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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**UPCOMING JUSTICE DAYS COMMEMORATE THE CREATION OF  
THE NAVAJO COURT SYSTEM**

The public is invited as the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch observes Justice Day at its judicial districts throughout the months of April and May to commemorate the creation of the Navajo Nation's own court system on April 1, 1959.

Not only is this year the 59th anniversary of the Navajo Nation's court system but it is also the 150<sup>th</sup> year since the signing of the Treaty of 1868, which returned the Navajo people to their sacred homeland and recognized a nation-to-nation sovereign relationship between the United States and the Navajo Nation. Many of the Justice Day activities will commemorate both anniversaries.

The Navajo people had their own form of dispute resolution before internment at Bosque Redondo where they talked things out, guided by leaders who were selected by community consensus. However, while at Bosque Redondo, the Navajo people were divided into 12 groups, each with a chief. These chiefs would handle less serious offenses of an Army-adopted code from among their own group. All the chiefs would act as a jury for the more serious offenses with the Fort Sumner commander serving as judge.

After the Navajo people returned to their homeland, Courts of Indian Offenses, also known as CFR Courts (Code of Federal Regulations), were created by the Department of Interior Secretary. The CFR Courts were established to help do away with customs and practices of Indian people. The CFR Courts lasted from 1883 to 1892 when the Navajo Courts of Indian Offenses were created. The Navajo Courts of Indian Offenses were also courts of the Department of the Interior and were created by the agent assigned to the Navajo people at that time.

After a bill was introduced in Arizona in 1957 to extend its jurisdiction to the Navajo Nation utilizing Public Law 280, the Navajo Tribal Council created a Navajo court system which became effective April 1, 1959. The establishment of a court system is an inherent exercise of sovereignty that the Navajo government exerted when the Council approved the resolution to

create its own courts.

Today the Navajo Nation courts have been called the flagship of indigenous courts. Many people look to the Navajo court system to protect the sovereignty of all American Indian courts.

In addition to the courts, the Judicial Branch of the Navajo Nation offers the traditional form of dispute resolution of “talking things out” or peacemaking, *hózhóji naat’aah*, through the Peacemaking Program. As part of its function, the Peacemaking Program also provides education on our traditional customs and Diné Fundamental Law.

The annual Justice Day activities give the public an opportunity to visit the judicial districts and to learn about how the justice system works. The judicial districts will be observing Justice Day with various activities that seek to provide public education. This year, the Supreme Court and the Administrative Office of the Courts will be holding their inaugural Justice Day on May 9, 2018.

The schedule for Justice Days is as follows:

April 3, 2018

Window Rock Judicial District, Window Rock, Arizona

April 4, 2018

Chinle Judicial District, Chinle, Arizona

April 5, 2018

Dził Yijiin Judicial District, Pinon, Arizona

Crownpoint Judicial District, Crownpoint, New Mexico

April 6, 2018

Dilkon Judicial District, Dilkon, Arizona

Kayenta Judicial District, Kayenta, Arizona

Tuba City Judicial District, Tuba City, Arizona

April 16, 2018

Aneth Judicial District, Aneth, Utah

April 20, 2018

Alamo Court, Alamo, New Mexico

Ramah Judicial District, Ramah, New Mexico

May 4, 2018

To’hajiilee Court, To’hajiilee, New Mexico

May 9, 2018

Supreme Court and Administrative Office of the Courts, Window Rock, Arizona

More information will be announced on the [www.navajocourts.org](http://www.navajocourts.org) website.

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