

Shiprock man pleads guilty to federal voluntary manslaughter charge

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ALBUQUERQUE – Zachariah Nez, 19, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who resides in Shiprock, N.M., pled guilty June 15 in federal court in Albuquerque to a voluntary manslaughter charge. The plea agreement recommends a prison sentence within the range of six to 11 years followed by a term of supervised release to be determined by the court.

Nez was arrested in October 2016, on a criminal complaint charging him with killing a Navajo man on the Navajo Indian Reservation in San Juan County, N.M., on Oct. 17, 2016. According to the complaint, Nez killed the victim by striking him with a rock.

Nez was indicted on Nov. 1, 2016, and charged with second-degree murder on Oct. 17, 2016, in San Juan County.

During the proceedings, Nez pled guilty to a felony information charging him with voluntary manslaughter. In entering the guilty plea, Nez admitted that on Oct. 17, 2016, he killed the victim by striking him several times with a rock. Nez remains in custody pending a sentencing hearing which has yet to be scheduled.

This case was investigated by the Farmington office of the FBI and the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph M. Spindle.