



## **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' INITIATIVE PRESIDENT REFLECTION OF 2020**

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 31, 2020

ARIZONA- President Baca's release the following statement in reflection of 2020:

This year, the Indigenous Peoples' Initiative (IPI) has grown substantially. I am very proud of the work the IPI has been able to accomplish as far as COVID relief efforts for the White Mountain Apache Tribe. This summer, our team was able to distribute donations to EMS, the fire department, Whiteriver Police Department, department of corrections, doctors, and people within the community in need of supplies. With the shortage of PPE supplies first responders faced, our team also worked to cut out and sew gowns for EMS. Moreover, we were also able to provide donations of N95 face masks, face shields, and hand sanitizer to those on the front lines of the pandemic."

In addition to supplying first responders and community members with needed supplies, the IPI also worked towards Arizona celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day. For the first time in Arizona history Arizona Governor Doug Ducey signed a proclamation that the IPI team and the Governor's staff have been working on together. This marked a monumental step for Arizona and our nation. This proclamation gives us tangible evidence that even in the face of oppression, America can and is moving forward. It is my hope that with the new year it will bring a renewed opportunity to recognize and embrace our Indigneous communities. In the new year, the IPI will continue to work closely with local, business, state, and national leaders to bring fruition to Indigneous Peoples' Day in both the state of Arizona and on a national level.

While 2020 brought a pandemic, an economic crisis, racial reckoning, and civil unrest it was a reminder of how fragile progress can be and that we as citizens of the world must be vigilant to guard against that darker currents of our nation's history of violence, hatred, and despair that can unfortunately rise again. Lets not let 2020 define our society but let us build from the events of this year. John Lewis once said, "*We must press on for what is right, what is fair, and what is just. But we will not go back, we have come too far, and we are not going to give up now.*" It is my hope that we can put our differences aside and work together with cooperation and mutual respect for another to make this nation one that truly aligns with or democratic principles. It is my hope that we work to lay down the heavy burden of hate and let peace triumph over violence and hatred.