

Diné Justice

A Newsletter of the Judicial Branch of the Navajo Nation

SEPTEMBER 2016



Peacemaking Program graduates nearly 100 youth apprentices

The inspiration for beginning the Peacemaker Youth Apprenticeship Program came from traditional Dine stories. One involves the first Talking God as he performed the first Blessingway Ceremony. The story goes that at the conclusion of the ceremony, the other deities left the Hogan and Talking God was the last to leave.

He stuck his head back in and told the Dine people to never lose their teachings and language.

With the help of the Peacemaking Program and a federal grant, from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs, nearly 100 young Dine from across the Navajo Nation

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Devin Pooyouma, Harvey Tsinigine, Chief Justice Allen Sloan and Lavina Tsinigine at the graduation ceremony for youth apprentices.

Student interns

My experience working for the Judicial Conduct Commission



Kiana Ferris is a recent graduate of Navajo Preparatory School and is attending Fort Lewis College in the Fall 2016 semester.

By Kiana Ferris

Throughout my time working for the Judicial Branch as an office technician, I have been able to personally see how our Navajo Nation government works. Before this experience I never knew a whole lot about our government system besides what I read in the newspapers. However, transcribing the audios from the previous Judicial Conduct Commission work session held in June gave me a sense of what our Navajo Nation leaders discuss and how they operate as a system. Attending the last Judicial Conduct Commission meeting held in August really let me experience how much discussion goes behind each decision. I also realized how

important wording is within all of the laws so that there are not any loop holes.

It amazes me how much Navajo traditional thinking is able to be incorporated in our policies and way of thinking, and it made me realize how important having harmony within the entire Navajo Nation is. It means a great deal to me that our leaders are not only thinking for the present day but for the future of the Navajo Nation as well. Through working here, it has broadened my knowledge of government systems in general. It's definitely been a great learning experience and has me thinking about going into law. ●

College interns assist Supreme Court

By Kiana Ferris

Both native to the community, Cheron Laughing and Warren Scott are experiencing a taste of what the workforce is like at the Office of the Chief Justice located in Window Rock, Arizona.

Originally, the job was supposed to last to July 22; however, both received an extension to work until late August. Laughing attends Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, where she is pursuing a double major in Comparative Politics and Political Geography, with a minor in Arabian. Her current career goals include working for American Indian Law jurisdiction or the State Department with International Relations.

Scott is a recent graduate from Window Rock High School, planning to attend Mesa Community College. He is planning on earning an Associate's Degree in computer science. Scott's main interest is working with computers. He hopes to become a programmer or computer assembler.

Although their job at the Chief Justice's office was temporary, both gained new experiences throughout their time working. Scott says that it has definitely helped with time management, because he now has to work with deadlines with paperwork. Laughing states this experience has "reawakened interest in American Indian law, as well as the relationship between tribal, state and federal courts." Their tasks and responsibilities at the Chief Justice's Office included making edits for reports and inserting citations on documents that will be a part of the anthology of Navajo Nation Supreme Court decisions. They were also able to attend a recent Supreme Court hearing to learn more about the Navajo Nation judicial system. ●



Cheron Laughing



Warren Scott

Youth apprentices

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completed the curriculum as part of the Peacemaker Youth Apprenticeship Program and learned more about their culture and traditions. Dozens attended the graduation ceremony at Dine College on Friday, July 29, 2016, where they were honored with a luncheon, certificates, backpacks and a letter from the Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation.

The youth came from far and near. The group from To'hajiilee, N.M., left at 5 a.m. to attend the event. Others came from Ramah, Tuba City, Dilkon, Aneth, Chinle, Window Rock and Shiprock.

Many attended with relatives. Devin Pooyouma was there with his grandparents Harvey and Lavina Tsinigine. Pooyouma, 17, is a recent graduate from Tuba City High School.

The Tsinigines couldn't hide the pride they have in their grandson, who is Dine and Hopi.

"He gets into things on his own," Lavina said. "He pushes himself. He took Navajo classes. He tries to learn more about his Navajo side."

What Devin learns in school or through the program, he brings home, Lavina said. She added that she really didn't know what peacemaking was until she attended the graduation ceremony.

"I thought it was sitting in court," she said. "I would want him to learn more, keep going."

During remarks, OraSheila Altsisi, from Dilkon, Ariz., explained that the modern justice system, such as the courts, uses a vertical approach to dispute resolution while traditional peacemaking uses a horizontal ap-



Shaynee S. Bileen shakes hands with Traditional Program Specialist Ray Deal upon graduating the youth apprentice program.

proach where those involved in the dispute are able to come together to discuss the conflict and come up with a resolution together.

Altsisi said that the students in the program learned about Navajo traditional stories, the circle of life, ceremonies and medicine man songs. She said, "I feel like I've just absorbed all of the teachings."

The youth at Window Rock went to class each day at the Staff Development and Training Center. Elaine Henderson, the traditional program specialist for Window Rock's Peacemaking Program, called the youth "the cream of the crop."

Among them, Natauel Topaha, 11, was one of her star students. "He was really patient. He really listened," she said.

Natauel is a sixth grader at Ganado Middle School. He said that he joined the program so he could learn about his culture because it is important to him.

"I learned that some people are related to me and what tools are used for different kinds of ceremonies," he said.

Jessica Denetdeal, 16, from Ganado, went to the orientation for the program at Dilkon after learning about it from a friend.

"It was really interesting because we learned a lot of traditional stuff," she said. "I wanted to learn about my own culture because I didn't know that much."

Jessica said that her group learned traditional stories, what the cradle board represents and how to make blue corn mush, but her favorite part of the program was taking part in horse therapy.

"We got to see a real horse and gentle it down," she said.

Another graduate of the program,

Brenneih Nelson, 13, attends To'hajiilee Community School. She participated in the program in hopes of becoming more informed about the Navajo culture. Subjects such as the Navajo star constellations, history of clans and the history of the six sacred mountains are just a few of the subjects that Nelson said she gained the most from.

The curriculum for the program was developed largely by the Peacemaking Program's bi-cultural training manager Roger Begay.

"We started with a document that was all Western presentation and it was mostly about

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Dustin Hosteen introduces himself at the ceremony recognizing youth who completed the apprentice program.



GRADUATES OF YOUTH APPRENTICE PROGRAM

CHINLE

Lydell Poleahla
Aaliyah Brown

RAMAH

Colette Chee
Janell Chee
Nahshon Desmond
Sharmaine Chee
Shania Hosteen
Taye Johnson
Adriano Pino
Dustin Hosteen
Ronisha Apachito
Chloe Desmond
Dimitri Desmond
Drewvis Filfred
Titus Filfred

ANETH

Riley Dishface
Alyzea Benally
Charity Bedonie
Faith Bedonie
Morning Rain Joe
Nicole Blackwater
Shimaya Billie

SHIPROCK

Emily Kitseallyboy
Shia Deale
Ryan McDonald
Todd Mc Donald
Andrew McDonald
Monte Diswood
Alexander Diswood

DILKON

Ashley Davis
Alexandria Denetdeal
Elizabeth Denetdeal
Shaun Altisisi
OraSheila Altsisi
Alana Johnson
Justin Thomas
Raeshawn Greenwood
Jessica Denetdeal
Arthello Neal

TUBA CITY

Nashiona M. Redking
Ariam Redking
Makaylee Twohatchet
Acacia Williams
Anthony Neztosie
Lyriisa George
Tyler Williams
Rhiannon Worker
Daniel Alvin Honahni
Cauy Manygoats
Logan H. Salaba
Riley Salaba
Honesty Caceres
Francisco Caceres
Brett Nez
Shawndean Bigman
Beau Tanner Manygoats
Kyler C. Smith
Erin Butler
Andraya Cavanaugh
Shaynee S. Bileen
Kaylee M. Bileen
Elena Edison
Yannah Nizhoni Battiest
Lanisha Jim
Lakayla Jim
Lakisha Jim
J. Aguirre
Davin Pooyouma

WINDOW ROCK

Caitlyn Begay
Desiree Aurora Begay
Wade Dixson
Keilah Dixson
Cheyne Herder
Van-Garrett G. Johnson
Colleen Lee
Natauel Topaha
Caitlyn Wauneka
Krystyonna Wauneka
Kyle Weaver
Jaden Plummer
Tiyawna Owens
Julius John
Arviso Casuse
Cali Hicks
Lepedro Harvey
Yedibah J. Tsosie
Chance Thomas
Shyanne Smith

ALAMO/TO'HAJILEE

Khaleah Long
Colin Long
Kendrick Long
Brenneih Nelson
Eryann Montehermoso
Iziah K. Shenale
Ryan Bruce
Joaquin Billy
Shondiin Billy
Nathan Monte
Manuel Monte

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bullying," said Roman Bitsuie, Peacemaking Program coordinator. "We put that aside and put together our own document. It's only the beginning in terms of what we want to accomplish."

The purpose of the program was to teach the youth about their culture thus preparing them to become apprentices to peacemaking. With peacemaking, they will be able to help their peers in their schools and communities with dispute resolution. Peacemaking is the traditional form of dispute resolution that has been used by the Dine since time immemorial.

The Peacemaking Program was awarded a grant from the U.S. Office of Justice Programs to use peacemakers to address school truancies and bullying through the Youth Apprentice Program. In January, the Peacemaking Program put out a call to recruit youth for the program. This is the first time that youth have completed the curriculum program. ●



TOP: Alexander (left) and Monte (right) Diswood pose for a photo with Chief Justice Allen Sloan after the graduation ceremony.



TOP: Acacia Williams and Makayle Twohatchet pose for their families after receiving certificates and backpacks. RIGHT: Janell Chee receives a certificate from Chief Justice Allen Sloan.



What happens now?

Judicial Branch facilitates discussion on citizens returning from incarceration

By Raquel Chee, *Grants Administrator*

The New Path Reentry Planning Workgroup and Navajo Nation Probation & Parole Services hosted a “What Happens Now” seminar at the To’neesdizi Chapter House in Tuba City, Ariz., on Thursday, July 21, 2016. Families of returning citizens or those formerly incarcerated were invited. The event was attended by community members and local service providers. The U.S. Attorney’s Office and U.S. Federal Probation sent representatives to discuss supervised release and expectations.

The seminar was designed to promote transparency and build bridges among government officials, local service providers, families, returning citizens and former offenders. Those in attendance identified the need for a halfway house closer to home for their returning family members. Others identified the need for treatment services, housing, employment and positive mentors.

A returning citizen gave a very impactful statement about how she “deserves a second chance” and that her family has been key to her successful reentry following federal incarceration. She recalled her experience of being in a halfway house in southern Arizona where she observed that the majority of Native American parolees were Navajo who desired to be closer to home to complete their transition.

Another returning citizen discussed how he has successfully transitioned into the role of a mentor after his return from incarceration. He expressed the need for positive mentors to help guide returning citizens into a new identity, absent of the negative habits that contributed to them becoming incarcerated.

Navajo Nation Chief Probation Officer Lucinda Yellowhair stressed the importance of the value of healing and restorative justice for our people who have made amends for their wrongdoings.

The next “What Happens Now” seminar will take place in Window Rock at the Navajo Nation Museum on Sept. 29, 2016.

The New Path Reentry Planning Workgroup meets the second Tuesday of every other month and is comprised of tribal and non-tribal service providers, tribal leaders, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, U.S. Federal Probation, county officials, community advocates and former offenders.

Please contact Raquel Chee at rchee@navajo-nsn.gov for more information. ●

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.

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

JUDICIAL BRANCH OF THE NAVAJO NATION

P.O. Box 520

Window Rock, Arizona 86515

www.navajocourts.org