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Indian Affairs Department and Bernalillo County District Attorney's Office Designate Special Subunit to Help Solve Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Cases

Albuquerque, NM - Today, Bernalillo County District Attorney Raúl Torrez and New Mexico Indian Affairs Department Secretary Lynn Trujillo announced a memorandum of understanding that would form a specialized Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR) Task Force subunit within the District Attorney's Office. The subunit will be dedicated to assisting in MMIWR data-sharing and analysis, case investigations, and interventions. Additionally, the subunit will support the statewide MMIWR Task Force's efforts to improve the collection, consolidation and exploration of MMIWR data and develop a criminal network analysis software platform to house, interpret and share this information.

MMIWR is a crisis in Bernalillo County and the State of New Mexico, rooted in historical, colonial violence against Indigenous peoples. New Mexico has the fifth largest AI/AN population in the U.S., but has the highest number of MMIWR cases in the country. Native American women in New Mexico experience the highest rate of

homicide among all racial and ethnic groups. A parallel crisis exists when it comes to the quality and collection of data related to these cases, which is inconsistent and oftentimes inaccurate. Issues including the racial misclassification of victims, outdated and non-uniform record-keeping protocols and weak cross-jurisdictional relationships contribute to the lack of reliable and substantive MMIWR case data locally and nationwide.

"Thank you to Bernalillo County District Attorney Raúl Torrez for helping to establish this specialized subunit within the District Attorney's Office. The signing of this MOU supports the ongoing work of the New Mexico MMIWR Task Force, and we are grateful for the opportunity to advise and assist the subunit as they start on an important endeavor that will give much-needed oversight and assistance to families who are still searching for answers," Indian Affairs Cabinet Secretary Lynn Trujillo said. "Thank you to the New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force for reviewing and providing valuable feedback on this agreement."

"Between 2014 and 2019, there have been more than 600 Native American missing persons reported statewide -- over 287 of those cases involve women, with Albuquerque and Gallup being amongst the top ten cities in the nation for the highest number of MMIWR cases," District Attorney Raúl Torrez said. "It is clear that steps need to be taken to help bring resources to the victims, families and communities affected by this crisis. Working with Native communities and law enforcement to collect actionable data is crucial to moving these cases forward and preventing future violence. I believe this subunit will contribute to that effort here in New Mexico."

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