

First Lady Phefelia Nez's new appointment to help indigenous women

Written by Staff Reports

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Nez named to missing, murdered Indigenous Women Task Force

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, and the Office of the First Lady and Second Lady announced the appointment of Navajo Nation First Lady Phefelia Nez by New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham to serve on New Mexico's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force Oct. 7.

In March, Gov. Grisham established a task force to investigate the epidemic of

missing and murdered Indigenous women in the state of New Mexico when she signed N.M. House Bill 278 into law.

Nez will assist the task force in assessing and determining how to increase state resources for reporting and identifying victims. "Throughout our country, we hear far too many stories of families and victims who experience this traumatic epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and we need to put a stop to it, and it begins with collecting and analyzing the data. Together through partnerships, we need to be proactive to protect our Indigenous women and children," said Nez.

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In her new role, the First Lady will have the opportunity to work with state and federal officials, tribal members, and advocates to collaborate with tribal law enforcement

agencies to identify barriers to improve the reporting, investigating, and data collection of missing and murdered indigenous women.

First Lady and Second Lady Dottie Lizer will also work closely with the state of Arizona's study committee on missing and murdered Indigenous women to establish methods for collecting data, reviewing policies, practices, and prosecutorial practices, and identifying barriers to track violent crimes committed against Indigenous women and girls.

"The issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and children has not received adequate attention, which had led to a shortage in data that contributes to the ongoing problems, including the lack of prosecution and lack of coordination among local, state, and federal law enforcement. As leaders, we need to be the voice for our women and children," Lizer said.

To move efforts forward, the Office of the President and Vice President has also established an internal workgroup known as the "Dine Nihik'ei Nihii' Nasdl': Work Group, Reunite our Diné Relatives," led by Nez and Lizer to address issues and concerns related to missing and murdered peoples and social ills impacting Navajo families, including Navajo men and boys. Most importantly, the focus is to heal, restore, and reunite Navajo families.

"Our Navajo women are sacred and are the center of our society, and they offer love, comfort, and discipline; therefore, the Nez--Lizer Administration remains committed to making violence against women a top priority, as we continue to advocate for safety and justice for Navajo women and children," said President Jonathan Nez.

The creation of the Dine Nihik'ei Nihii' Nasdl' workgroup is a step forward for the protection and empowerment of Navajo families.

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First Lady and Second Lady will be hosting a summit to address efforts to restore balance, love, and harmony within Navajo families soon.

“On behalf of the Navajo people, we extend our appreciation to New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham for establishing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force, and we look forward to working together to protect Navajo families,” added Vice President Lizer.