

## Missing/Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force holds first meeting

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 22 November 2019 07:15

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### Navajo, Jicarilla Apache, Mescalero Apache tribes represented

ALBUQUERQUE, N. M. – New Mexico held its first meeting of the task force to study the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women Nov. 8. The group will define goals, develop a strategy to understand the extent of the problem in New Mexico and create a final report that meets the requirements of State House Bill 278.

First Lady Phefelia Nez spoke at the meeting. “Throughout Indian Country, we hear far too many stories of families and victims who experience this traumatic epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We need to put a stop to it, and it begins with identifying barriers, collecting and analyzing data, and uniting with each other to protect our sacred Indigenous women and children.”

The task force will also collaborate with tribal, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, victims, survivors, grassroots organizations, health services, women’s shelters, and many others to determine the scope of the problem, identify barriers to address the problem, and create partnerships to improve the reporting of and the investigation of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

“The issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and children has not only affected families, but it impacts communities. As leaders, we must continue to advocate for safety and

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justice for Native women. Most importantly, we need to address efforts to restore balance, love, and harmony within Native homes and communities,” Nez said.

The task force is responsible for submitting a report of its findings and recommendations to Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and presenting it to the appropriate interim legislative committee before Nov. 1, 2020.

New Mexico Indian Affairs Department Secretary Lynn Trujillo will chair the task force along with New Mexico Department of Public Safety Secretary Mark Shea, and Kathy Howkumi of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services.

### **The other members appointed by Lujan Grisham include:**

- Beata Tsosie, Pueblo representative;
- Sharnen Velarde, Jicarilla Apache Nation representative;
- Bernalyn Via, Mescalero Apache Tribe representative;
- First Lady Phefelina Nez, Navajo Nation representative;
- Mathew Strand, representative of a statewide or local non-governmental organization that provides legal services to Indigenous women;
- Linda Son-Stone, representative of an Indigenous women’s non-governmental organization that provides counseling services to Indigenous women;

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- Elizabeth Gonzales, representative of the Office of the Medical Investigator;
- Becky Jo Johnson, an Indigenous woman who is a survivor of violence or who has lost a loved one to violence.

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force will meet monthly until the completion of the report.