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New Mexico Indian Affairs Department Announces Unique Partnership with Native Women Lead and the University of New Mexico Innovation Academy

Santa Fe, NM – The Indian Affairs Department on Sunday announces that the UNM Innovation Academy, and Native Women Lead (NWL) are working together to support Native American women businesses and entrepreneurs through a one-time appropriation. The project, led by NWL will host two convenings to bring together over 200 Native women entrepreneurs, and launch a directory for Native women entrepreneurs to connect to one another and access the resources they need to start or grow their businesses.

Through this appropriation, approved by Governor Lujan Grisham, the State of New Mexico sees alignment with the Executive Budget Recommendation for FY 2020 to lay the groundwork to support a 21st Century Economy. This is a step taken to level the playing field, encourage New Mexico business growth, tackle high poverty rates, spur job creation on and off tribal/rural communities, and help New Mexico's families.

This announcement comes the day before National Native Women's Equal Pay Day in which the National Women's Law Center estimates Native women are paid only 57 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. In New Mexico, Native American poverty rates exceed 33% compared to the National average of 25%. In 2016, the Institute for Women's Policy Research reported that 2 in 3 Native American mothers are the primary breadwinners in their families while the National Institute of Justice estimates 4 in 5 Native American women will experience violence in their lifetime. Despite these statistics, Native American women owned businesses have grown by 201% in the past 10 years according to the 2017 State of Women Owned Business Report commissioned by American Express.

This effort aims to build on the cultural and entrepreneurial vibrancy being spurred in the State of New Mexico. Native Women Lead, an emerging organization and movement, has focused their attention on supporting Native women entrepreneurs in the past two years. Since inception, NWL has convened over 500 Native women entrepreneurs for the largest gathering of Native women entrepreneurs in the country. NWL received support from Representative Georgene Louis, an enrolled member of Acoma Pueblo, to champion and introduce Legislation that eventually led to \$150,000 appropriation in which the Indian Affairs Department will administer.

“It’s exciting to see this project start to take shape,” said Lynn Trujillo, Secretary of the Indian Affairs Department, which is managing the appropriation. “Native women-owned businesses have grown threefold in recent years, and we hope this tool will fuel continued growth.”

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