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New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department Welcomes Melissa Sanchez as new Director of Indian Elder Affairs

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD) is pleased to announce the appointment of Melissa Sanchez as the new Director of the Office of Indian Elder Affairs (OIEA). Sanchez brings a wealth of experience and expertise in working with Native American communities and is poised to provide strategic leadership in addressing the unique needs of Native American elders in the state.

“I am honored to continue working with Melissa here at ALTSD,” said Cabinet Secretary Designate **Jen Paul Schroer**. “Her extensive work with Native American communities has equipped her with a deep understanding of the unique culture, traditions, and specific healthcare needs of Indigenous elders. I am confident that under Melissa’s leadership and experience, the Office of Indian Elder Affairs will flourish and be able to provide the best possible services to our Native American elders.”

Prior to her role as OIEA Director, Melissa Sanchez served as the Tribal Tourism Development Director at the New Mexico Tourism Department and was also previously the Director of the Indian Ceremonial Office. In her new position, Sanchez will play a pivotal role in the development and implementation of programs, policies, and services tailored to meet the distinct requirements of Native American elders in New Mexico.

“Having had the privilege of growing up within and working closely with Native American and Indigenous communities, universally there is the profound understanding of the unique cultural nuances, traditions, and specific needs that are inherent to tribal communities in New Mexico,” said OIEA Director **Melissa Sanchez**. “Keeping in mind, past, current and future generations, I’m appreciative of the opportunity to contribute to the collective work that has been accomplished thus far by OIEA, Tribal leaders, Indian Affairs Department and Native American elder advocacy organizations to meet, and exceed, the expectations of our elders. With a focus on building effective, sustainable, and culturally responsive programs, I am excited to lead a

team that shares this commitment of contributing to the well-being and quality of life with respect to traditional principles and core values.”

Sanchez is a seasoned professional, holding a bachelor’s degree in marketing management from New Mexico State University and over 20 years of experience in diverse community development and initiatives. Her outstanding track record in managing intricate projects, coupled with her dedication to team excellence, has positioned her as an exceptional leader. Beyond her work in government spaces, Sanchez is a co-owner and producer at Emergence Productions, a company that specializes in Native American and Indigenous performing arts, promotion and industry research and an alumna of the Americans for Indian Opportunity Ambassador program. Her involvement in the Gathering of Nations Pow Wow for over 25 years, as well as her prior role as the Entertainment and Special Events Manager for Acoma Business Enterprises, further underscore her ability to oversee multifaceted endeavors and high-performance teams.

Melissa Sanchez takes over the role from previous OIEA Director Rebecca Baca, who stepped down from the position this past summer.

The New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD) was established in 2004 to provide advocacy, support, and resources for seniors and adults with disabilities. The department oversees the state’s Area Agencies on Aging to elevate the quality of care at senior centers, offers advocacy through the Long-Term Care Ombudsman volunteer program, and provides intervention through the agency’s national award-winning Adult Protective Services. Additionally, ALTSD houses the state’s Aging and Disability Resource Center, which offers options counseling, education, and connection to resources. For more information about ALTSD, visit aging.nm.gov or follow us on [Facebook](#), [X \(Twitter\)](#), and [Instagram](#) @NewMexicoAging.

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