ALBUQUERQUE – Norman Yazzie, 56, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who resides in Shiprock, N.M., was sentenced March 21 in federal court in Albuquerque to 10 years in prison followed by four years of supervised release for discharging a firearm during a crime of violence.

Yazzie was arrested in May 2016 on a criminal complaint charging him with assault and firearms offenses on April 29, 2016, on the Navajo Indian Reservation in San Juan County. According to the complaint, Yazzie shot the victim with a rifle in the forehead and the knee, causing her to suffer serious bodily injury.

Yazzie subsequently was indicted on May 24, and charged with assault with a dangerous weapon, a rifle, with intent to do bodily harm, assault resulting in serious bodily injury, and discharging a firearm during a crime of violence. According to the indictment, the offenses took place on April 29 in San Juan County.

On Nov. 16, Yazzie pled guilty to discharging a firearm during a crime of violence. In entering the guilty plea, Yazzie admitted that on April 29, he shot the victim in the head and knee with a rifle.

This case was investigated by the Farmington office of the FBI and the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety. Assistant U.S. Attorney Novaline D. Wilson prosecuted the case 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.