

## Shiprock man pleads guilty to federal assault charge

Written by Staff reports  
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ALBUQUERQUE – Aaron Curley, 55, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who resides in Shiprock, N.M., pled guilty in federal court in Albuquerque July 10, to an assault charge under a plea agreement with the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Curley was arrested in Nov. 2016, on a criminal complaint charging him with assaulting a Navajo woman by stabbing her in the leg and sternum area with a knife.

Curley was indicted on Dec. 20, 2016, and charged with assault with a dangerous weapon, a knife, with intent to do bodily injury and assault resulting in serious bodily injury. According to the indictment, the offenses took place on Nov. 20, 2016, on the Navajo Indian Reservation in San Juan County, N.M.

During today's proceedings, Curley pled guilty to Count 1 of the indictment charging him with assault with a dangerous weapon. In entering the guilty plea, Curley admitted that on Nov. 20, 2016, he assaulted the victim by stabbing her in the left leg and caused the victim to sustain cuts to her left arm and hand as she was defending herself.

At sentencing, Curley faces a maximum penalty of ten years in federal prison. Curley 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 Division of Public Safety. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kyle T. Nayback is prosecuting this 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.

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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.

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