



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### Delegate Crotty promotes the Food Sovereignty Initiative at the “2016 Just Food? Forum on Land Use, Rights, and Ecology” at Harvard University



**PHOTO:** (left to right) On March 26, 2016 at Harvard University, Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty with Ona Balkus, J.D., Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, Sonlatsa Jim-Martin, COPE Project, Smita Narula, educator/activist, Sharon Sandman, Diné Food Sovereignty Alliance, Emily M. Broad, Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic.

**BOSTON, Mass.** – On March 25 and 26, Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáož’t’í’i) attended the 2016 “Just Food? Forum on Land Use, Rights, and Ecology: a conference exploring land and the food system” at Harvard University to promote the Navajo food sovereignty and food injustice initiative.

The conference examined the relationship between people and land, primarily through agriculture and the food system. The conference brought together scholars, farmers, activists, practitioners, and other authorities to discuss the growing concerns about who has access to land, how agriculture changes land, and who is marginalized or dispossessed by the current system.

Delegate Crotty presented the current systemic issues that have shaped the current Navajo food system and its negative health, community, economic, cultural, land, and environmental impacts and identified strategies and recommendations for future policy changes.

“Our food system was destroyed from the influence of colonialism, such as Hwééldi (The Long Walk), the livestock reduction, and boarding schools. To fix our food systems, we need to reflect and use our traditional knowledge. We need to reference our traditional values and principles into our policies to regain control over our food system,” stated Delegate Crotty during her presentation.

Delegate Crotty has been working closely with Partners in Health: Community Outreach, Patient Empowerment. The group was awarded a grant in the amount of \$1 million on an annual basis over the course of three years to improve chronic disease prevention and to increase access to healthy foods in the Navajo Nation. COPE is working with many organizations across the Navajo Nation and national partners to improve access to healthy foods in local stores for Navajo families.

The COPE project has also worked adjacently with the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic to create a Navajo Food Policy Toolkit. The toolkit aims to bolster the efforts to increase food sovereignty on the Navajo Nation by describing existing laws and policies that impact the food system, highlighting innovative efforts to improve food policy change. The toolkit serves as a reference for community leaders, food advocates, and members of the chapter, Navajo, state, and federal government.

Following the conference, Delegate Crotty stated that she received support from many who attended the conference. The next step is creating partnerships with entities and institutes to address further academic research and activism on the food epidemic in Indian Country.

“As a woman leader, this is my responsibility to keep our families safe and healthy. The Diné teachings of a woman is to keep the concept of Hózhó in the home and to respect life,” stated Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty said she will continue to work on policies regarding land, agriculture, food, and health at the local, state, and federal level.

The Navajo Food Policy Toolkit can be accessed at <http://www.chlpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Navajo-Food-Policy-Toolkit-May-2015.pdf>.

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