Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
For Immediate Release: April 29, 2019
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WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Tara Mac Lean Sweeney today announced that she has appointed Darryl LaCounte to the position of director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in the U.S. Department of the Interior. LaCounte, a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians in North Dakota, has served as acting director since 2018. His appointment is effective April 28, 2019.

Assistant Secretary Sweeney is committed to providing consistent and focused leadership for the BIA, as well as to actively collaborate with the Department's senior managers. Among her top priorities is to fill all of the bureau's leadership positions with highly qualified managers who will provide continuity and expertise in trust management in accordance with its mission.

"Ensuring that key leadership positions are filled is important for Indian Affairs' success and the Department's relationship with Indian Country," Sweeney said. "Mr. LaCounte has done a superior job over this past year as the acting director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He is clearly committed to the trust responsibility and the further development of our vital workforce, which is the foundation for our ability to deliver services to the tribes."

"When I was asked to step in to be the BIA's acting director, I felt a strong responsibility to the people behind the work – the Indian Affairs employees, the tribes, and the Indian and Alaska Native people we serve," LaCounte said. "In accepting this appointment as BIA director, I want to thank Assistant Secretary Sweeney for her confidence and support. Because I believe in our mission, I am committed to improving the way we accomplish it and to upholding the federal trust responsibility now and for future generations."

LaCounte began his federal career in 1988 at the Bureau's Wind River Agency in Fort Washakie, Wyo., as an oil and gas specialist in the real estate services branch of the Office of Trust Services. Since 2015, he had been regional director of the Bureau's Rocky Mountain Regional Office in Billings, Mont., which serves eight federally recognized tribes in Montana and Wyoming. He went on to serve as the acting deputy bureau director for Trust Services at the BIA's headquarters in Washington, D.C., beginning in February 2018. He was named the acting BIA director in April 2018.

LaCounte received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Eastern Montana College (now Montana State University) in 1986.

The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs oversees the BIA, the oldest bureau in the Department of the Interior. The BIA director is responsible for managing the bureau's day-to-day operations through four offices – Indian Services, Justice Services, Trust Services, and Field Operations. These offices directly administer or fund tribally operated BIA infrastructure, economic development, law enforcement and justice, social services (including child welfare), tribal governance, and trust land and natural and energy resources management programs for the nation's 573 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes through 12 regional offices and 81 agencies.

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