



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For interviews & comments contact: media@csvanw.org

Indigenous Leaders Share Open Letter Addressing Systemic Immunity For Perpetrators Of Violence Against Native Women

Albuquerque, NM – Today, the [Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women \(CSVANW\)](#), released the following open letter [as calls for the resignation](#) of James Mountain, current [nominee for New Mexico Secretary of Indian Affairs](#), continue to escalate after his history of sexual assault and violence was brought to light in recent weeks:

“Beloved Community,

“It is time to transform our systems.

“We find ourselves in a moment of truth, reacting to decisions that are being made for us without our consent. There are many of us who, in our shared pain, are calling for the removal of one person from power in the hope that our spirits will be offered reprieve....

“And while we understand that removing one person from power will not transform a broken system, it is a critical and necessary first step in holding systems of power and decision-makers accountable to our communities.

“The Justice system fails survivors daily, our legislative system is not operating in transparency, and our communities are left paying the cost. These systems are responsible for creating safety and protection for our communities. However, the reality is that these systems continue to fail us by protecting abusers and fostering distrust in the justice process.

“When systems of power and decision-makers are not held accountable to our communities, it enables the perpetuation of historical inequities and normalization of our oppression.

“In the past three weeks we, as survivors and community, have collectively been oppressed in our efforts to call for accountability by these very systems. Concerns from survivors have been met with disregard and delay tactics. These strategies only serve to protect a decision that so many of us believe is not in the best interest of survivors.

“Our voices are worthy of being heard!

“And so it is in these circumstances that the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women enters a call for community accountability. We declare that these systems of power cannot continue to enable abusers to rise into respected roles that come with tremendous responsibilities that affect all community members, including survivors. We need our decision makers to nurture trust and accountability, appoint trusted and revered community leaders, collaborate and listen to Tribal Leadership, and enact on the needs of our Indigenous communities.

“We are being divided and it directly impacts the work that has been cultivated to protect our women, children, LGBTQ+, 2Spirit, Trans and gender non-conforming relatives. For generations, we have worked to build awareness, bridge service gaps, and account for the failures of the justice system. There is too much heart-work at risk of being lost if we do not act, collectively, to protect us and demand better.

“We deserve leaders who can champion our issues, be accountable to our communities, and break cycles that for far too long have kept our People from healing. We are asking those who support survivors to reject being enlisted in our oppression and rise to this calling: help us create healing with your actions, words, and attention.

“The truth we must face is this: we are either comfortable with those in power having continued immunity after causing violence or we are not.

“And, if we are not, we must act to do something about it.

“It is time to demand transparent leadership from Governor Grisham, uplift the experiences of survivors who are voicing concern, and call on our Leaders to step into this moment with courage and love.”

- ***The Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women***

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[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.*