



## STATE OF NEW MEXICO INDIAN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force Release the Official State Response Plan**

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR) task force release the official state response plan for the State of New Mexico.

The MMIWR task force was convened by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department in 2019 when Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham established the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force, pursuant to [House Bill 278](#). The task force reported its findings and recommendations in December 2020 to Governor Lujan Grisham, the legislative council service library, and the appropriate legislative committees.

On May 5, 2021, Governor Lujan Grisham signed [Executive Order 2021-013](#), which established the next phase of the task force. Today, the task force is comprised of representatives from across Tribal Nations, including state legislators and community partners. The task force collaborates with Tribal government representatives, Tribal law enforcement, and federal agencies to determine how to address the crisis by creating partnerships and improving processes for reporting and investigating cases while supporting families and communities with resources.

While the threat to Indigenous relatives is profound across the country, the threat to Indigenous relatives in New Mexico is severe. According to the December 2020 New Mexico Missing, Murdered and Indigenous Women and Relatives [report](#), “Despite having the fifth-largest Indigenous population in the nation, the State of New Mexico has the highest number of MMIWG cases in the country.” The health, safety, and well-being of Indigenous women and relatives is a public health and public safety crisis in New Mexico.

“It is critical that we use every available tool to deliver critical resources to the loved ones of missing Indigenous women and relatives across New Mexico, bringing more

awareness and public attention to these important cases and ensuring their families have the support they deserve,” said **Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham**. “I am deeply grateful to the members of the New Mexico MMIWR Task Force, the family members, and the statewide advocates for lending their voices and expertise to the state’s response. Together we will continue to do everything in our power to bring closure, justice, and healing to New Mexico’s tribal communities.”

“We honor and acknowledge the strength and perseverance of all survivors and families who have shared their experiences and testimonies with the task force and helped guide us with recommendations for the official state response plan,” said **Secretary Lynn Trujillo**. “It is our responsibility to continue working towards identifying and breaking down systemic barriers while creating safe spaces and healthy communities for our Indigenous relatives.”

"Because of the work and testimony of mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons across our state, the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives has been pulled into the light," said Albuquerque **Mayor Tim Keller**. "No community should have to answer this call to action alone. Through designated APD staff that work closely with impacted families and other jurisdictions in these cases, a new multimedia campaign to help uncover leads, and our commitment to participating in joint sessions of law enforcement to overcome barriers, Albuquerque supports the work ahead in the state response plan. Families deserve answers and justice."

“My office is proud to have created the first MMIWR Task Force Unit within any District Attorney's Office in the state. We have also hired an analyst and a special agent, who previously worked for Navajo and Isleta law enforcement, to help solve these cases and share data amongst law enforcement and government partners," said Bernalillo County **District Attorney Raul Torrez**. "We are also pleased to have participated in the recovery of a young Indigenous woman who was found in Chicago on January 7, 2022. We look forward to solving more cases and engaging in impactful work to protect our communities."

“When asked to be a part of this group, I wasn’t expecting to step up to serve as a Co-Chair to do the work that needed to be done for all our relatives, including our Native LGBTQ/Two Spirit people. I am grateful for the inclusion of our population in the MMIWR work, especially being a Native Transgender woman,” said MMIWR Task Force Member/Community Impact Subcommittee Co-chair **Mattee Jim**.

This issue which has been identified as a national epidemic has come to the forefront as the number of abductions and murders of American Indian and Alaska Native Relatives has received national attention through the advocacy of family members and grassroots organizations. Nationally, native women and girls are nearly twice as likely to experience violence as their non-native counterparts. In the Southwest region, 46% of native women have reported they have been the victim of sexual assault or violence in their lifetimes. And the most disturbing finding is that nationally murder is the third leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaska Native women.

This MMIWR State Response Plan is guided by the wisdom and voices of family members of women and relatives that have gone missing or been murdered, people who have been trafficked, victim's advocates, spiritual leaders and healers, community educators, mental and behavioral health providers, law enforcement, legal advocates, policy makers, policy analysts and staff from Tribal, state, and local governments. The State Response Plan offers 40 proposed strategies focused on data improvements, community awareness, and systems change that government officials and other stakeholders can reference as they look to implement solutions.

[MMIWR Task Force New Mexico State Response Plan.](#)

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*Since 2003 the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department (IAD) has implemented groundbreaking state-Tribal policies intended to improve the quality of life for the state's Native citizens. Our initiatives are designed to strengthen Tribal and state relations and address the challenges we face in our communities; challenges such as economic development, infrastructure improvement, the protection of our cultures and languages, health care accessibility, and educational opportunities for our most precious resource— our children. Learn more at [www.iad.state.nm.us](http://www.iad.state.nm.us).*