

Indigenous Peoples Commission talks about community healing

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 24 May 2019 05:30

Troubled over a lack of connection

The Indigenous Peoples Commission spoke about the March 27 community healing forum planning meeting during their recent regular meeting.

One suggestion that was brought up several times during the healing forum meeting was the establishment of an Indian Center in Gallup.

The former Gallup Indian Center was where groups like Indians Against Exploitation became refined, and was also where job preparation skills could be taught, according to one of the persons on the record, Marley Shebala. Without the Indian Center, there is a feeling of disconnect in Gallup, she added.

At the May 13 meeting, the commissioners responded to comments made by members of the healing forum.

“The input sends your mind in so many different directions,” Emerson Toledo, commission chair, said. “It leaves me speechless, because there’s a lot to cover.”

Toledo said the input focused on the difficulties the community faces along with suggestions about where local resources should be allocated and what should be done with them.

Trish Arviso said during the healing forum that the abundance of pawn shops, liquor outlets, and bars in Gallup is what make it number 16 in the nation in crime and drug rates. She added that the problems have only gotten worse without a place for people to go, like the Indian Center.

Virginia Ballenger, IPC commissioner, said if the city is going to establish a new Indian Center, it will have to target the next legislative session in Santa Fe to get funding for it.

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“That is the only way the Indian Center can be built into the city,” she said. “People want to know how do we get it built and how much money do we need, and where the land is for it.”

Ballenger also discussed other topics that were brought up during the healing forum, namely alcoholism in the region.

Several people at the healing forum spoke about alcoholism affecting their families and how there is not enough being done to help people who turn to alcohol and drugs, especially veterans.

Ursula Casuse, who attended the previous meeting, said the city and the Navajo Nation have to get involved to begin the physical and mental healing processes for the many people who need them.

Dominique Dosedo, secretary and treasurer, said it is important that the commission be here for the local Native youth and do what is necessary to stop the cycle of addiction.

“Remember the youth, because they’re watching us,” she said. “Will [living conditions] be the same when they get up here?”

An Indian Center would be a good start for people to get help, Toledo said.

“We have goals we can work on,” he said. “We can work on the practice of harmonizing, and doing something for people living in Gallup, and being in Gallup.”

The date of the next Indigenous Peoples Commission work session is June 12 at 6 pm. No location has been announced.

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