

Diné Justice

A Newsletter of the Judicial Branch of the Navajo Nation

MARCH 2017



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Best practices

During the Navajo Nation Public Safety Summit held January 30 through February 3, 2017, Ramah Judicial District Judge Leonard Livingston and staff attorney Dan Moquin, along with Ramah Chief of Police Darren Soland, presented on the quarterly resource meetings that Ramah conducts for service providers. The meetings were presented as a “best practice” for the rest of the Navajo Nation to learn.

“In Ramah we have limited resources. One of our philosophies is know your resources,” said Livingston.

Programs including housing, schools, social services, prosecutors and probation are invited to the meetings. They are also open to the public and the media.

Moquin said that the first rule when starting the meeting is saying that they are all there to fix the problem, not to blame. They also take advantage of trainings provided by the U.S. Attorney’s office and open those trainings to the communities.

Soland said the resource meetings are one of the most useful means to get information to the community. “It’s an open dialogue. It’s a positive dialogue,” he said.

Soland gave the example of educating the community members about what criteria is necessary to issue an Amber Alert when there had been confusion about it. Amber Alerts can be issued if there is reasonable belief by law enforcement that an abduction has occurred, the law enforcement agency believes the child is in imminent danger, there is enough descriptive information

about the victim and abduction to assist in the recovery of the child, the abducted child is 17 years or younger and the child’s name has been entered into the National Crime Information Center system.

Getting that information to the public took away some of their frustration, Soland said.

As service providers developed objectives, goals and visions as part of the Summit, many expressed that they want to implement regular resource meetings in their districts as well. For the Judicial Branch, regular resource meetings at the judicial districts became a goal to accomplish.

Regina Begay Roanhorse also presented on Total Community Approach, To’hajiiilee-Alamo Healing to Wellness Court and Teen Court as a best practice during the summit. Other programs that presented included the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center, Leech Lake DWI Wellness Court, Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Family Violence and Victim’s Services Program, Kenaitze Joint Jurisdiction Court and Tulalip Tribes Alternative Sentencing Program.

The Public Safety Summit was organized by the Department of Justice and attended by various Navajo Nation service providers. ●

New employees



Chris P. Benally was hired as the staff attorney for Chinle Judicial District in February 2017.

Meet the new staff attorney: Chris P. Benally

I am Bį́įh Bitoodnii born for Áshį́į́hí , and Tsi'naajinii are my cheis and Nazhtezhi tahbahi are my nalis. I am originally from Cedar Tree Hills, in Coppermine Arizona.

I was raised traditionally, speaking Navajo, and by a single parent. I grew up herding sheep, tending cattle and horses and attending and helping out in ceremonies.

Within my family I'm a first generation high school graduate, college graduate, law school graduate, and veteran.

I attended Kaibeto Boarding School and graduated from Page High School. I served honorably for eight years in the United States Army and left the service as a sergeant, with the Army Ranger tab and air assault badge.

After the military I became a high-pressure tube

welder with the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers Union and married my beautiful wife Camille. We have four children and their clans are Tlizi lahni.

In the process of working in construction, my wife and I completed our Bachelor's degrees at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah. My degree is in Criminal Justice. Thereafter, I attended J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University.

I interned with the Department of Interior, Utah County Public Defenders, and the Navajo Supreme Court and am a member of the Navajo Nation Bar Association.

I was previously employed with the Tuba City Prosecutor's Office in Tuba City, Arizona, as a criminal prosecutor and presenting officer in children's cases. ●

Announcements

Gathering of Native Americans Training Conference

When: March 14, 15 & 16, 2017

Where: Alamo Wellness Center

Time: 8:30AM – 4:00PM

Lunch will be provided

Registration begins at 8:30AM Daily

Parent Permission need for all youth participants

Child care is not available during event

WHO SHOULD ATTEND: Community

members, Leaders, Youth, Elderly,

Providers, Educators, Law Enforcement

Navajo Legislative Branch, Navajo Judicial Branch-
Teen Court, Judicial Branch Peacemaking Program,
Navajo Department of Behavioral Health Services,
Alamo Behavioral Health, SAMSHA TTAC, Alamo
Wellness Center and Kaufman & Associates, Inc.
(KAD).

For more information contact Regina or Sherrilyn at Alamo
Courts (575) 854-2668

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuba City Judicial District is holding a pro se clinic for Probate on March 9, 2017, at 8:30 a.m. Please arrive by 8 a.m. to purchase the pro se packet for \$5.25 with a money order. For more information, call (928) 283-3140.

Window Rock Judicial District is hosting Adult Guardianship Pro Se Clinics on March 16 and April 20, 2017. Please contact the Window Rock District Court for more information and to register at (928) 871-6626.

Aneth Judicial District Pro Se Clinic is being held April 7, 2017, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

To see our latest events, visit our website at www.navajocourts.org and click on the link for our monthly calendar.

Alamo to host Gathering of Native Americans Conference Training

What is GONA (Gathering of Native Americans)?

GONA is an opportunity to conduct a culture-based intervention to identify and address intergenerational healing in response to grief and loss issues that have occurred over the years. This will provide an opportunity for community building and will enhance the tribe's planning and implementation efforts in order to begin addressing the issues of preventing mental and substance use disorders and suicide.

Who should attend?

Anyone who is concerned for the well-being of our community and our youth.

We want you! Come help create a healthy community. Involvement of the youth, tribal elders, and families is essential to all aspects of the planning process. We are seeking input and full participation in the development and implementation of the community plan.

Sponsored by the Navajo Department of Behavioral Health Services, Navajo Nation Judicial Branch Teen Court and Peacemaking Program, Alamo Behavioral Health Services and Wellness Center, Alamo Navajo School Board Inc., and the Tribal Training and Technical Assistance Center—Kaufman and Associates. ●

Best Practices: Wings for LIFE

By Ann Edenfield Sweet

Ms. Sweet presented at the Navajo Nation Public Safety Summit on the Wings for LIFE program as a best practice. She is pictured on the left with Sadie Tolino, a WFL volunteer, at the Summit.

I was invited to speak at the Navajo Nation Public Safety Summit about a program I started after having a husband incarcerated and writing a book, **Family Arrested: How to Survive the Incarceration of a Loved One**.

The program, Wings For L.I.F.E. - **L**ife-skills **I**mparted to **F**amilies through **E**ducation (WFL), is a National and State Best Practice Model and has won the: National Award of Excellence in Crime Prevention from the American Probation and Parole Association, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections Impact Award, 2017 NM Children's Law Institute's Child Welfare, and Juvenile Justice Award, 2017 Martin Luther King Jr. Keep the Dream Alive Award, and the 2017 NM Innovative Program Star, as one of the top 10 Behavioral Health programs in New Mexico.

I have written the curriculum, *Strengthening Families from the Inside Out*, which is the leader's guide for the Wings For L.I.F.E. program. I feel called to share this program with the Navajo Nation. Way too many people spend time behind bars and we must break the generational cycle of incarceration!

WFL empowers returning citizens (former inmates) and their families to feel safer, be more socially engaged, accepted and live with dignity through group mentoring, support and education.

WFL teaches life-skills, manners and ways to improve quality of life through expert speakers in relevant fields who address money, jobs, parenting/communication and issues unique to incarceration. There is an after-dinner program for the children and youth that could offer tutoring, but I would encourage this program to also teach Navajo traditions, stories, artwork, dances, languages, weaving, beading, pottery, etc. Local Navajo elders could teach, inspire, and encourage the children to learn more about their culture and take pride in their heritage. WFL aims at intervention, prevention and positive adult and youth development through successful implementation of Search Institute's© 40 Developmental Assets© – evidenced-based principles which focus on prevention and resiliency to promote positive, healthy development by teaching ways to find meaning and purpose in one's



life and which cut at-risk behaviors for all ages. Our Vision is for Wings For L.I.F.E. (WFL) to be to families of prisoners what AA is to alcoholics: a sustainable way to change behaviors.

WFL teaches people of all ages to be law-abiding, hard-working, productive citizens while giving hope, encouragement and teaching the life skills that empower positive change. Past research indicates intervention through WFL programming reduces recidivism, teaches positive behaviors, improves grades and graduation rates, empowers participants to find gainful and sustainable employment and strengthens the family unit.

Please contact me if you would like to adapt this program for the Navajo Nation. My vision is to train Navajo leaders who can make the program culturally sensitive and meaningful in each local community.

Ann Edenfield Sweet

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Justice Days

Celebrating the creation of the Navajo court system

The judicial districts of the Navajo Nation annually observe Justice Day to celebrate the creation of the Navajo courts. This year is the 58th anniversary of the Navajo Nation's court system. The Navajo tribe established its own court system effective April 1, 1959.

The establishment of our court system came about as the state governments were considering taking over the Navajo tribal courts. Our Navajo leaders had the foresight to ensure that our courts were under Navajo jurisdiction.

Today the Navajo Nation courts are known as the flagship of indigenous courts. Many people look to our court system to protect the sovereignty of all American Indian courts.

The judicial districts take pride in presenting their courts to the public during Justice Day activities. It gives the public an opportunity to visit the courts and to learn about how our justice system works. Justice Day is a unique opportunity to commemorate the history of our government and to learn about the present day operations.

The judicial districts will be observing Justice Day with various activities that are open to the public. The courts will be holding Justice Day on the following dates and at the following locations:

April 4, 2017

Crownpoint Judicial District

April 5, 2017

Dilkon Judicial District

April 7, 2017

Tuba City Judicial District

Kayenta Judicial District

Aneth Judicial District

May 2, 2017

Window Rock Judicial District

May 5, 2017

Ramah Judicial District

More to be announced on www.navajocourts.org. •



Navajo judges of the Code of Federal Regulations Courts in 1954.



Navajo Nation judges in 2003.



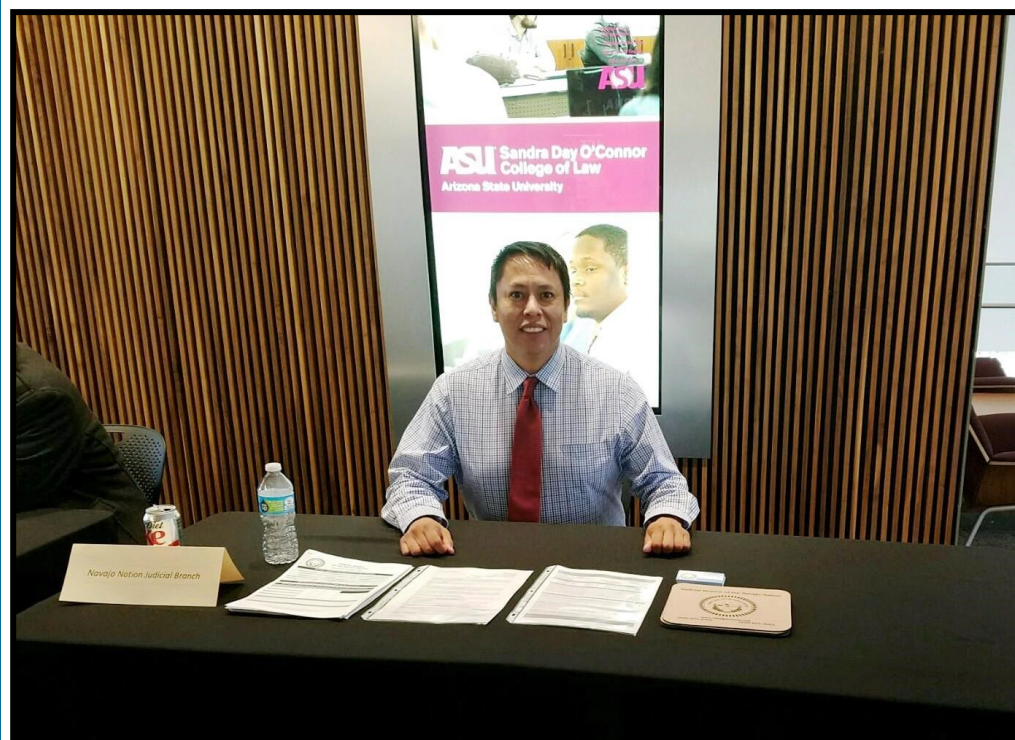
Navajo Nation judges in 2016.



Peacemakers from Alamo and To'hajiilee getting sworn in by District Court Judge William Platero at the To'hajiilee chapter house on February 17, 2017.



Navajo Nation Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tohnaneesdizi) wearing a Judicial Branch polo shirt during the Law and Order Committee regular meeting on February 27, 2017. The Law and Order Committee is the legislative oversight for the Judicial Branch of the Navajo Nation.



« Human Resources Director Ralph Roanhorse attending a job fair event at the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law on February 24, 2017. The Human Resources Office of the Judicial Branch is continuously recruiting for potential Navajo Nation judges. For more information, visit the www.navajocourts.org website and click on the VACANCIES link.

TAP: Planning for the future

Navajo Nation developing plan to address issues related to substance abuse, violence and suicide.

Empowering and Strengthening Healthier Generations. That is the vision for the people working on the Navajo Nation Tribal Action Plan (TAP). Organizers call the development of the plan a collaborative effort with various tribal agencies, technical assistants and non-governmental organizations involved at the onset.

Yvonne Kee-Billison of the Office of the President and Raquel Chee, grants administrator for the Judicial Branch, like to relay the story of how they were both in a Navajo Nation Council standing committee meeting and asked each other what they were doing at that meeting. It turned out that both were there because they were starting work on a comprehensive plan to address challenges related to health, violence and education that the people of the Navajo Nation face.

After realizing both were working on similar plans, their bosses, President Russell Begay and Chief Justice Allen Sloan, issued a May 2016 letter directing the executive and judicial branches to work together in the development and submittal of one Tribal Action Plan. Now Kee-Billison and Chee are the team leaders in getting a Navajo Nation TAP established.

Those who have worked on developing the plan have identified three key problems that they want to address, including violence, substance abuse and suicide.

Committed to developing the plan are Navajo Nation Department of Behavioral Health, Office of Diné Youth, Division of Social Services, the Judicial Branch, Navajo Nation Division of Health, Indian Health Services and many others.

The TAP is a requirement for purposes of applying for certain types of funding from the federal government for the justice system and for substance abuse and mental health. The Navajo Nation is obtaining technical assistance to ensure that requirements of the funding sources are met in order to apply for funding in the future.

The seeds for the plan initially were planted during the 2015 Criminal Justice Summit held in Albuquerque, N.M. At that time, participants from across the Navajo Nation judicial districts identified fears and needs from their communities. The top three fears and needs were

domestic violence and elder abuse, suicide and lack of law enforcement and prosecutors.

The development of the TAP continued the following year with a workshop held August 1-3, 2016. The Judicial Branch at that time issued a press release calling for participation and input from community members, schools and resource partners. Presentations and panel discussions were held on the state of the Navajo Nation's criminal justice system and systems of education and care. Participants worked on fears/needs assessments and resource mapping. More than 170 people showed up to the first TAP work session.

A second work session followed in September 2016. Participants divided into groups to identify barriers to communications and solutions, draft problem statements on topic areas, identify goals for the problem statements and identify specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound objectives for the goals. Approximately 120 people attended the second work session.

From there, an additional work session with a smaller team was held October 10-11, 2016, where the teams further worked on the problem statements and objectives. The team also decided to change the name of the TAP to Diné Binahat'á bee As'ah Oodááł.

In October, a core group of people from various disciplines was also identified to take the information from all sessions and begin drafting the TAP document. Since then, that group has met several times to work on the draft.

This is not the first time the Navajo Nation has developed such a plan. A tribal action plan was first developed in 1987 and a second TAP was developed and approved by the Navajo Nation Council in 1990.

A draft of the Tribal Action Plan is near completion and will be shared with the public before it is introduced into the legislative process for approval. The document will then become the people's plan. It is anticipated that an advisory committee will be put in place to monitor the implementation of the plan.

For more information, visit the www.navajocourts.org website and click on the link for Tribal Action Plan. ●

“WHAT HAPPENS NOW?” Seminar



Who: Families of Returning Citizens/Formerly Incarcerated

What: The purpose of this seminar:

- Engage families in their loved ones' pre/post release process
- Encourage families to support their loved ones transition from prison to home
- Provide an overview of supervised release and client expectations
- Promote transparency and build the bridge amongst government officials, NGOs, families, and the returning citizens/former offenders.

When: April 6, 2017 5p.m.-7p.m.

Where: Chinle Chapter House

Panelists: Navajo Nation Probation & Parole Services, U.S. Attorney's Office, Federal Probation, AHCCCS

Sponsored by: New Path Reentry Workgroup whose Mission is to:

“Engage and embrace each high risk offender and provide an individualized road map of success that is realized by meaningful employment, housing and positive community involvement.”

For More Info: Raquel Chee at rchee@navajo-nsn.gov

Judicial Branch Vision

It is our vision that the present judicial system, consisting of an adversarial-style tribal court system modeled on Anglo courts, a peacemaking system modeled on Diné original dispute resolution methods, and Probation and Parole Services, will fully embody the values and processes of the Navajo People, including family and clan-centered Navajo values. Our justice system as a whole will truly reflect the heart and soul of the Diné. It will be one that the People recognize as their own and fully participate in the spirit of nábináháazlago.

Judicial Branch Mission

The Judicial Branch will provide stability in the Navajo Nation government by providing court, peacemaking, and probation and parole services, to adjudicate cases, resolve disputes, rehabilitate individuals and families, restore harmony, educate the public, agencies, services and other governments in Diné bi beenahaz'áanii and protect persons and property pursuant to Navajo Nation laws, customs, traditions and applicable federal laws. Pursuant to Diné bi beenahaz'áanii, the Judicial Branch will carefully develop a justice system that fully embodies the traditional values and processes of the Navajo people.

JUDICIAL BRANCH DIRECTORY

Administrative Office of the Courts

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Judicial Administration (928) 871-6762
Human Resources (928) 871-7023
Fiscal (928) 871-6900
Information Technology (928) 871-6765

Supreme Court of the Navajo Nation (928) 871-6763

JUDICIAL DISTRICTS

Tuba City Judicial District (928) 283-3140
Window Rock Judicial District (928) 871-6626

Shiprock Judicial District (505) 368-1270

Crownpoint Judicial District (505) 786-2072

Kayenta Judicial District (928) 697-5549

Aneth Judicial District (435) 651-3545

Chinle Judicial District (928) 674-2070/2071

Dilkon Judicial District (928) 657-8140

Ramah Judicial District (928) 775-3218

Dzil Yijiin Judicial District (928) 725-3781

Alamo/Tohajilee Judicial District

Alamo Court (575) 854-2668/2669

To'hajiilee Court (505) 908-2817/2818

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Send submissions and ideas for our newsletter to Karen Francis at: karenfrancis@navajo-nsn.gov.

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