



Office of the Governor

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM

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Governor names Josett D. Monette as new Indian Affairs Department secretary

James R. Mountain to serve as senior policy advisor to the governor

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham today named Josett D. Monette as Cabinet Secretary of the Indian Affairs Department, succeeding current Secretary-designate James R. Mountain, who will transition to the governor’s office as senior policy advisor for tribal affairs.

Monette has served at the Indian Affairs Department since March 2023 when she was appointed as general counsel. She was appointed to deputy secretary in July 2023.

“Both former Secretary-designate Mountain and Secretary-designate Monette are proven leaders who are dedicated to serving the Nations, tribes and pueblos of New Mexico,” said **Gov. Lujan Grisham**. “This administration will continue to prioritize meaningful government-to-government relations and the effective and equitable delivery of resources to tribal communities.”

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. The Native American Program serves indigent clients living on or near the Pueblos and provides legal services, mostly in tribal courts, in many areas of law including jurisdictional issues, violations of due process, custody, divorce, child support, defending against debt collections, probate matters, tribal criminal defense, Indian Child Welfare Act, tribal housing matters, tribal employment matters, and representing respondent parents in Child in Need of Care matters. 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 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.

“I am stepping into this role with deep commitment, dedication, care, and a profound respect for our Nations, Tribes and Pueblos and their homelands here in New Mexico. Working for Indian Country is where my dedication lies.” **Secretary-designate Monette** said. “I have a clear understanding of the responsibility that IAD holds in oversight of New Mexico’s investments of millions of dollars, resources, and commitments to government-to-government relationships to our tribal communities. I want to thank Gov. Lujan Grisham for her trust and confidence in me to lead the Indian Affairs Department and uphold her unparalleled commitments to New Mexico’s tribal leaders and communities.”

Prior to her legal career, Josett 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.

“Serving as the Cabinet Secretary for Gov. Lujan Grisham has been one of the greatest honors I have ever been asked to take on. The Governor has done nothing but uphold her promises and commitments to tribal leaders and our people by investing hundreds of millions of dollars in tribal infrastructure and Indian education, honoring tribal sovereignty and promoting self-determination,” **Mountain** said. “I am grateful and look forward to continuing to serve under her leadership in a new role for the administration, our tribes and New Mexico.”

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