

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives event educates the community

Written by By Rachel Pfeiffer Sun Correspondent
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Between 2014 and 2019, 53 percent of all missing persons in Gallup were Indigenous women, one of the highest rates in the state during that period. In 2018, one report found Gallup was

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among the top ten cities in the U. S. with the highest numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

Charmaine Jackson of Ná'ál Kíd Productions along with independent advocates helped organize the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives event Nov. 5 at the El Morro Theatre.

The event began with a “sharing our stories” portion that allowed speakers to talk about their experiences and perspectives.

“It was a very powerful segment for participants, survivors, and families of victims and the missing,” Jackson said. “Along with community support, prayer, and song, people had the courage to speak about their loved ones without judgment.”

The event also featured the films “Say Her Name” and “Somebody’s Daughter,” both directed by Rain. The documentaries examined cases of specific missing and murdered Indigenous women. “Somebody’s Daughter” follows several high-profile cases, while “Say Her Name” focuses on cases in Big Horn County, Mont. “Somebody’s Daughter” has received attention from top lawmakers, including President Joe Biden.

“The film is phenomenal, inspirational,” Jackson said. “It’s educational, and it’s straight to the point. It says things that need to be said.”

McKinley County Commissioner Genevieve Jackson, Dist. 2, spoke at the event. Because members of her family have been murdered or gone missing, Jackson has first-hand knowledge of the issue.

“Those two films by the gentleman named Rain were excellent because they concentrated on Indigenous women and problems in other Native communities,” Commissioner Jackson said. “Those very same problems exist here.”

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In addition to increasing general awareness about the danger, Genevieve Jackson hopes education can take place in schools and the health and social services departments to improve safety, as well as the handling of the problem as a whole. She also believes political aspects of the issue need to be addressed.

“Missing and murdered Indigenous women and relatives is an issue that affects the local leaders, the city leaders, the community leaders, the state leaders, and the national leaders,” the commissioner said. “Those people we call leaders must be aware and bring resources to the table on how we can solve the problem.

“Right now, the problem is that we are lacking financial resources to address some of these problems,” she continued. “The Navajo Nation is short-staffed in the law enforcement department. Some of these things languish because there are not enough prosecutors or detectives to pursue these cold cases.”

Commissioner Jackson also believes additional resources dedicated to the health and social services departments would enable them to provide counseling for those who have lost loved ones. Ultimately, though, she hopes events like this will lead to solutions.

“I’d like for the grassroots people to become more involved,” Jackson said. “I’d like for them to come up with recommendations and solutions so we can problem-solve, bring attention to this, and give it a lot of weight so we can address it with our lawmakers.

“It’s a problem that’s always been here, but that doesn’t mean it needs to endure into the next generation,” the commissioner concluded.

The hope is at some point in the future, events like the one at the theatre can focus solely on honoring those lost, instead of also generating ideas to combat the issue.

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