

Begaye calls for federal level investigation in Tsingine shooting

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WINSLOW, Ariz. -Before a crowd of several hundred who had gathered to memorialize the life of Loreal Tsingine, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye called for the City of Winslow to handle the investigation of Tsingine's shooting in an unbiased and appropriate manner.

Tsingine was shot five times on Easter Sunday as she struggled with a police officer who tried to apprehend her in response to an alert of a shoplifting that had taken place at a local convenience store. She was laid to rest April 5.

Officer Austin Shipley fired the deadly shots, and has been placed on administrative leave, pending an investigation being headed by the Arizona Department of Public Safety.

"From the Office of the President and Vice President, we will follow this investigation very closely to make sure that justice is done," he said.

President Begaye said the Navajo Nation will not hesitate to take legal action against City of Winslow if a thorough and unbiased investigation isn't carried out.

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Begaye said that Navajo Nation Attorney General Ethel Branch will be working with the United States Department of Justice to see that federal level investigation is done.

At the vigil, President Begaye demanded that law enforcement officers treat and approach every person with respect. He said that every life and person is valuable and that every person should be treated accordingly.

“The life of any person on the streets of Winslow is just as valuable as the life of the President,” he said.

“I’m asking the police officers out there to respect the Navajo people. No matter what they do, you can talk sense with them, you can communicate with them. You don’t have to pull a gun on them. We understand when a police officer talks to us with respect and honor rather than throwing us on the ground and abusing us. That is not respect,” he said.

The tragedy of Tsingine’s death has emphasized how the Navajo Nation needs to be more engaged in the lives of Navajos who live in border towns. President Begaye said the Nation needs to work very closely with municipalities to make sure that federally funded programs are addressing and serving the Navajo people that live in border towns.

“We spend our dollars throughout border towns around the Nation. We need to make sure that we are partnering very closely with the city, county, the state and the feds in servicing our people here,” he said. “They need to know that Navajo dollars are holding up the economy of the border towns. The border towns need to understand and respect this. We deserve better service and respect in these border towns.”

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