



**Native
Professional
Advancement
Center**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Legacy in Motion: NPAC Celebrates national book release of ‘For a Girl Becoming’—A Story Rooted in Generations of Indigenous Leadership

Albuquerque, N.M. – [Native Professional Advancement Center \(NPAC\)](#) is proud to celebrate the [upcoming national release of *For a Girl Becoming*](#), a luminous new children’s book written by Joy Harjo, the first Native American U.S. Poet Laureate, and illustrated by Adriana Garcia, winner of the Pura Belpré Award. The book, to be released nationally on April 29, 2025, tells the poetic journey of a young girl growing into womanhood—and that girl is none other than Krista Chico, Harjo’s granddaughter and a current Job Developer for NPAC in Albuquerque.

“Our family has traditionally stood for justice for our Native peoples and I’m very proud of our family connection to the National Indian Youth Council [now NPAC],” said Joy Harjo. “One of my most influential mentors was my aunt Lois Harjo. Her stories and love for our family and our Mvskoke people passed to me. That my granddaughter Krista Chico is carrying on that love, what we call ‘vnoketckv’, ensures that we continue.”

The release of *For a Girl Becoming* is more than a literary milestone—it is a full-circle moment for a family and an organization that have both stood at the forefront of Native empowerment for over 60 years. [Joy Harjo](#), a revered artist of the Muscogee Nation, once worked for the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) in the 1970s—an organization that has evolved into what is now NPAC. Today, her granddaughter Krista Chico continues that legacy, working on the frontlines to support Indigenous job seekers and learners in urban Native communities.

“This book is a gift to all Indigenous girls—and to every one of us who stands at the threshold of becoming,” said Krista Chico, who grew up listening to her grandmother’s stories. “It’s humbling to see my life reflected through her poetry. What’s even more powerful is that I get to walk in her footsteps—not just in life, but in serving our people through NPAC. This is our shared legacy.”

From NIYC to NPAC: A Tapestry of Intergenerational Impact

[Founded in 1961, the National Indian Youth Council \(NIYC\)](#) was among the first Native-led organizations to champion self-determination, civil rights, and sovereignty. Today, as NPAC, the organization carries forward that mission through workforce development, education, and cultural advocacy, empowering thousands of Native individuals across New Mexico and beyond.

*"We are incredibly proud to honor both Joy and Krista—not only as relatives but as torchbearers of a movement that has transformed lives for more than six decades," said **Darius Lee Smith, Executive Director of NPAC.** "Joy Harjo's work with NIYC in the 1970s helped lay the groundwork for what we now call Indigenous professional advancement. To see Krista now working directly with our community, lifting up the next generation—it's proof that legacy matters, and that the seeds we plant in activism and poetry truly do grow."*

Celebrating Muscogee Creativity at Ocmulgee Rising

As part of the lead-up to the book launch, Krista Chico will join her grandmother [in their ancestral homelands for "Ocmulgee Rising: A Celebration of Muscogee Creativity," held on April 24, 2025, in Macon, Georgia.](#) Hosted by [Georgia Humanities and the National Humanities Center](#), the event features a reading by Harjo and a guided poetry walk through the sacred Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park.

*"To stand in that space, with my grandmother, on the lands of our ancestors—it's something I can't put into words," said **Chico.** "Our work with NPAC is about self-determination, but it's also about remembrance. The past isn't behind us—it's with us. And we carry it forward in everything we do."*

A Message of Becoming—for Girls, for Communities, for Nations

[For a Girl Becoming](#) is not only a celebration of personal growth—it is a poetic testament to Indigenous resilience, community, and identity. With rich symbolism and powerful verse, the book speaks to readers of all ages and backgrounds, and is especially poignant in this moment of cultural resurgence and Native visibility.

*"This book captures everything we hope to ignite through our work at NPAC—confidence, connection, creativity, and continuity," said **Deanna Aguiar, Director of Programs and Development at NPAC.** "It's more than a children's book. It's a roadmap for healing and hope. And to know that it's rooted in our own NPAC family makes it all the more powerful."*

For interviews with Joy Harjo, Krista Chico, or NPAC leaders, contact:
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Founded in 1961, the [Native Professional Advancement Center](#), operating alongside the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), has been a pioneering force in advocating for the rights and well-being of Native American communities. Born out of a desire to see a world where Native peoples can freely exercise their rights to

self-determination and sovereignty, we have spent over six decades dedicated to the empowerment and advancement of Native Americans across the United States.