

American Indian Law Center, Inc.

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Pueblo Woman Selected to Lead Prominent Indian Law Center

Albuquerque, New Mexico—Helen B. Padilla, a Native of Isleta Pueblo, has been named the new Director of the American Indian Law Center, Inc., (AILC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

AILC is the oldest existing Indian-controlled and operated legal and public policy organization in the country. The Indian Law Center is renowned for its Pre-Law Summer Institute (PLSI), preparing Indian students to succeed in law school and become lawyers.

Padilla received her Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Business Administration and a Juris Doctorate, with a Certificate in Indian Law, from the University of New Mexico. She is a member of the New Mexico bar, and is also admitted to practice law in Colorado and Connecticut.

Padilla said, "PLSI prepared me for the rigorous and challenging curriculum of law school. I'm honored and humbled by the selection and ready to continue the important work of the Law Center. Under my predecessor's (Sam Deloria) leadership, the Law Center became a catalyst and leader in strengthening tribal government institutions. I want to maintain that path and ensure our programs are responsive to tribal organizations and institutions by providing training and programs for tribal governments, facilitating intergovernmental relations, and preparing our graduates for the ever changing dynamics of Indian policy and law."

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Prior to her current position, Padilla served as Tax Administrator and General Counsel for the Pueblo of Tesuque. In 2004, Governor Richardson appointed her to the General Counsel position for the State of New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. She has a wealth of experience outside New Mexico as the Senior Staff Attorney for the Mohegan Tribe of Indians in Connecticut, Assistant Regional Counsel for the Social Security Administration in Denver, Colorado and a legal intern with the National Indian Gaming Commission in Washington, D.C.

Padilla said, "My father's guidance and experience as a tribal council member for many years at Isleta has strongly influenced my desire to work with tribes."

Sam Deloria, former AILC Director and current Director of the American Indian Graduate Center in Albuquerque, stated, "The Law Center will benefit greatly from Helen's depth of experience in Indian law and her commitment to Indian law students. Indian country and Indian law deserve her caliber of expertise and leadership."

"The legal issues in Indian Country are some of the toughest and most complex, making the American Indian Law Center an essential tool in the successful recruitment and retention of some of the best and brightest. Helen has the track record and expertise to lead the critical work of the Law Center," said Joe Garcia (Ohkay Owingeh), Chairman of the All Indian Pueblo Council and President of the National Congress of American Indians.

About the American Indian Law Center: <http://lawschool.unm.edu/ailc>

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AILC serves to build, promote and honor self-sustaining American Indian and Alaska Native communities through education, training and leadership.