



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 15, 2013

**NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION INDIAN
WORKING GROUP SIGNS A MEMORADUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

WASHINGTON, D.C., & WINDOW ROCK, A.Z. – Friday, July 12, 2013, marked the establishment of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission (Commission) and the Civil Rights Division's Indian Working Group (IWG). The MOU will establish a communication process when civil rights violation occurred and can be brought to the IWG when a member of the Navajo Nation civil rights are violated.

The MOU evolved from discussions between Albert Sanchez, New Mexico EEOC Program Analyst, Albert Baltazar, Special Counsel of the USDOJ Civil Rights Division, and the Commission on May 25, 2012. A meeting was held between the Commission, NMEEOC and Civil Rights Division to discuss violations of civil rights violations in border towns surrounding the Navajo Nation.

The Commission was established as an entity of the Navajo Nation government to operate as a clearinghouse entity to address discriminatory actions against citizens of the Navajo Nation. The Commission works to ensure that Navajo citizens are free from discrimination and are free to enjoy basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Commission is authorized to receive reports of discriminatory and racially motivated acts perpetrated against citizens of the Navajo Nation and refer such incidents to the proper authorities.

The IWG is a part of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and is comprised of members from throughout the Civil Rights Division. The mission and purpose of the IWG is to assist the Civil Rights Division in its law enforcement duties and responsibilities toward Native Americans. The IWG works to identify issues that affect Native Americans and to refer, coordinate, support and monitor enforcement and outreach activities involving Native Americans.

The MOU promotes and encourages enforcement of federal civil rights laws by increasing communication between the Commission and IWG. The MOU outlines procedures and provides guidance to the Commission and IWG in sharing information about civil rights issues affecting citizens of the Navajo Nation.

“This MOU will assist the Commission by streamlining and expediting information between agencies to resolve civil rights violations that are not afforded the same investigative measures that non-indigenous victims receive. This MOU will be that stepping stone toward resolving issues that this Commission has had difficulty with pursuing in the border towns surrounding the Navajo Nation” said Commissioner Darden, chairperson of the Commission.

“This MOU between the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission and the Indian Working Group establishes a strong mechanism to assist the Civil Rights Division to address civil rights issues involving citizens of the Navajo Nation, “ said Eve Hill, Senior Counselor to the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. “For far too long Native Americans have experienced discrimination and injustice, and the federal government can and must stop such discrimination.”

“With the MOU approved by both the Navajo Nation and US civil rights office, the Navajo Human Rights Office now looks forward to working on common strategy to address race discrimination against Navajo citizens,” said Leonard Gorman, Executive Director of the Office of Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission.

###