

## Chippewa woman named Secretary of Indian Affairs

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 09 February 2024 00:00

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SANTA FE — The New Mexico Senate unanimously confirmed Josett Monette as the Cabinet Secretary for the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department on Feb. 5.

“Secretary Monette’s extensive background in serving Indigenous people uniquely positions her to address the challenges facing our tribal communities and realize the opportunities,” Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said. “I thank the New Mexico Senate for their unanimous support in confirming Secretary Monette, reflecting the widespread recognition of her qualifications and leadership.”

Monette is a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians. Prior to joining the state, Monette was the New Mexico Legal Aid Native American Program Director. She is an Adjunct Professor for the University of New Mexico School of Law National Native American Law Student Association Moot Court Team.

She recently served as a Commissioner for the Pueblo of Tesuque Gaming Commission. Previously, she worked as a Staff Attorney at NMLA Native American Program, an Associate General Counsel for the Pueblo of Isleta, and as an Associate Attorney with Barnhouse, Keegan, Solimon, & West, LLP, an Indian law firm in Albuquerque which provides representation to tribes and tribal businesses throughout the country. Monette served on the Board of Directors for the New Mexico State Bar Indian Law Section for seven years and sits as an Attorney Bar Exam Coach. She holds a JD with a certificate in Indian Law from the UNM School of Law, as well as a master’s in educational leadership, bachelor of science in secondary education and bachelor of arts in American Indian Studies from the University of North Dakota.

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Prior to her legal career, Secretary Monette was an educator and worked in education mostly on her home reservation in the Turtle Mountain Community. She raised three children as a single mother.

“I am beyond humbled, honored and appreciative of the governor and the Legislature placing their trust in me,” Monette said. “I am committed to advancing the priorities of this administration in support of the 23 Nations, Tribes and Pueblos, and all of New Mexico’s native people and fostering a respectful and productive dialogue between the state and sovereign nations.”

Sen. Benny Shendo Jr. sponsored Monette for the secretary role.

“It was an honor to bring the confirmation of Secretary Monette before my Senate colleagues. ...,” he said. “It’s important that we entrust this role with someone who knows and advocates for all the needs of our tribal nations, tribal communities and Indigenous people throughout the state. Secretary Monette has proven over the last 11 months that she has the talent, commitment and compassion to lead the Indian Affairs Department and I look forward to supporting her continued success.”

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