

Navajo Nation leaders recognize ‘Navajo Nation Suicide Prevention Week’

Written by Staff Reports

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer signed a proclamation Sept. 6 recognizing Sept. 6-12 as *Navajo Nation Suicide Prevention Week* in coordination with National Suicide Prevention Week and World Suicide Prevention Day Sept. 10.

“Our administration recognizes the mental health needs of many of our people, including our young Navajo people. The Navajo Nation Division of Behavioral and Mental Health Services continues to help many of our people, but we need to do more,” Nez said. “It starts with healing among families. There are far too many young people losing hope at a young age.

“Parents and grandparents have the challenging responsibility to instill good values, teachings, and confidence in our children at a young age. We will continue to do everything we can to help families and young people who suffer from modern day monsters like depression, suicide, and other issues that often lead to people taking their own lives,” Nez said.

The Nez-Lizer Administration continues to support the *Building Communities of Hope* initiative to empower individuals, families, and communities and to restore hope, self-sufficiency, and determination through comprehensive suicide prevention strategies.

Building Communities of Hope

was initiated in Nov. 2015. It aims to provide services in schools, universities, and communities on and off the Navajo Nation.

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"The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for our people. By having to shelter-in-place to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, we know that many people are dealing with their issues at home and some are even taking the opportunity to heal their families using the time spent at home during this pandemic," Nez pointed out.

"We have heard stories of families reconciling, coming together, and strengthening their relations during this challenging time. We pray and continue to work toward helping more families become stronger and to revitalize the teachings of our elders," he added.

According to the Division of Behavioral and Mental Health Services, suicide is the seventh leading cause of death on the Navajo Nation, and American Indian communities experience higher rates of suicide compared to all other racial and ethnic groups in the U.S.

"The Division of Behavioral and Mental Health Services and [the] *Building Communities of Hope* initiative play a vital role in saving lives and preventing suicides among our people," Lizer said. "If you or someone you know is having issues with their mental or spiritual well-being, we encourage you to use the resources available to seek help. We will continue to pray for strength, understanding, and healing for all of our Navajo people who are dealing with these tough challenges," he concluded.

"In this COVID-19 pandemic it's important to seek help for yourself or others, we can all do our part to prevent suicide. Learn about suicide warning signs and symptoms to help someone today or in the future," Department of Health Executive Director Dr. Jill Jim said.

The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President recognizes public awareness is key to preventing loss of life by suicide and remains committed to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

The Navajo Nation supports the efforts of our divisions, departments, and programs as advocates for life by promoting resiliency, culture, traditional values, faith, and providing public education and direct services with the understanding that these efforts will create avenues to reduce the number of suicides.

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