



## Law and Order Committee receives missing and murdered cases report from Division of Public Safety

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**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — A report by the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety (DPS) on the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives was delivered to the Law and Order Committee (LOC) of the 24th Navajo Nation Council at its Mar. 8 regular meeting. DPS Executive Director Jesse Delmar gave the requested report on recent reporting related to missing and murdered cases.

“Our families are going to continue having many sleepless nights if we don’t get a hold of our data and turn this around,” said Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tónaneesdizi), vice chair of the LOC. “The world is changing on Navajo and our children are now growing up to see these as normal cycles.”

Delmar said DPS began entering all missing and murdered cases into a national reporting system and said his goal is to get an accurate account on how many people are missing on the Navajo Nation and surrounding border towns.

“Once they are in the system, people across the world can help these initiatives and that is something we’ve been working on,” said Delmar. “We always encourage people to work with their families and the public in these situations because we have a whole community of individuals like Madam Chair and Eugene Tso who help us by using their experiences to help solve these cases of missing people with us.”

According to Delmar, DPS personnel and the Navajo Nation Washington Office began discussing a strategic planning session with the US Congressional General Accountability Office (GAO) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to evaluate the federal government’s response to missing and murdered Indigenous women cases across the country.

The GAO is conducting the evaluation study and has submitted questions to all branches of the Navajo Nation government relating to federal response efforts.

Delmar noted that the work of the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) initiative has also recently gained the attention of other entities, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the US Attorney’s Office and both the Arizona and New Mexico State governments, who have hired tribal liaisons.

Following Delmar’s report, committee member Council Delegate Eugene Tso (Chinle) provided personal testimony on the loss of his sister and his nephew, whose missing cases have not yet been solved. “We need more prosecutors. We tend to forget our younger generations of potential teachers and doctors that end up on the streets,” added Eugene Tso.

Otto Tso suggested the answers to improving the Navajo Nation's response to Missing and Murdered Diné relatives should include a review of the Nation's current punishments and asked Delmar for input on sentencing.

In response, Delmar cited the Council's recent work in amending Title 17 of the Navajo Nation Code related to definitions of controlled substances through Resolution No. CS-76-20. Delmar asked for the Council's help in continuing further amendments.

The DPS currently deals with illegal substance issues, missing persons and shootings occurring on a more frequent basis, Delmar added. "So, we are looking to get more help from outside entities," said Delmar.

LOC Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock) also asked Delmar for a written report detailing all data from the last two years surrounding missing and murdered persons on the Navajo Nation and surrounding areas at the month's end.

"We need an overview. Us, as delegates, rely on your view and we cannot have people slipping through the cracks," said Charles-Newton.

Delmar indicated DPS has some data available to share with the committee and is looking to discuss plans to build a database with the GAO.

Council Delegate Vince James (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Łichíí', Steamboat), member of LOC, also asked Delmar to include details of the DPS's process in handling missing person cases, recalling difficulties with a recent case he helped handle with a family in Lukachukai.

Delmar agreed and indicated DPS would begin work on the reports.

In closing, Delmar recalled a murder case he helped solve in 1989 that took four months to solve until a witness from the public provided critical testimony.

"That's why we are responding to cases every day and we need the public's help," said Delmar.

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