

For Immediate Release
July 13, 2011

**NAVAJO WOMAN RECEIVES 30-MONTH PRISON SENTENCE FOR
DUI-RELATED INVOLUNTARY MANSLAUGHTER CONVICTION**

ALBUQUERQUE – On July 12, 2011 in federal court in Albuquerque, **Verdie Chavez**, a 34-year-old enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who resides in Smith Lake, New Mexico, was sentenced to 30-months of imprisonment to be followed by three years of supervised release for her conviction on an involuntary manslaughter charge. Chavez also was ordered to pay \$6,119.98 in restitution to cover funeral costs for the victim. Chavez, who has been under pretrial supervision at a half-way house since her arrest on June 4, 2010, is required to surrender to the U.S. Marshal's Service by July 14, 2011 to begin serving her prison sentence.

United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said Chavez was driving under the influence of alcohol and driving recklessly when she killed Jimmy Larry, a 65-year-old Navajo man, on the Navajo Indian Reservation on July 23, 2007. Chavez was indicted on September 29, 2010 and charged with (1) second degree murder; (2) involuntary manslaughter; and (3) assault resulting in serious bodily injury. On February 11, 2011, Chavez entered a guilty plea to count 2, the involuntary manslaughter offense, under a plea agreement with the United States Attorney's Office. The two remaining counts of the indictment were dismissed after Chavez was sentenced.

Court filings reflect that, following the collision that resulted in Mr. Larry's death, Chavez told a nurse at the Gallup Indian Medical Center that she intentionally swerved into the other lane because her passenger "doubled dared" her to hit an oncoming car traveling in the opposite direction. Chavez told the nurse that, when she attempted to get back into her lane of traffic, her passenger grabbed the steering wheel and forced her to stay in the other lane until

Chavez struck Mr. Larry's vehicle. The passenger denied Chavez's version of the events. Court filings also reflect that Chavez had a prior DUI conviction.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety, and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kyle T. Nayback.

###

11-296