



STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
INDIAN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

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Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor  
Lynn Trujillo, Secretary  
Nadine Padilla, Deputy Secretary

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Legislation establishing a “Missing in New Mexico”  
Event goes to Governor for signing.**  
*Annual event will support New Mexicans with missing relatives*

**Santa Fe, NM** – Gov. Lujan Grisham, Indian Affairs Department (IAD) Cabinet Secretary Lynn Trujillo, Department of Public Safety (DPS) Cabinet Secretary Jason Bowie, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR) Task Force member Meskee Yatsayte, on Monday issued the following statements following the state House voting to approve Senate Bill 13, establishing an annual “Missing in New Mexico” event and a clearinghouse within the Department of Public Safety to centralize missing person information and promote intrastate communication.

"With the highest number of open missing and murdered indigenous women cases in the country, it is essential that New Mexico does more to provide support to Native families in solving cases of missing loved ones," said Gov. Lujan Grisham. "And let me be clear: This will not be solely a day of reflection or to remember the ones lost – this is a day of action where we will partner with federal and tribal law enforcement, members of the media, and communities and families to get justice for the loved ones of the missing."

"The MMIWR crisis has impacted too many of our Indian families and communities. Through the task force, we hear from families about the challenges they face in working with multiple jurisdictions and getting information on their loved one's case. The Missing in NM Day will bring all parties together so that families have one place to go to get answers and provide information to law enforcement," said IAD Cabinet Secretary Lynn Trujillo. "Thank you to Senator Linda Lopez, Senator Shannon Pinto, and Representative Andrea Romero for sponsoring this legislation, and to the MMIWR Task Force for their important work in addressing this crisis."

“This legislation affirms New Mexico’s commitment to muster answers and justice for missing and murdered indigenous women and relatives. For generations a disproportionately high number have gone unreported,” said DPS Cabinet Secretary Jason Bowie. “This legislation fosters dialogue and a commitment to address and prevent further tragedy in our community. These women and families are members of our community, and everyone deserves to have our full support.”

"As founder of the Navajo Nation Missing Person Updates and a MMIWR Task Force member, I fully support the establishment of the Missing in New Mexico Day Event. I have witnessed the success of this event in Arizona which is why I proposed this legislation to the MMIWR Task Force," said Meskee Yanabah Yatsayte. "I want to thank the families, the bill sponsors, the legislators and the Governor for her support. This event will help support the resolution of missing relatives' cases on the Navajo Nation, other tribal communities and across the state. Thank you."

Sponsored by Senator Linda M. Lopez, Senator Shannon D. Pinto, and Representative Andrea Romero, Senate Bill 13 establishes an annual one-day event that will bring together multiple partners across all levels of government to assist and serve families and victims in the pursuit of justice and resolution. DPS will partner with the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) to host the annual event and support families by bringing resources and partners to a central location. The NamUs missing persons database and related divisions support the resolution of missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons cases by offering case consultations, collecting biometric data (DNA, fingerprints, images), and offering training about this critical database to communities.

This legislation is a product of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR) Task Force, the creation of which was enacted in 2019 by Gov. Lujan Grisham – the mission of the task force was [further expanded by the governor](#) in 2021.

The need for this event is evidenced by the data; New Mexico currently has 926 active missing persons cases and 20 unidentified missing persons reported in NCIC.

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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, 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).*