

MMDR Task Force selects voting members

Written by gallupsun
Thursday, 23 November 2023 11:45

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Naabik'iyati' Committee's Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Task Force Chairwoman Amber Kanazbah Crotty, (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'i'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz't'í), recently announced the selection of community members who will serve as task force voting members.

Within the MMDR Task Force's action plan, the Naabik'iyati' Committee recognized the need for the Navajo Nation to be actively involved in the efforts to comprehensively and holistically combat the murders and missing cases of Diné people on and off the Navajo Nation.

The Naabik'iyati' Committee further acknowledged that these efforts can most effectively be implemented by collaborating with all three Branches of the Navajo Nation government through a branch representative and three community member representatives.

"On behalf of the MMDR Task Force, we welcome your expertise, commitment to community, and boots-on-the-ground efforts to further the mission of bringing closure to many Navajo families," Crotty said.

After being selected, the candidates were confirmed by vote of the Task Force on Nov. 9.

Crotty welcomed the new Task Force representatives, spoke highly of their skills and contributions, and expressed appreciation for the high caliber of resources they will offer to the cause.

The Task Force has selected Laurelle Sheppard, Tonya Grass, and John L. Tsosie.

Sheppard has extensive experience in the public service sector, including corrections, law enforcement, and advocacy. She has served as a Federal Police Officer, a Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Detention Officer, and was the Vice President of the non-profit Hopi-Tewa Women's Coalition. With the Hopi-Tewa Women's Coalition, she advocated for change within the community by promoting safety and support for survivors of domestic violence and sexual

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assault. As a program director, Sheppard currently leads the Victim Services Program for the Navajo Nation.

Grass is currently a Victim Advocate Supervisor for Utah Navajo Health Systems. She has a bachelor's degree in criminology from Dixie State University in St. George, Utah. She has been an advocate for over five years and currently manages a staff of 12 advocates across the Navajo Nation.

"Working with my community and giving back is something that I've always strived to do, and I'm proud to be providing my services to the community and finding effective ways to serve better those who have been victims of a crime and [families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People]," Grass said.

Tsosie, the former MMIP Liaison for the Office of the President and Vice-President, has been advocating for domestic violence prevention and missing persons locally and nationally for over 20 years. In 2015, Tsosie participated in the search for Ashlynnne Mike. Since that experience, Tsosie has advocated within his community, throughout the Navajo Nation, and beyond. Tsosie has networked with other tribal nations, building unity and an amplified voice.

"We are honored to have these individuals join our Task Force, to further the achievement of the action plans of the MMDR Task Force, and to be a voice and resource for victims of violence and for our missing relatives," Crotty said.



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