ALBUQUERQUE – 

, 44, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who resides in Tohatchi, N.M., plead guilty Tuesday in federal court in Albuquerque, to a second degree murder charge. Under the terms of his plea agreement, Hale will be sentenced within the range of 180 to 240 months in federal prison followed by a term of supervised release to be determined by the court.

Hale was arrested on Feb. 23, 2016, by the FBI on a criminal complaint alleging that he murdered a Navajo woman on the Navajo Indian Reservation in San Juan County, N.M. According to the complaint, on Feb. 20, 2016, Hale struck the victim in the head and fled from the scene of the crime, the victim's home in Hogsback, N.M. The victim was transported by helicopter to the hospital, where she was pronounced dead. Hale was later indicted on a murder charge on March 23, 2016.

During today's proceedings, Hale plead guilty to a felony information charging him with second degree murder. In entering the guilty plea, Hale admitted that on Feb. 20, 2016, he killed the victim by striking her twice in the head with a crowbar. Hale remains in custody pending a sentencing hearing which has yet to be scheduled.

This case was investigated by the Farmington office of the FBI and the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety. Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael D. Murphy is prosecuting the case.

This case was brought as part of the Tribal Special Assistant U.S. Attorney (Tribal SAUSA) Pilot Project in the District of New Mexico which is sponsored by the Justice Department's Office on Violence Against Women under a grant administered by the Pueblo of Laguna. The Tribal SAUSA Pilot Project seeks to train tribal prosecutors in federal law, procedure and investigative techniques to increase the likelihood that every viable violent offense against Native American women is prosecuted in either federal court or tribal court, or both.

The Tribal SAUSA Pilot Project was largely driven by input gathered from annual tribal consultations on violence against women, and is another step in the Justice Department's on-going efforts to increase engagement, coordination and action on public safety in tribal communities.