



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL  
Office of the Speaker

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Candlelight Vigil Held for Victims of Murder**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – September 30, 2019 – A candlelight vigil for the National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Murder was held at the Navajo Council Chamber on Wednesday to recognize and honor Navajo relatives lost to violence.



PHOTO: Relatives and friends of murder victims took part in a candlelight vigil at the Navajo Nation Council Chamber on Wednesday, September 25, 2019 in Window Rock, Ariz.

The purpose of the vigil was to bring Navajo community members and families of murdered victims to share stories of their loved ones and to offer support in the spirit of healing and recognizing the day of remembrance.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty organized the candlelight vigil to promote awareness of the underreported ongoing crisis of Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives, also known as MMDR, and stressed that it was important to provide a platform for community members to share their experiences and to honor relatives lost to violence.

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“We want to help create these safe spaces for anyone that has lost their loved one, or loved ones, to violence and murder. It is our responsibility as brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents, children, and friends to take care of ourselves and to help each other overcome the grief of losing a Diné relative,” said Delegate Crotty.

Throughout the evening, family members and friends added victims’ names to a wall of remembrance. By the end of the candlelight vigil, the names of 19 Diné victims of murder were written on the wall, and families were able to share their stories.

Meskee Yatsaytee, founder and volunteer advocate for the Navajo Nation Missing Persons Updates group, facilitated the discussion of the gathering and encouraged family members to speak about their lost family members and to allow them a chance to voice their advocacy for community healing and change.

“This is positive collaboration when we work together to coordinate events like this so we can share our stories. I want to thank everyone who came out here because I know it’s hard to share these stories, but it is also a healing time for all of us and that’s the reason for the vigil,” said Yatsayte.

Also in attendance was Vanessa Dundon, founder and advocate for Missing Flowers: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Men. She expressed her appreciation to Delegate Crotty and thanked families who participated in the vigil and stated that it was important for Navajo leadership and communities to hear the voices of the victims and their families.

Jolene Holgate, Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives coordinator and legislative district assistant to Delegate Crotty, lost her younger cousin sister Arielisa Bryant to violence in July near Flagstaff, Arizona. The case is ongoing.

“We are here with you because we have been there ourselves. We do this work because we know what the families have gone through and we need to continue listening to them as we move forward in healing,” said Holgate.

The National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Murder occurs annually on Sept. 25. For more information regarding Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives, an email may be sent to [navajommdr@gmail.com](mailto:navajommdr@gmail.com).

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