



The Navajo Nation  
Office of the President and Vice President

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**First Lady Nez commends New Mexico leaders for establishing a unit to help solve Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives cases**



**PHOTO:** Navajo Nation First Lady Phefelia Nez, 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, New Mexico Indian Affairs Department Secretary Lynn A. Trujillo, and the Second Judicial District Attorney Raúl Torrez during a signing ceremony on December 16, 2021, in Albuquerque, N.M.

**ALBUQUERQUE** – Navajo Nation First Lady Phefelia Nez, 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, and other members of the New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force were part of a press conference on Thursday in Albuquerque, N.M., to offer support for New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, New Mexico Indian Affairs Department Secretary Lynn A. Trujillo, and the Second Judicial District Attorney Raúl Torrez, as they signed a memorandum of understanding establishing a Missing and Murdered Indigenous

Women and Relatives (MMIWR) Task Force sub-unit under the Second Judicial District Attorney's Office Crime Strategies Unit in Bernalillo County, N.M.

The MMIWR subunit will begin identifying all existing and new cases, review cold missing persons cases related to MMIWR, provide investigation and legal assistance, communicate with victims' families, and collaborate with the MMIWR task force, tribal, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

"On behalf of the Navajo Nation, we thank the state of New Mexico for recognizing the importance of reuniting, restoring, and healing Native families and communities through this historic initiative. The New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force is helping to close the gaps where missing persons cases often fall into, identifying jurisdictional misinterpretations, fostering coordination among tribal nations, and developing innovative strategies to assist law enforcement. Today, we move closer to minimizing the number of unsolved MMIWR cases, and healing families on the Navajo Nation, and in New Mexico," said First Lady Nez, who continues to serve as one of the original New Mexico MMIWR Task Force members since its creation in 2019.

In 2020, the New Mexico MMIWR Task Force released its final report and recommendations to Gov. Grisham, which included reviews and recommendations related to data collection, resources, partnerships, improved reporting and investigation of cases, and increased support for families.

"Today, we witnessed many years of advocacy for our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives transformed into action. The new MMIWR subdivision under the Bernalillo County District Attorney's Office sets the bar for the rest of the country to protect our sacred women and vulnerable populations in urban areas. As a member of the New Mexico MMIWR Task Force, I am proud of our efforts and I'm committed to providing justice and healing to our MMIWR families," said Delegate Crotty, who also serves on the New Mexico MMIWR Task Force.

Additionally, the subunit will support the statewide MMIWR Task Force's efforts to improve the data collection and analysis on all MMIWR related cases.

"On behalf of the Navajo Nation, we extend our appreciation to Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, Secretary Lynn A. Trujillo, the task force members, partners, and volunteers, who collaboratively gathered data, provided testimonies, analyzed data, and provided recommendations regarding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives that affects many of our people and tribal communities. We continue to identify gaps and barriers that families, survivors, and victims encounter through collaborative efforts. We hope to reunite and heal families," added First Lady Nez.

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