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## **In recognition of Native American Heritage Month, Governor Lujan Grisham declares November to be New Mexico Indigenous Languages Month**

SANTA FE – In honor of Native American Heritage Month, and in partnership with the New Mexico Indigenous Youth Council (IYC), Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed a proclamation recognizing November as New Mexico Indigenous Languages Month, celebrating the state's 23 Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos, which account for 11% of the total population and speak eight languages. – Jicarilla Apache, Keres, Nde Bizaa' (Mescalero Apache), Dine Bizaad (Navajo), Tiwa, Tewa, Towa, and Shiwi'ma Bena:we (Zuni).

“This month we honor the Nation’s first peoples, including New Mexico’s 19 Pueblos and 3 Apache Tribes, and the Navajo Nation. New Mexico is a state that finds value and strength in its cultural diversity, and we celebrate Indigenous instructors, teachers, and community members who preserve Indigenous languages for future generations,” said **Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham**. “This month we recognize and uplift all Native peoples, especially youth, to ensure that Indigenous cultures, traditions, and histories are respected and maintained.”

“As we observe Native American Heritage Month, it is vital to focus on the ongoing issues that Indigenous communities face. Challenges include the need to promote and enhance health and education outcomes, as well as the need to revitalize and maintain Indigenous languages. The sustainability of Indigenous languages is essential for maintaining Indigenous histories, heritages, cultures, and identities,” said **IAD Secretary Lynn Trujillo**. “I applaud the New Mexico Indigenous Youth Council's initiatives to spread awareness of the importance of preserving the Indigenous languages spoken in our state as well as Governor Lujan Grisham for recognizing and honoring Native American heritage every day.”

“As young people, when we first began thinking and writing components of the language proclamation, there was a mountain of futures we looked to. For example, we considered the question, “What can this piece of legislation do?” And in order to choose the best avenue to support tribal linguistic diversity, we relied on consultation from leadership from the New Mexico Tribal

Language Consortium (NMTLC). That collaboration has taken us far, and we've continued to rework the proclamation with the new cohort of IYC as well," said **IYC member Shayna Naranjo**.

The New Mexico Indigenous Youth Council views the preservation of Indigenous cultures and languages as an urgent priority and advocates for government support through the allocation of resources and increased awareness of Indigenous languages in New Mexico, as well as the recognition of all Indigenous languages of the Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos as New Mexico's first languages.

The enactment of [House Bill 60](#) required salary parity for educators certified in Native American languages instruction, ensuring for the first time that Indigenous language instructors are paid commensurate with other New Mexico teachers. The Public Education Department has also developed a series of grants to support the preservation of Indigenous language, including the Indigenous Language Initiative Grant, which provides access to culturally and linguistically responsive learning environments that support the development of curriculum, assessments, and teacher preparation. The grants also provide funding for tribal communities to assess the status of their languages.

The IYC collaborated with the NM Tribal Language Consortium to develop the language for the [proclamation](#).

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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: economic development, infrastructure improvement, the protection of our cultures and languages, healthcare 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).*

*The New Mexico Indigenous Youth Council (IYC) was formed in February 2021 following two listening sessions that the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department (IAD) held with tribal youth from across the state. The IAD selected members representing the 23 Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos to engage with the department and help steer the work related to the issues raised at the listening sessions. IAD provides this space to come together to share mutual experiences, collaborate on shared initiatives, and build community. Learn more at <https://www.iad.state.nm.us/from-the-office/Indigenous-youth-council>.*