Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Bureau of Indian Affairs Director Michael S. Black today announced that he has named Sharon A. Pinto as regional director of the BIA's Navajo Regional Office in Gallup, N.M. Pinto, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, had been serving as the regional deputy director since October 28, 2007, and as the acting regional director since May 4, 2011.

"Sharon Pinto is a proven and capable senior federal manager, and her commitment to the welfare of the Navajo people makes her an outstanding choice for regional director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Navajo Regional Office," Black said. "I have every confidence in her ability to successfully lead the office in carrying out the BIA's mission to serve the Navajo Nation."

"As the new Navajo Regional Office regional director, I want to thank BIA Director Black for this tremendous opportunity," Pinto said. "I look forward to working with him as a member of his field management team, and to maintaining the office's high standard of service to the Navajo Nation."

The Navajo Regional Office oversees five agencies serving the Nation, a federally recognized tribe with over 200,000 enrolled members whose 16 million acre reservation is located in northeast Arizona and extends into northwest New Mexico and southeast Utah. Her appointment became effective on October 9, 2011.

As the acting Navajo Regional Office regional director, Pinto has been responsible for the oversight and management of 420 employees and the administration of over $170 million in BIA programs and $90 million in P.L. 93-638 Indian self-determination contracts with the tribe, carrying out tribal consultation with the Navajo Nation on a day-to-day basis, and working with tribal officials, Interior's regional trust administrator and other federal representatives, and state and county agencies on matters relating to the development and management of the tribe's trust lands and natural and mineral resources.

Prior to becoming the acting regional director, Pinto had been serving as the deputy regional director for the Navajo Region since October 2007, where she was responsible for providing oversight and management of BIA regional trust resource management and tribal services programs.

Pinto began her federal career in October 2001 as an Indian self-determination specialist with the BIA's Southwest Regional Office in Albuquerque, N.M. She also helped provide 638 training to BIA and tribal employees, worked with 23 tribes on administrative support cost issues, and sought to improve the distribution of regional indirect cost funds. She served in that position until her promotion to the post of Indian self-determination officer in the Navajo Regional Office in December 2004, where her responsibilities included supervising and directing the regional self-determination office.

Pinto came to the BIA after having spent 11 years working for the Navajo Nation, the state of New Mexico and the private sector. After graduating in 1991 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Northern Arizona University, Pinto started in July of that year as a district prosecutor for the Navajo Nation Prosecutor's Office in Window Rock, Ariz.

She left the prosecutor's office in June 1997 to work for the Navajo Housing Authority, the largest Indian housing authority in the United States, as a staff legal advocate. From March 1998 to March 1999, Pinto served as a tribal court advocate with the John A. Chapela law firm in Window Rock where she handled civil and criminal cases in Navajo Nation courts.

From March to December 1999, Pinto worked as a paralegal/victim advocate with the state of New Mexico's 11th Judicial District Attorney's office in Gallup providing legal assistance to victims of domestic violence. In May 2000, Pinto joined the staff of the Navajo Nation Ramah (N.M.) Navajo Chapter as human resources manager. In November 2000, Pinto was appointed acting executive director of the chapter's 638 grants and contracts office, which managed and operated its law enforcement, community resources, trust services, realty management, tribal government, financial management, and property, procurement and facilities management contract and grant programs. She held the post until October 2001.

Between 1991 and 2001, Pinto served on or with numerous local boards and organizations including the Navajo Multi-Disciplinary Team for Child Abuse; Navajo DNA Legal Services, Inc.; the Navajo Nation Domestic Abuse Advisory Board; the Navajo Nation Youth Crime Prevention Coalition; and the McKinley County (N.M.) Domestic Violence Task Force. She also has served as a member of the Ramah Navajo Community Economic Development Task Force, the Ramah Navajo Community Housing Task Force and the Ramah Navajo Community Local Governance Task Force.