



HONORING 65 YEARS OF NATIVE LEADERSHIP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NPAC Executive Director Darius Lee Smith to Serve as Guest Speaker at CNM Native American Tribal Education Summit

Albuquerque, N.M – The [Native Professional Advancement Center \(NPAC\)](#), powered by the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), is proud to announce that Executive Director Darius Lee Smith has been invited to serve as a featured guest speaker at the [upcoming Central New Mexico Community College \(CNM\) Native American Tribal Education Summit on Friday, June 4, 2026](#), at CNM's Main Campus in Albuquerque.

Hosted by the [CNM Native American Advisory Council](#), the summit will bring together tribal educators, leaders, and community partners from across New Mexico to learn more about CNM's educational resources, student support services, and collaborative initiatives that can strengthen Native student success and community advancement.

As part of the opening session, Smith will share his personal educational journey, reflections on mentorship, and the importance of culturally grounded support systems that help Native students thrive in higher education and workforce pathways.

"It's an honor to join this important gathering and speak directly with educators and leaders who are shaping opportunities for Native students across our communities," **said Darius Lee Smith, Executive Director of NPAC.** "Education changes lives, but access to mentorship, encouragement, and culturally relevant support can make all the difference in whether students feel empowered to persist and succeed. I'm grateful for the opportunity to share my story and continue building relationships that uplift our future generations."

The CNM Native American Tribal Education Summit is designed to strengthen collaboration between tribal communities and educational institutions while highlighting resources available to Native students pursuing college and career pathways.

Smith's participation reflects NPAC's growing role as a statewide leader in workforce development, education, mentorship, and Indigenous leadership advancement. Through programs focused on workforce training, supportive services, civic leadership, and film and media development, NPAC continues to expand opportunities for Native individuals and families across New Mexico.

*“Partnerships between educational institutions and Native-led organizations are essential to creating pathways that are both accessible and culturally responsive,” **Smith added.** “When Native students see themselves supported, represented, and encouraged, they are more likely to succeed—not just in school, but in leadership and in life.”*

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Founded in 1961, the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC)—now operating as the [Native Professional Advancement Center \(NPAC\)](#)—is one of the nation’s oldest Native-led organizations advancing Indigenous self-determination, civil rights, and opportunity. For 65 years, NIYC/NPAC has served Native communities across New Mexico through culturally grounded workforce development, education, leadership training, and advocacy. Rooted in the Red Power movement and a legacy of community-led action, NPAC continues to empower Native people to build strong families, resilient economies, and thriving futures.