

Navajo Nation praises executive order to address missing, murdered Native people

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Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and First Lady Phefelia Nez commended U. S. President Joe Biden after he issued a new executive order directing federal officials to work hand-in-hand with Tribal Nations and Tribal partners to address cases of missing and murdered Indigenous people.

At the White House Tribal Nations Summit Nov. 15, Biden ordered federal officials to work to build safe and healthy Tribal communities and support comprehensive law enforcement, prevention and intervention.

“With today’s executive order, President Biden continues to fulfill his commitment to tribal nations that will help to strengthen coordination between all agencies to help locate and resolve missing persons cases in tribal communities,” Nez said. “Far too many of our Navajo people continue to endure the heartache and frustration of a missing loved one. We have to continue to work together to do more for our people. We thank President Biden, Secretary Haaland, and all grassroots and community advocates.”

First Lady Nez commended the signing of the Executive Order and said more needs to be done to address missing persons including the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, to help resolve jurisdictional issues that arise in cases involving violence against Navajo women by non-Navajo perpetrators.

“The executive order will help agencies at the federal, state, and tribal levels to better communicate and work together to address data sharing and collecting, responses by law enforcement, and support for families of missing persons,” First Lady Nez said.

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“Generations of Native Americans have experienced violence or mourned a missing or murdered family member or loved one, and the lasting impacts of such tragedies are felt throughout the country,” the order states. “Native Americans face unacceptably high levels of violence, and are victims of violent crime at a rate much higher than the national average.

“Native American women, in particular, are disproportionately the victims of sexual and gender-based violence, including intimate partner homicide,” it continued.

At this first-ever Tribal Leaders Summit, Biden directed federal officials to work with tribal nations to strategize how to improve public safety and advance justice.

“This builds on the work we did together on reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act in 2013, when we granted authority to tribes to exercise jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders who commit violence on tribal lands,” Biden said. “We’re going to reauthorize that again, we’re going to expand the jurisdiction to include other offenses like sex trafficking, sexual assault, and child abuse.”

The second day of the summit Biden participated in a panel discussion about tribal priorities.

For more information about the Executive Order, go to <https://www.whitehouse.gov>

or to reach the executive order directly, go to <https://bit.ly/3nkHqoc>