

Churchrock man pleads guilty to federal voluntary manslaughter charge

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ALBUQUERQUE – Randy Payton, 35, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who resides in Churchrock, N.M., pled guilty July 18, in federal court in Albuquerque, N.M., to a voluntary manslaughter charge. Payton entered the guilty plea under a plea agreement that recommends that he be sentenced to a term of imprisonment within the range of seven to 13 years followed by a term of supervised release to be determined by the court

Payton was arrested on Oct. 19, 2016, on a criminal complaint charging him with killing a Navajo man on the Navajo Indian Reservation in McKinley County on Oct. 14, 2016. According to the criminal complaint, Payton killed the victim by hitting and kicking him repeatedly during a fight. Payton was subsequently indicted on the same charge on Nov. 15, 2016.

During the proceedings, Payton pled guilty to the indictment and admitted killing the victim during a fight on Oct. 14. Payton remains in custody pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

This case was investigated by the Gallup office of the FBI and the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Novaline Wilson.