

NEWS RELEASE

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PUEBLO OF JEMEZ AND THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO PARTNER TO ESTABLISH THE WALATOWA EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER;

**Governor Michelle Lujan-Grisham, Senator Benny Shendo, Jr. and Representative
Derrick Lente have invested over \$6.2 Million of capital outlay dollars to make this
facility a reality**

JEMEZ PUEBLO, N.M.— On Thursday March 17, 2022 at 11 AM, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham will join the Jemez Pueblo community in a ground breaking ceremony to establish the learning center where the Jemez (Towa) Language will be nurtured and prioritized as the first language of its children. Ceremony will be at 139 Canal Street, Jemez Pueblo, NM.

The Early Childhood Program is a comprehensive child development continuum inclusive of Head Start and Child Care Services which currently serves approximately 100 Jemez children, ages 0-5 and their families, through a full language immersion approach since 2013. All teachers and child care providers are fluent in the Jemez Language. “The Center is the Pueblo’s top priority infrastructure project, as there is a great need in our community to provide a safe facility for early childhood education and language learning,” said Governor Raymond Loretto, DVM.

“Our unique and valuable community-based education incorporates the community’s vibrant traditional calendar as well as art, music, dance, learning through movement, play, and exploration of our community and nature thru science and math,” shared Lana Garcia, Early Childhood Program Manager.

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“This investment is part of Governor Lujan-Grisham’s commitment to Early Childhood Education in New Mexico,” said Senator Benny Shendo Jr. “Jemez’ innovation in education, ties to culture and language, and community involvement are at the core of the center’s design and focus. We hope this partnership can serve as an example of the state’s commitment to work with tribes throughout the state.”

The Pueblo of Jemez strives to develop a comprehensive Department of Education that meets the educational and developmental needs of all Tribal members from birth to adult age. Jemez recognizes the need to establish high standards that provide the needed services and programs to ensure student success and high academic achievement. Jemez works to develop and implement culturally appropriate curricula at all Jemez Tribal Schools so that they are inclusive of language, culture, traditions and tribal history.

This commitment is one of a series of investments that the State of New Mexico has made toward supporting Indian Education, Language and Culture priorities and tribal ownership of Education. This past session, the State Legislature supported tripling the Indian Education Act investment as requested by the Public Education Division and HB60 elevated the status of Native Language Teachers to be compensated at a commensurate level of public and charter school teachers.

“We are pleased to share that under Governor Lujan Grisham’s leadership, the Public Education Department secured significant funding increases in House Bill 2 (HB2) to support Indian education, indigenous language and culture preservation and implementation of the Indian Education Act (IEA),” stated Secretary of Education, Kurt Steinhaus.

“We are grateful to the Governor and members of the Legislature for greatly expanding supports and funding for indigenous education,” added Assistant Secretary of Indian Education, Lashawna Tso.

“This is a step toward remedying the issues identified in the Yazzie/Martinez Consolidated lawsuits,” said Secretary of Indian Affairs, Lynn Trujillo. “It will help in supporting culturally and linguistically relevant education, preparing students for college and careers, preserving indigenous languages, and funding tribal education departments to develop community-based education programs and social support services.”

Representative Derrick Lente stated: “The passage of HB60 is a historic moment. It is a triumph overcoming nearly 130 years of the intentional efforts of eradicating our languages. The passage of this legislation is another example of the perseverance of each generation doing their part to define the inheritance of the next generation. This triumph reverses the long history of systemic and institutional racism in the name of linguicide using education as the means. It will now be at the center of our vision for education.”

The Pueblo of Jemez is the sole surviving Pueblo that speaks the Jemez (Towa) Language.

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Design of the Walatowa Early Childhood Learning Center A Jemez Language Immersion Program



For information about the Jemez Department of Education, contact: 575.834.9102 or go to the Pueblo of Jemez website at: www.jemezpueblo.org.

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