



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:
Jared Touchin, Communications Director
(928) 274-4275
Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer
(928) 274-2758
Timothy Benally, Public Information Officer
(928) 871-7000
nnopvp.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 22, 2022

First Lady Nez and Second Lady Lizer welcome the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children to the Navajo Nation



PHOTO: Navajo Nation First Lady Phefelia Nez (right) and Second Lady Dottie Lizer (left) during the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children's first Navajo Regional Hearing at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort in Leupp, Ariz on April 22, 2022.

LEUPP, Ariz. – On Friday, Navajo Nation First Lady Phefelia Nez and Second Lady Dottie Lizer were joined by 24th Navajo Nation Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Navajo Nation Division of Social Services Executive Director Deannah Neswood-Gishey, Navajo Nation Criminal Investigation Director Michael Henderson, and Navajo Nation Office of the Prosecutor Vernon L. Jackson, during the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children's first Navajo Regional Hearing that aims to restore harmony, balance, and healing of Navajo families and communities.

In partnership with the Casey Family Foundation, the two-day regional hearing was held at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort in Leupp, Ariz. On the opening day, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez provided a virtual welcoming address for the commission's first visit to the Navajo Nation.

The Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children was established by Congress in 2016 to conduct a comprehensive study of federal, state, local, and tribal programs, grants, and support available for Native children and to develop recommendations to improve the health, safety, and well-being of Native children. Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety Executive Director Jesse Delmar serves as one of the 11 commissioners.

"The Nez-Lizer Administration has developed shared values and partnerships with various federal, state, and local programs and organizations to prioritize the well-being and safety of Navajo children and families. It is important for leaders, educators, parents, and community members to identify barriers and create lasting solutions for future generations. Many Navajo families endure Nayéé, modern-day monsters. These Nayéé include suicide, substance abuse, chronic illnesses, diabetes, domestic violence, and violence brought upon vulnerable populations. Our cultural teachings grounded in faith, hope, resilience, and Ké, kinship, provide us the tools to overcome and prevent social issues. Moving forward, our federal, state, and local partners need to understand and recognize the importance of integrating our cultural values and principles into prevention and intervention efforts," said First Lady Nez.

During her presentation, the First Lady also highlighted the internal workgroup known as the "Diné Nihik'éeí Nihíí' Násdłjį': Work Group, Reunite our Diné Relatives," which was established to address issues impacting Navajo families. Currently, the workgroup is developing the Tribal Community Response Plan to improve coordination and response to deter violence against women and children. First Lady also serves on the New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force to support comprehensive law enforcement, prevention, intervention, and support services to help address missing and murdered Indigenous people

"Our collaborative efforts must be built upon faith, love, and support. We need to encourage and educate each other that these important values can build healthy families and deter disparities. Every child should feel safe within the home and community. It can take one person to impact a child's day, but it takes a community to impact the child's life. We must provide adequate resources, services, and opportunities to secure their future," said Second Lady Lizer.

"Our children are sacred, and we must protect them. Sa'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón, Navajo Lifeway principles, grounded in Nitsáhákees (thinking), Nahat'á (planning), liná (life), and Sihasin (reflection). The restoration of hozhó, balance, and harmony within our homes and society requires the implementation of the Sa'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón to identify problems, investigate, analyze, and strategically resolve issues. Our ancestors and elders used the same framework to survive and heal, and we must now use those teachings to overcome the challenges our children face," said Delegate Crotty.

During the hearing, Criminal Investigation Director Henderson stated that the top three crimes on the Navajo Nation, aggravated assault, sexual assault, and homicide, along with historical trauma hinder the capacity to deter violence against children and vulnerable populations. Additionally, Acting Chief Prosecutor Jackson reported that substance abuse among parents and caregivers is a significant factor in child abuse and neglect on the Navajo Nation. Many Navajo children are displaced from their homes, increasing their risk for mental and emotional health challenges, suicide, educational challenges, and feelings of isolation and disconnection.

Other participants included Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council members Triston Black and Adriano Tsinigine, community youth Tyler Jensen, First Things First Navajo Nation Regional Director Memarie Tsosie, and others.

“On behalf of the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President, we appreciate the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children and Casey Family Foundation for giving the Navajo Nation the opportunity to provide direction to improve the health, safety, and well-being of Navajo children,” added First Lady Nez.

###

For the latest news from the Office of the President and Vice President, please visit <http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/> or find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.