Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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Interior Secretary Don Hodel today announced the appointment of LaDonna Harris, a nationally known enrolled member of the Comanche Tribe, as the U.S. representative "to the Inter-American Indian Institute (III.).

"I am very pleased that a highly- qualified Indian woman with such close ties to the Indian community has agreed to serve in this important position," Hodel said. "I believe that her many years of service to the Indian people in this country will go a long way toward meeting the III goal of improving the conditions and the relations with the indigenous people throughout the Western Hemisphere.

A native of Oklahoma, Harris currently serves as president of Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO) in Washington, D.C. AIO, an organization started by Harris 15 years ago, is a national Indian advocacy organization working to strengthen tribal governments. She also organized Oklahomans for Indian Opportunity and has served as a leader and advisor to various Indian advocacy organizations.

"I look forward to using the experience I have gained working with tribal leaders and the Indian community over many years in addressing the many issues confronting the indigenous people in the Western Hemisphere," she said. "I welcome the opportunity to make a contribution to the goals of the Institute, particularly during this time as we experience a resurgence of Indianness in this country arid throughout North America."

Harris previously served as a consultant to the Institute and participated in the 8th Inter-American Indian Congress in 1981 in Yucatan, including presentation of a technical paper on economic development. She also traveled to Guyana in 1983 to enlist that country as a member of the Institute.

Harris, 52, was appointed by President Johnson as a member of the National Indian Opportunities Council and continued service on that body under Presidents Nixon and Ford. She was appointed by President Carter as a member of the President's National Commission on Mental Health and chaired a task force on Indian health problems.

The Institute, established by international convention in 1940, is comprised of 17 nations. Its primary purpose includes dissemination of information to member nations in planning economic, social, educational and cultural improvements for Indians throughout the hemisphere. The Institute acts in a consultative and advisory capacity for the various national bureaus/institutes of Indian Affairs.

Harris replaces Dave Warren who resigned earlier this month and was appointed Secretary General of the 9th Congress now meeting in Santa Fe, N.M.