



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Indigenous leaders urge ongoing use of facemasks despite COVID-19 restrictions being lifted July 1st

**Albuquerque, N.M.**— As the state of New Mexico prepares to [“reopen” by removing all COVID-19 restrictions](#), beginning July 1, Indigenous leaders with the Coalitions to Stop Violence Against Native Women are urging the public to continue the use of facemasks to proactively slow the spread of the virus and any of its new variants.

**The following is a statement from Angel Charley, executive director of CSVANW, urging the public to continue wearing masks and practicing social distancing until this pandemic is truly over:**

“As Indigenous people of this land, we are always taught that the wellbeing of ourselves and others is a collective effort—not an individual one. And if there is one thing COVID-19 has taught us, it is that we are all connected, and we depend on each other to move forward and beat the pandemic.

“Indigenous people across NM, and across the world, were some of the hardest hit communities by this virus. Since March of 2020, we have had to say goodbye to too many of our elders, and too many of our friends and family. And much of this tragedy still haunts our families. A tragedy that can continue to be prevented by use of facemasks.

“So today, we are calling on the public to continue being proactive in our fight against the COVID-19 virus, and its variants, by continuing to wear masks and practicing social distancing—regardless of restrictions removals beginning July 1st. This is our ultimate show of love and respect for others in our state. I ask this holding an immense awareness for our little ones, under 12, who have not yet had access to a vaccine.

“And while we understand the need to regain a sense of normalcy and live life as we used to before the pandemic, it is within our power and it is our responsibility to protect those most vulnerable within our communities. This is the only way to ensure healthy and prosperous communities now and after the pandemic.”

So far, leaders from Indigenous pueblos, tribes, and nations have asserted their ongoing efforts to slow the spread of the virus by continuing to mandate the use of facemasks in public. This

discretion is in direct alignment with [the latest guidance by the World Health Organization](#) urging even fully vaccinated people to continue wearing masks.

As part of the ongoing local public health effort, CSVANW [launched a digital campaign](#) asking Indigenous community members of why they will continue to wear a mask even after restrictions are lifted.

**Here are some of the top responses from community members online:**

**“I CONTINUE TO WEAR MY MASK BECAUSE...”**

- To protect my family and anyone else I come close to in public
- The pandemic is not over yet
- I don't trust that most people that took them off are actually vaccinated
- To protect my children and others who might be compromised health-wise.
- To protect my son
- To protect my elders!
- To protect my daughter, she isn't old enough for the vaccine & to
- protect the elders around me
- To keep our most vulnerable and valuable populations safe! Children are our future, keep them (safe).

**###**

*[CSVANW](#) is an award winning organization at the forefront to a dynamic approach to the tribal domestic and sexual violence fields that is demonstrating the most effective, creative and innovative ways to address and prevent the cycle of violence within tribal communities.*