Superintendent
Matt Montaño

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Bernalillo Public Schools

Welcomes JoAnn Melchor

As New Indian Education Director

Nonprofit Executive Brings 40+ Years of Native Community Service to the Role

BERNALILLO, NM — Bernalillo Public Schools is proud to announce **JoAnn Melchor**, an enrolled member of Santo Domingo Pueblo, as its new **Indian Education Director**. Melchor brings to the district more than four decades of frontline experience empowering Native students, families, and tribal communities across New Mexico — making her one of the most seasoned Indigenous education and community development leaders in the state.

Throughout her career, Melchor has worked directly with and on behalf of New Mexico's Pueblo and tribal nations. As Executive Director and Managing Director of Southwest Youth Services, she built and sustained partnerships with 20 tribal communities, delivering youth leadership, college preparation, and positive development programming to more than 2,000 Native children and youth. At Santo Domingo School — her home Pueblo — she administered an $850,000 5-year 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, creating after-school and summer programs that served K-8 students while weaving in tribal values, nutrition, and college-readiness initiatives. As Director of Advancement at Keres Children's Learning Center in Cochiti Pueblo, she championed the right of Pueblo children to be educated on their own cultural terms, building a diversified funding plan to sustain the schools independence for the next decade.

At the executive level, Melchor served as President and CEO of the New Mexico Foundation, where she directed statewide programs and forged partnerships that transformed lives across New Mexico's communities. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, she acted swiftly; founding both the **Native American Relief Fund** and the **Native American Recovery Fund** to channel critical resources to all tribes throughout New Mexico. Most recently, as Vice President of Development at First Nations Development Institute, she oversaw institutional fundraising, individual giving, and corporate and foundation relations, leading a 12-person team and shaping strategic relationships to leverage investment in Native communities.

Education has been a constant thread throughout Melchor's career. From coordinating Futures for Children's education and sponsorship programs; supporting Native students and families across New Mexico and Arizona; to facilitating conflict resolution training for youth through the New Mexico Center for Dispute Resolution, she has consistently placed student success and community well-being at the center of her work. Her deep relationships with tribal leaders, schools, and philanthropic partners across the state position her to serve Bernalillo Public Schools Native students with both vision and practical expertise.

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Melchor is an active voice in national philanthropy, having presented at the Asset Funders Network Annual Conference, Philanthropy Southwest, the First Nations LEAD Conference, and the Centering Justice Symposium, among others. She has served on the boards of Groundworks NM, the New Mexico Humanities Council, and the New Mexico Community Foundation, and has been recognized by *New Mexico Woman's Magazine* as an Up and Coming New Mexico Native Woman.

Melchor's appointment marks a defining moment for Bernalillo Public Schools and for the Native students and families it serves. She arrives not simply as an administrator, but as a Pueblo woman who has spent a lifetime leading the fight for the resources, recognition, and respect that Indigenous communities deserve — and winning. With deep roots in New Mexico's tribal nations, a proven record of building institutions that last, and an ongoing commitment to the sovereignty and dignity of Native peoples, JoAnn Melchor is uniquely positioned to ensure that every Native student in Bernalillo Public Schools sees themselves reflected, supported, and celebrated in their education. The work of generations continues — and it is in good hands.