

Diné Youth & Justice

The Official Newsletter of the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch's Nábináhaazláago Initiative and Peacemaking Program

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Nábináhaazláago Initiative working to provide case management services for youth

Case management staff with the Nábináhaazláago Initiative have served more than 300 youth at youth detention sites in Tuba City, Arizona and Tohatchi, New Mexico. The initiative is part of a two-year grant that began in November 2009 and continues to today. The initiative is funded through a \$1,362,906 grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Assistance to Rural Law Enforcement to Combat Crime and Drugs Program and is administered by the Navajo Nation Judicial

Branch. With the initiative, the Judicial Branch is seeking to provide case management services to youth in detention on the Navajo Nation.

The initiative is also seeking to provide assessments for those in protective custody and to devise and implement a data collection plan.

The Judicial Branch is partnering with other Navajo Nation and external agencies to accomplish these tasks and specifically to formulate agreements and plans for interagency collaboration.

The Nábináhaazláago Initiative has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Diné Education so that case management officers can refer youth to services that the Department is able to offer, including seeking alternative educational options and the use of Office of Diné Youth resources.

Other partnerships continue to be formed. Members of a working group and a steering commission meet regularly to formalize partnerships to meet the goals of the initiative.

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Youth Education and Apprentice Program targets truancy

The Navajo Nation Judicial Branch's Peacemaking Program received a \$450,000 four-year grant for the Youth Education and Apprentice Program to provide truancy intervention and prevention for children ages 11-17. The grant was received Oct. 9, 2009.

The Peacemaking Program is focused on providing meaningful services where peace-makers will be able to engage in effective communication and counseling methods in schools. This will be accomplished by training peace-makers to provide direct services to students and their families within their

communities and schools.

The first year of this grant was committed to strategic planning, which included establishing a mission statement, vision statement and a grant advisory board. The mission statement is, "Hoozhoogo Iina": Empowering youth and families to be decision makers and problem solvers using traditional methods." The vision statement states, "The Navajo Nation will be a stronger, healthier, happier, more culturally centered people for future generations."

The Peacemaking Program's five member grant advisory board includes:

a) Josephine Foo, grant administrator, b) Gloria

Continued on p. 7



12/13/10—Gloria Benally, Peacemaking Program coordinator, at the Family Group Decision Making training session

SCHOOLS SELECTED TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAM

The Peacemaking Program has selected schools from within the Navajo Nation judicial districts to begin the pilot project. The ten schools that have been selected include: Alamo High School, To'Hajiilee High School, Pinon Unified School District, Wingate High School, SebaDelkai School, Ganado High School, Pine Hill School, Kayenta Community School, Whitehorse High School and Career Prep School.

About us

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 nábináháazlaago.

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.

NÁBINÁHAAZLÁAGO INITIATIVE

Vision Statement

To guide a new generation of youth with the knowledge, experience, positive values and well-being to succeed

Mission

To provide youth-driven services that change attitudes and behaviors, promote community collaboration, and ensure timely services, strengthening youth and families with cultural values and promoting wellness.

THE PEACEMAKING PROGRAM

Peacemakers have been part of the Navajo Nation justice system since time immemorial. In the modern era, peacemakers have been part of the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch for more than twenty years as guides in traditional dispute resolution.

Navajo peacemaking is one of the most renowned restorative justice programs in the world. Neither mediation nor alternative dispute resolution, it has been called a “horizontal system of justice” because all participants are treated as equals with the purpose of preserving ongoing relationships and restoring harmony among involved parties. In peacemaking there is no coercion, and there are no “sides.” No one is labeled the offender or the victim, the plaintiff or the defendant.

In 2000, the Navajo Nation Council began requiring peacemakers to be involved in determining nályééh in criminal cases. In 2002 the Diné Fundamental Law was codified. In 2003, peacemakers were further directed by the Navajo Nation Council to offer traditional counseling, education and advice to judges, clients of the courts, and the general public.

Peacemakers are the institutional keepers of the methods and principles of original dispute resolution, culture and tradition in our justice system.

There are presently 242 certified peacemakers at large in 110 Chapters. The Peacemaking Program provides them institutional support. In addition, Peacemaker Liaisons are located in each District Court who match disputants to a peacemaker that all parties will accept.

To'Hajiilee establishes local truancy protocol

TO'HAJIILEE—In November, 2009, the To'Hajiilee Family Court through the Peacemaking Division in collaboration with the To'Hajiilee Community School established a local truancy protocol. The protocol sets forth standard procedures in processing truancy court cases that are referred to the To'Hajiilee Prosecutor's Office for prosecution.

This collaborative effort came to the forefront during a community resources meeting sponsored by the To'Hajiilee Court. Among the participants of the community resources team are the To'Hajiilee Court, To'Hajiilee Peacemaking Division, To'Hajiilee Prosecutor's Office, To'Hajiilee Community School, To'Hajiilee Behavioral Health Services, To'Hajiilee Social Services and the Navajo Housing Authority – To'Hajiilee Sub-Office. These entities played a major role in the establishment of the protocol to fight truancy within the community.

The To'Hajiilee community resources team found that the student attendance rate was at an all-time low of 73 percent during the 2008-2009 school year. During this time, there were more cases referred or identified for truancy than any other time in the previous five years. The truancy rate among students at the To'Hajiilee Community School was considered the highest priority for the school because of its effects on school funding. It was understood by the resources team that if the truancy remained high at the community school, there would be a serious reduction in funding for the school which would ultimately affect the school's overall operation.

In response, the community resources team established the truancy protocol to help alleviate the truancy problem.

The protocol established a system of response which involved the prosecutor's office, peacemaking program and the court. A case for truancy would



The To'Hajiilee court house

The To'Hajiilee community resources team found that the student attendance rate was at an all time low of 73 percent during the 2008-2009 school year.

be referred to the prosecutor and a truancy case would be filed with the court. At the initial hearing, the court would transfer the case to the peacemaking program upon the request

of the prosecutor. Then the peacemaking program would hold a peacemaking session in an effort to resolve the truancy problem between the student, the parents and the school. The peacemaking program would report back to the court on its resolution and recommendations. The peacemaking participants would all play a major role in the rehabilitation efforts of the truancy problem and the parents and student were equally held responsible for any further truancy.

Penalties for violating the peacemaking agreement include commu-

nity service work for the student and parents and possible contempt of court proceedings. As a reward for following through on all the conditions of the peacemaking agreement, the case is dismissed by the prosecutor and no further action is taken against the student and parents.

The truancy protocol has been very successful and a recent report from the To'Hajiilee Community School indicated an increase in student attendance to 94 percent for the 2010-2011 school year which started in

August 2010. The truancy rate has decreased significantly and the resources team is continuing its efforts to fight truancy through continued com-

munity education. For more information on the truancy protocol contact Honorable William J.J. Platero, District Judge at the To'Hajiilee Court.

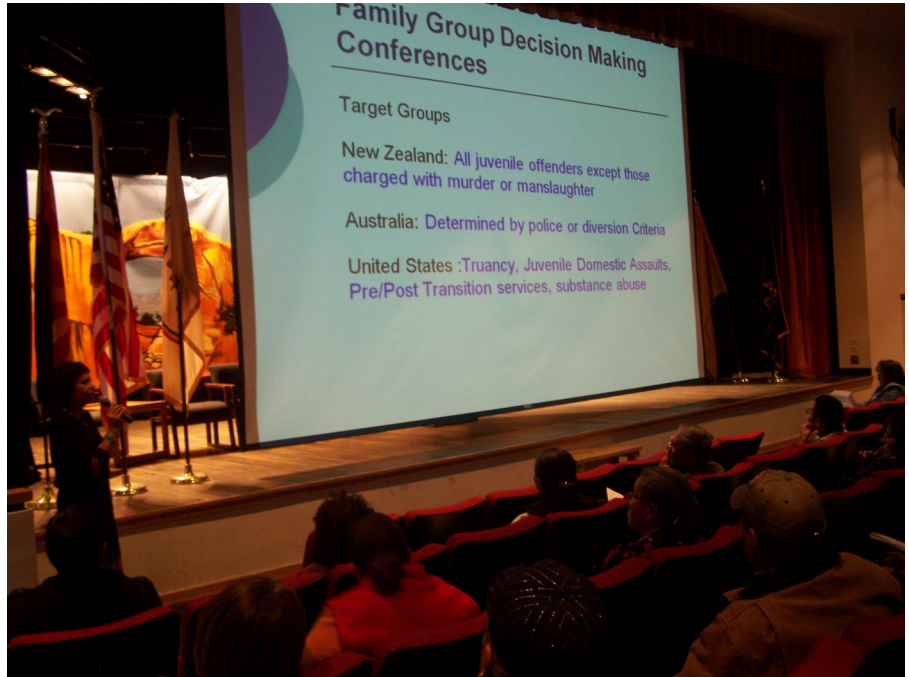
The truancy protocol has been very successful and a recent report from the To'Hajiilee Community School indicated an increase in student attendance to 94 percent for 2010-2011 school year .

Family Group Decision Making discussions begin

WINDOW ROCK—More than 90 participants took the opportunity to learn about Family Group Decision Making during an information session at the Navajo Nation Museum on Nov. 8, 2010.

Stephanie Autumn, director of the EDC Tribal Youth T/TA Center, gave an introduction to the history and principles of the technique. Autumn also offered to return to teach more about the aspects of Family Group Decision Making.

Family Group Decision Making is a restorative form of justice and has been successfully implemented in many parts of the world including New Zealand, Australia and the United States. Restorative practices are alternative responses to crime or misconduct and bring together those who are involved in conflicts in a way that helps people to address the harms, assume responsibility and work things out, Autumn said during her presentation. Restorative practices also generate levels of personal change for those involved.



Summer Autumn presents on the history of Family Group Decision Making.

The technique involves the family members as participants who actively seek solutions. It also involves identifying a family's

strengths that can be used in problem-solving. Autumn said that in family group conferencing, participants begin with agreements. There is also a concept of freedom of choice in family group conferencing which enables participants to become engaged in the process.

Participants identified current issues for youth today, such as bullying and suicide, where new techniques can be explored. Participants included peacemakers, probation officers, school counselors, residential assistants, parent educators, Behavioral Health prevention specialists, public information officers, teachers, case management specialists, chapter officials, security guards, social workers, students and community members.

Further training for peacemakers, social service workers and others also took place in December as part of the training for Judicial Branch personnel and others.



Participants listen to a discussion on Family Group Decision Making.

Sweat lodge ceremonies start at Tuba City Juvenile Detention Center again

TUBA CITY– Youth in Tuba City got the chance to take part in a sweat lodge ceremony in October. At one time, there were such ceremonies conducted routinely at the Tuba City Juvenile Detention Facility. Recently staff at the Nábináhaazláago Initiative contacted other resources to bring the sweat lodge ceremonies back.

“We’re hoping to keep it going,” said case management officer Robbin Preston.

Four clients, ages 14-17, took part in the first sweat lodge ceremony. The case management workers brought the firewood and the youth cut and split the wood for the ceremony. The youth also dug out the rock pit for the ceremony.

Preparing for the ceremony began at 6 a.m. and the ceremony itself started at about 8 a.m.

“The Department of Corrections staff were really helpful,” said Pres-



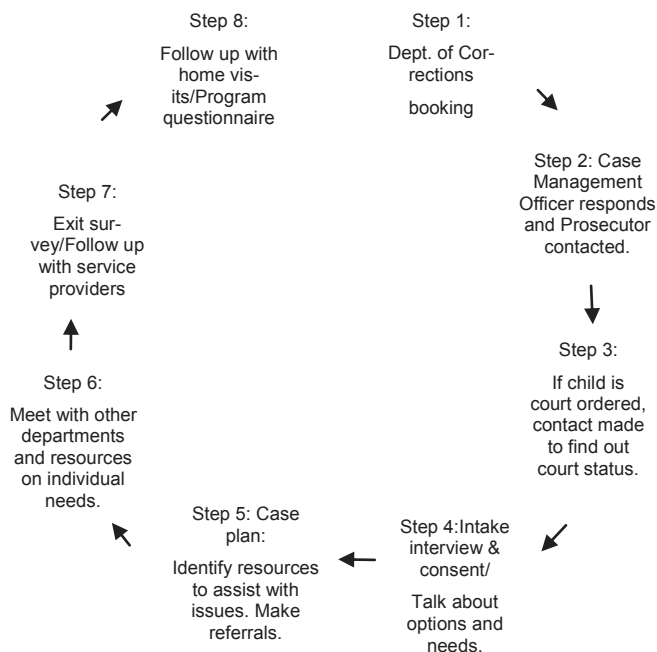
A rainbow is visible behind the area where a sweat lodge ceremony was conducted at the Tuba City Juvenile Detention Facility for Nábináhaazláago Initiative clients.

ton. “The kids enjoyed themselves.”

The sweat lodge ceremony was such a success that other youth who heard about it have expressed interest in attending such ceremonies in the future.

In addition to the sweat lodge, the Boys and Girls Club provided some activities for participants throughout the day.

Nábináhaazláago Initiative’s Case Management Process



The process begins when a child is arrested by law enforcement and booked into a Department of Corrections facility. The DOC refers to the Case Management Office where the child is interviewed by a case management officer. The prosecutor’s office is also contacted.

The Case Management Office collects data, conducts an interview and assessment, and obtains consent from the child and parent/guardian. If no consent is given, the child is given an exit survey and the case is closed.

If consent is given, a plan is made to address the child’s needs and referrals are made to service providers. The case management officer then meets with the service providers on the case plan. Follow-ups and home visits are made to report on the progress of the child. After treatment is completed, a program questionnaire is filled out.

The case management officer may work with the prosecutor’s office and the probation and parole office throughout the process.

Meet the Case Management Staff

The Case Management Offices that are part of the Nábináhaazláago Initiative are located at the juvenile detention centers in Tohatchi, New Mexico, and Tuba City, Arizona. The Tuba City detention center is a long-term facility for youth while the Tohatchi center holds youth for up to 48 hours.

At each of the sites, case management workers are available to speak with youth and to help guide them as they seek resources to address why they enter the Navajo Nation justice system. The case management officers work with service providers to help youth in detention.

The case management supervisor at Tuba City is Dorothy Littleben and the case management officer is Robbin Preston.

The case management supervisor at Tohatchi is Juanita Dennison and the case management officers are Chanelle Benally and Vernal Ayze. The office technician is Laurena Smith.

According to the case management workers, it takes patience to be a case management officer and working with other service providers improves their progress with case loads.

Littleben said she enjoys her job because she has direct contact with youth to provide assistance. Littleben has many years experience in case management and started with Nábináhaazláago Initiative at the Tohatchi Juvenile Detention Center before becoming the supervisor at Tuba City.

Preston has nearly 10 years experience work-



Tohatchi Case Management Office staff includes (l to r) Juanita Dennison, Chanelle Benally and Laurena Smith.

ing in juvenile corrections. He said that it takes patience, willingness to compromise and strong communication skills to work as a case management officer. His advice for young people is, “Work today to get where you want to be tomorrow.”

The duties of the case management officers are to perform case management services; obtain family waivers and consents; make referrals; perform risk assessments; provide data, field observations and recommendations; and provide aftercare case management and monitoring. The office technicians assist with data collection, which is an important effort because data regarding youth in detention was previously unavailable. The data will help to identify key issues for staff to continue to address in assisting our youth who need services.



Tuba City Case Management Office staff includes Robbin Preston and Dorothy Littleben.

What do Case Management Officers do?

- ▶ We are on-site and are the first to respond after booking at the detention center.
- ▶ We allow free expression with no interruption during the interview process.
- ▶ We can help discover options to make positive changes in behavior if you choose.
- ▶ We will refer you to services and advocate for you, if requested.
- ▶ We will support your determination to rediscover traditional and cultural values and k'e as a means of self-identity.

Youth Apprenticeship Program targets truancy (cont'd from p. 1)

Benally, grant project coordinator, c) Karen Francis, grant liaison, d) Stacie Hansen of the American Humane Association to evaluate the project, and e) Tim Benally, assistant superintendent of the Department of Diné Education to provide guidance on school regulations.

During strategic planning meetings, a committee was formed to develop curriculum for traditional counseling certification for the peacemakers and to create educational tools for children in kindergarten through 12th grade focusing on peacemaking processes, values, principles, and standards of character building and empowering youth



12/13/10—A participant creates a section for a quilt that relates experiences with children.

and families to be decision makers and problem solvers using traditional methods. Also discussed were school regulations for federal, state, and Navajo Nation background and finger printing clearance requirements for resources in school facilities. Thirty peacemakers were selected to be trained as traditional counselors from the judicial districts during the third meeting. A recertification effort was instituted to ensure that the peacemakers who were selected maintained the integrity of their communities. All 30 selected peacemakers have been recertified with their respective community chapters and during this effort a number of new peacemakers were also recruited.

During the end of the first year and beginning of the second year, the Peacemaking Program centralized its efforts in project implementation. A seven member training committee has been established. This committee consists of a multicultural counseling and therapy specialist Dr. Larry Emerson, a Western counseling clinical therapist Charles Stacey, and a faith based coun-

seling therapist Johnny Begay. The counseling methods will be enhanced with the assistance of other professionals including school principal Dr. Mark Sorenson, Sylvia Jackson of the Department of Diné Education and four consultants from the Diné Hatahli Association. The Peacemaking Program will provide education on Navajo language and culture by Roger Begay and case management by Gloria Benally. Training in these areas began in January 2011 and will continue to September 2011. By the time the training is complete, the peacemakers should be prepared to assist schools and communities in the fall of 2011.



12/13/10—Peacemakers and staff hear a presentation on the Peacemaking Program.

Success story

A case management officer shares a success story from the Tuba City case management office

My success story goes to one of the first youth that came through our Case Management program. A local Tuba City resident who was 15 years old at the time came through the detention facility in May 2010 with multiple charges that were almost extreme. Her emotions and frustration were high as she spoke of why she decided to disobey her parents knowing the consequences she could face. Her suggestion was that she wanted to

try going to school elsewhere besides Tuba City. I told her I could help her look into nearby boarding schools. I had a meeting with her mother and the youth expressed to us how she wanted to be independent and on her own. She was ready to challenge herself at a school away from home. She applied to a boarding school in the upper west coast—Chemawa Indian School, a Native American boarding school in Salem,

Oregon. By the end of August she came to me with good news about her acceptance to this school.

I felt I had accomplished a big step toward opening up opportunities for this individual. To date, she is doing extremely well academically and although she misses home sometimes, her new friends and new surroundings give her reassurance.

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Karen Francis, Judicial Liaison Officer

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Dorothy Littleben, Case Management Supervisor/Tuba City
Juanita Dennison, Case Management Supervisor/Tohatchi

Peacemaking Program Administration

Gloria Benally, Program Coordinator
Roger Begay, Bi-Culture Training Manager
Andrea Boyd, Office Technician

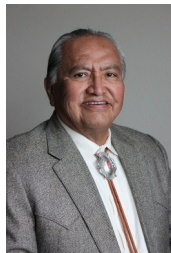
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Navajo Nation Judicial Branch Directory

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Eleanor Shirley
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Judicial Administration (928) 871-6762
Human Resources (928) 871-7023
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Nábináhaazláago Initiative

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Tohatchi Juvenile Detention Center (505) 733-2821
Tuba City Navajo Juvenile Detention Center (928) 283-3140/3150

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Tuba City (928) 283-3143
Window Rock (928) 871-6940
Shiprock (505) 368-1276
Crownpoint (505) 786-2084
Kayenta (928) 697-5502
Aneth (435) 651-3545
Chinle (928) 674-2554
Dilkon (928) 657-8136
Ramah (505) 775-3218
Alamo (575) 854-2866/2868
Tohajiilee (505) 908-2817

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Carol K. Perry, Judge

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Genevieve Woody, Judge

Crownpoint Judicial District (505) 786-2072

LaVerne A. Johnson, Judge
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Kayenta Judicial District (928) 697-5549

Jennifer D. Benally, Judge

Aneth Judicial District (435) 651-3545

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Leroy S. Bedonie, Judge
Cynthia Thompson, Judge

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Wilson Yellowhair, Judge

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