



NAVAJO NATION DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

ETHEL BRANCH
Attorney General

HEATHER L. CLAH
Deputy Attorney General

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Shaniya Logg

Phone: (928) 871-6345

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STATEMENT FROM NAVAJO NATION ATTORNEY GENERAL ETHEL BRANCH UPDATING THE NAVAJO NATION ON THE ONGOING PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION REGARDING REPORTS BY THE VICE PRESIDENT

WINDOW ROCK, NAVAJO NATION – As Attorney General of the Navajo Nation, my duty is to uphold the laws and policies that protect the rights and dignity of all individuals within our Nation, including those who experience harassment or discrimination in any form.

The Navajo Nation takes all allegations of sexual harassment very seriously. The Navajo Nation's personnel policies are clear: no employee, regardless of their position, should be subjected to unwelcome or inappropriate behavior in the workplace. It is my responsibility to ensure that any claims brought forth are addressed with the utmost care, impartiality, and respect for all parties involved.

When Vice President Richelle Montoya reported her experience of sexual harassment, the situation was immediately concerning. Given the gravity of the allegation and the high-profile nature of the parties involved, I ordered an independent preliminary investigation to ensure transparency and objectivity. I hired outside attorney Eric Dahlstrom from the law firm of Rothstein Donatelli to conduct this preliminary investigation, and that process remains ongoing. Mr. Dahlstrom is conducting a detailed and impartial investigation. I understand there may be frustration that his investigation has not been completed yet, but a thorough and wholesome investigation requires review of significant documentation and numerous interviews, which cannot be done overnight. I must emphasize the importance of a thorough and unbiased preliminary investigation to ensure the rights of all parties are appropriately protected and it would be improper and irresponsible to make decisions or share information based on an incomplete process. I will provide additional updates to the Nation once the preliminary investigation has been completed by Mr. Dahlstrom.

Regarding the option of Navajo Peacemaking, it is essential to clarify that the Navajo Nation has not proposed Peacemaking and we continue to focus on the preliminary investigation. Navajo Peacemaking is a traditional form of conflict resolution deeply rooted in our culture, which seeks

to foster dialogue and healing. However, I respect that this process may not be appropriate for every situation, particularly when formal legal proceedings are necessary. No party should feel coerced or pressured to pursue any resolution method against their will.

As the Attorney General, my focus remains on upholding the integrity of the Navajo Nation's legal process and ensuring that justice is served fairly for all.

The Navajo people deserve leadership that reflects their values and protects their rights. As these events unfold, I remain committed to transparency, accountability, and justice for all members of our Nation.

Ethel Branch, Attorney General of the Navajo Nation

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