural addressing delays response times especially when officers are responding in remote areas at night time when the majority of emergency calls are received on the Navajo Nation.

On Wednesday, President Nez also accepted an invitation to join Ella Mae Begay’s family, friends, and supporters as they walked to bring awareness to their missing loved one and others who are also missing.

“We have to do better for our people. Our administration supports the Navajo Police Department and we need local support as well, to move forward with Police Chief Francisco’s plans to improve the dispatch system and coordination. We will do our very best to communicate more effectively with the family of Ella Mae and we will continue to pray for her return,” added President Nez.

The Office of the President and Vice President thanks the family of Ella Mae Begay, her niece Seraphine Warren, Council Delegate Charlaine Tso, and all of the supporters for helping to bring awareness to the disappearance of Ella Mae Begay, other missing persons, and the need to improve collaboration and communication with community members and law enforcement.

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