

# New Mexico Early Childhood Tribal Advisory Coalition

*Office of the Assistant Secretary for Native American Early Education & Care*

**Dr. Joannie Suina** (*Pueblo of Cochiti*)  
Assistant Secretary



NEW MEXICO

**Early Childhood**

Education & Care Department



## Vision and Mission

**Vision:** All New Mexico families and young children are thriving.

**Mission:** Optimize the health, development, education and wellbeing of babies, toddlers, and preschoolers through high-quality, community-based and family-driven early childhood programs and services.

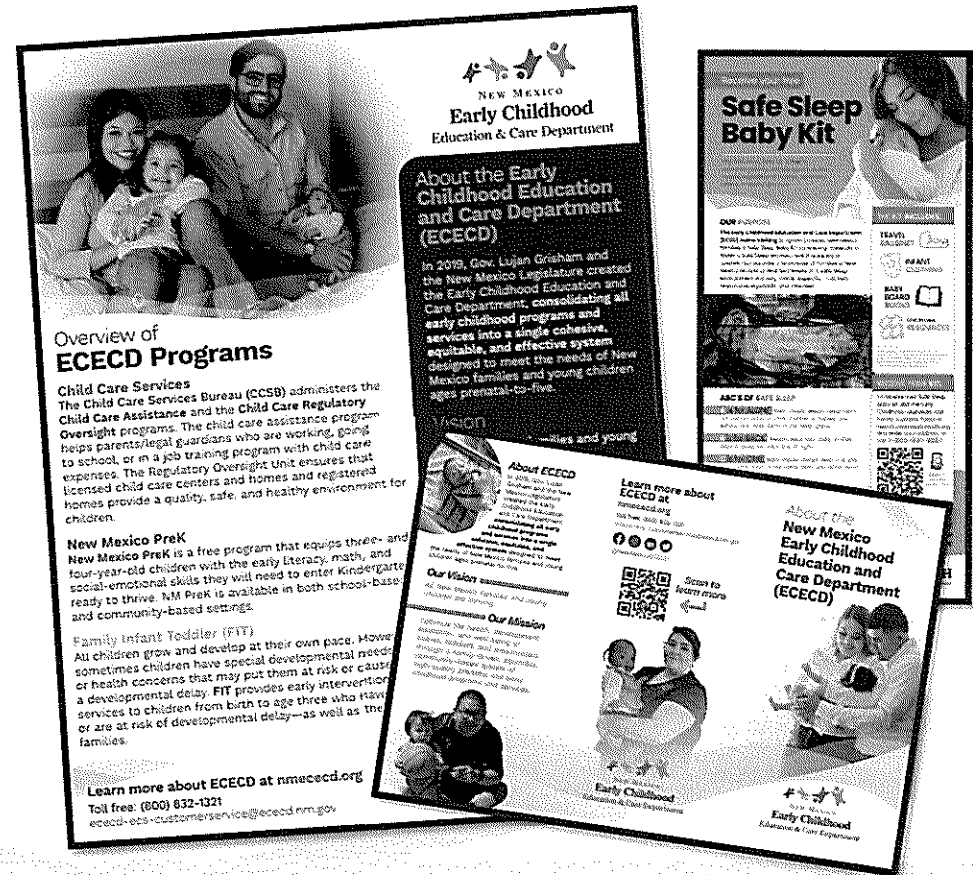
## Our Commitment

Our commitment to New Mexicans is to create a cohesive, equitable, and responsive prenatal-to-five early childhood system that supports families, strengthens communities, and enhances child health, development, education and well-being.

All programs are voluntary, with a goal of ensuring every program is linguistically and culturally inclusive.

# About ECECD

- In 2019, Gov. Lujan Grisham and the New Mexico Legislature created the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD)
- The Department officially launched on July 1, 2020.
- New Mexico was the **fourth** U.S. state to create a cabinet-level department fully dedicated to early childhood services
- To date - 11 states have now established early childhood focused state agencies or offices
- New Mexico is the only state to have a Native American Early Education and Care Office at the state government level



Visit us online at [nmeccd.org](https://nmeccd.org)  
for flyers, brochures, tutorial videos, and much more!

# Office of the Assistant Secretary (OAS) for Native American Early Education and Care

The Early Childhood Education and Care Department Act of 2019 mandated the appointment of an Assistant Secretary for Native American Early Education and Care, making ECECD the first early childhood department in the nation to have a dedicated position to strengthen government-to-government relationships related to prenatal to age five programs and services NMSA 1978, § 9-29-3(B).

## Key Duties of the Assistant Secretary

- Provide administration, coordination, and oversight of Indian early childhood education
- Collaborate with state and federal partners and agencies, Tribal governments, eligible providers, and community partners
- Consult with Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes to support culturally, linguistically, and historically relevant curricula and learning guidelines for Tribal and non-Tribal students
- Assist school districts and educational agencies to expand appropriate Indian education programs for infants, toddlers, children, youth, and families pursuant to Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)
- Seek funding to establish and strengthen programs related to infants, toddlers, children, youth, and families
- Ensure that language and cultural considerations are included in programs administered through the department

# OAS for Native American Early Education and Care



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*(Pueblo of Cochiti)*

Assistant Secretary,  
Native American  
Early Childhood Education



**Dr. Michelle Tsosie**  
*(Chickasaw, Seminole  
and Choctaw)*

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Secretary for Native  
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**Mark Hume**  
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Policy Analyst



**Julianna Baca**

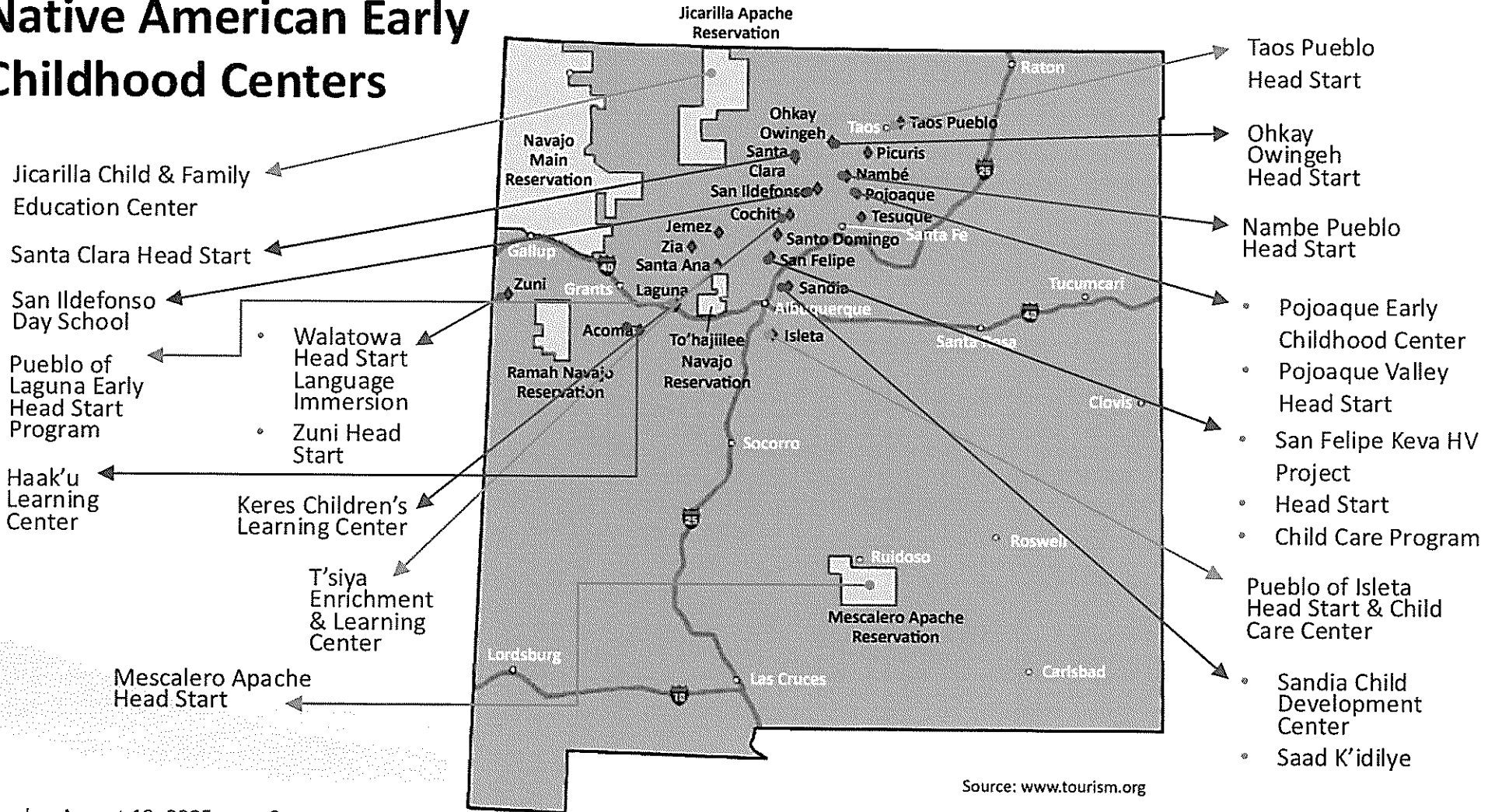
Tribal Grants  
and Contracts  
Fiscal  
Specialist



**Alvaro  
Quintanar**

Administrative  
and Fiscal  
Support

# Native American Early Childhood Centers



Source: www.tourism.org

# New Mexico Early Childhood Tribal Advisory Coalition (NNECTAC)

- Established in 2022 as a community Tribal Advisory body to ECECD
- Consists of members appointed by Tribal leadership from each of the Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes of New Mexico
- As of June 2025, NNECTAC comprises members from 19 of the Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes early childhood education professional communities, as well as representatives from resource partners across the state
- OAS will expand the coalition in FY26 to include members from all Nations, Pueblos and Tribes in New Mexico as well as expanding representation to Native Language Revitalization programs and organizations



Pictured: Members of NNECTAC and the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) at the Isleta Head Start and Child Care Center, with a special guest, the Easter Bunny.

# **New Mexico Early Childhood Tribal Advisory Coalition (NMECTAC)**

In FY23, ECECD, in partnership with the 23 Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes of our state, founded the New Mexico Early Childhood Tribal Advisory Coalition (NMECTAC) to create a channel for regular communication and engagement with New Mexico's tribal communities. The coalition highlights the distinct and unique American Indian cultures and languages across the state.

1. Identify the strengths and gaps of early childhood education and care in each community;
2. Help Tribal communities learn from each other to develop culturally relevant and appropriate assessments, curriculum, evaluations and innovative family engagement models;
3. Develop best practices of collaboration in local, tribal, state and federal systems (i.e., grant writing, IGAs, etc.)
4. Communicate regularly with ECECD and make broad recommendations about Tribal early childhood education and care needs and associated education transitions;
5. Strengthen ECECD's commitment to equity and quality early childhood education and care for tribal families;
6. Develop capacity building both among NMECTAC members and our respective communities to meet the first five goals



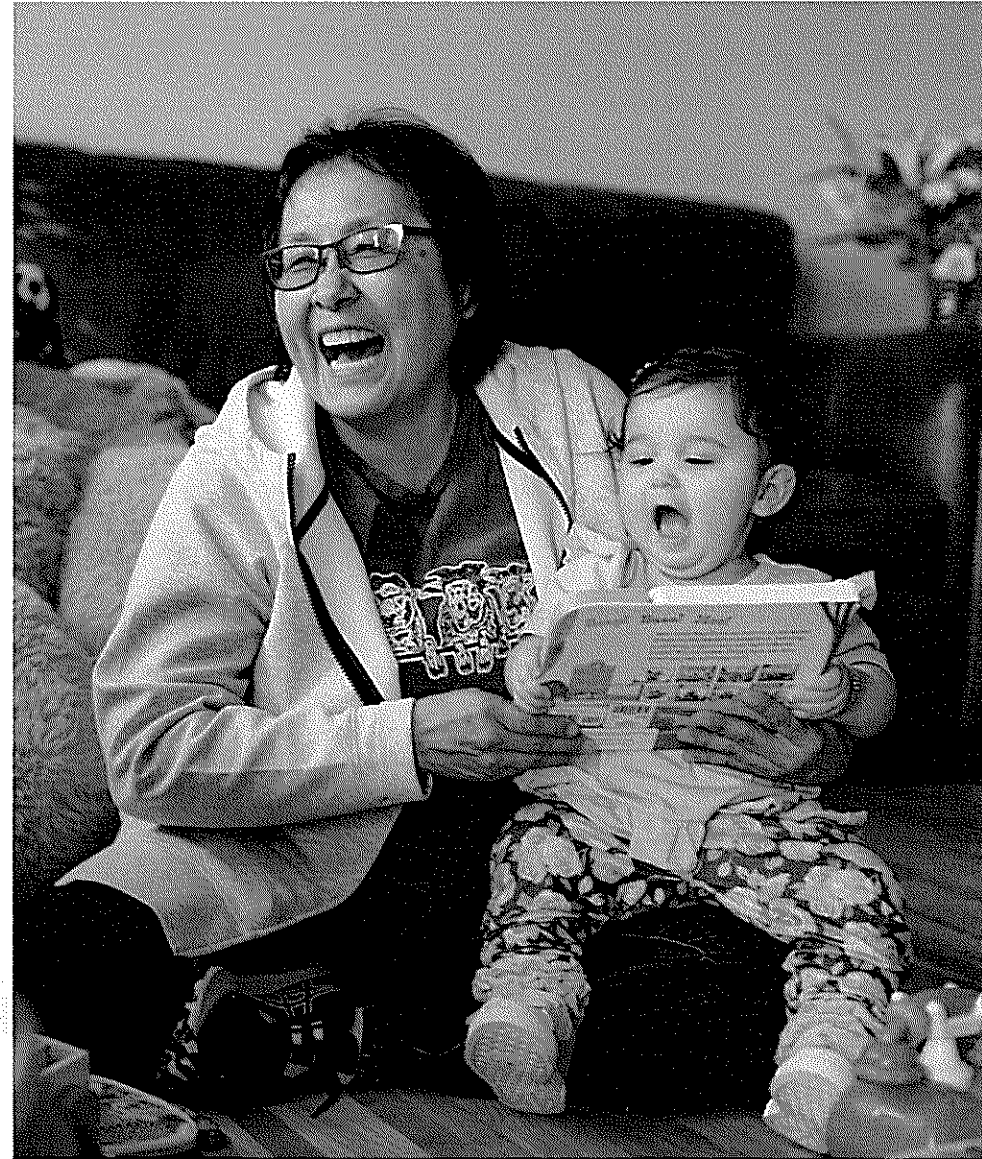
## NMECTAC Participating Communities and Programs:

- Jicarilla Apache Nation
- Mescalero Apache Tribe
- Navajo Nation
- Pueblo of Acoma
- Pueblo of Isleta
- Pueblo of Nambé
- Ohkay Owingeh
- Pueblo of Picuris
- Pueblo of Pojoaque
- Pueblo of Sandia
- Pueblo de San Ildefonso
- Pueblo of Santa Ana
- Pueblo of Santa Clara
- Pueblo of Santo Domingo (Kewa)
- Pueblo of Taos
- Pueblo of Zia
- Pueblo of Zuni
- Education for Parents of Indian Children with Special Needs (EPICS)
- New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- New Mexico School for the Deaf
- Saad K'idilyé Diné Language Nest

## NMECTAC

### *Accomplishments*

- Strengthened quality across ECECD by embedding Indigenous perspectives
- Advised on New Mexico's Early Learning Standards
- Guided the expansion of the Tribal Investment Strategy fund, and informing a series of Trauma-Informed Care seminars
- Grew member leadership and advocacy
- Hosted the Colorado Department of Early Childhood at an in-person meeting in Isleta Pueblo to exchange practices and deepen cross-state collaboration





## **Sacred Beginnings:**

*A Learning Tour of  
Native American Early  
Education and Care in  
New Mexico*



Commencing September 2025

## *Sacred Beginnings:* **A Learning Tour of Native American Early Education and Care in New Mexico**

- Strengthens government-to-government relationships with New Mexico's Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes while gathering on-the-ground insights into early childhood programs
- Engages Tribal Leaders, ECE directors, home visiting staff, and community members in focused discussions
- Outcomes: elevate culturally grounded practices, identify resource gaps, and inform FY26–FY27 policy, technical assistance, and funding strategies



# Executive Leadership Contacts

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# *Stay Connected* with the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department



**NMECECD.org**



**800-832-1321**



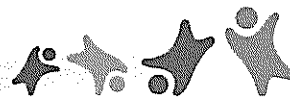
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87502-5619**

ECECD's bi-weekly newsletter delivers agency announcements, resources, training opportunities, and upcoming events straight to your inbox. Join our monthly Community Call (held the first Tuesday of each month) for updates and engagement.

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