

Former K'ai'bii'to' Chapter employee pleads no contest to fraud, forgery charges

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 21 September 2018 08:44



WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Attorney General Ethel Branch announced Sept. 13 that former K'ai'bii'to' Accounts Maintenance Specialist Berniece Pinto-Denetdeal has pled No Contest to one count of fraud and one count of forgery.

Pleas of No Contest are treated as Guilty for sentencing purposes.

Defendant Pinto-Denetdeal used her position as an Accounts Maintenance Specialist to forge signatures of other Chapter officials to issue checks to herself that she was not entitled to. In order to conceal her actions, she falsely recorded information in the Chapter's accounting software.

The total loss to the Chapter and the Nation amounts to approximately \$32,559.

Defendant Pinto-Denetdeal changed her plea of Not Guilty to No Contest in two criminal dockets before the Navajo Nation District Court of Tuba City. She was originally charged with 64 separate criminal complaints.

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Defendant Pinto-Denetdeal has entered into a plea agreement with the Navajo Nation and the United States to resolve cases filed in both jurisdictions, and has agreed to pay restitution in the amount of \$29,941.05 to the K'ai'biit'o' Chapter.

She will be on probation for two years with the Navajo Nation and three years with the federal government.

The Navajo Nation District Court of Tuba City accepted the plea agreement and all its terms.

"Chief Prosecutor Gertrude Lee has done a tremendous job in rebuilding the Navajo Nation Office of the Prosecutor. She joined us in October 2016 and since then she has filled an astounding number of legal positions. She started with only seven legal staff members and now has eighteen. When she fills her two vacant legal positions, she will have tripled her legal staff. The effects of this can be seen across the board, but especially in the areas of white collar and violent crime prosecution," Attorney General Ethel Branch said.

"Chief Prosecutor Lee was able to do this with additional funds secured through the support of President Begaye and the Department of Justice, and through her natural talent in recruiting new staff. I hope the next administration will continue these efforts to strengthen the Office of the Prosecutor and demand public integrity. We owe it to the Navajo People to ensure we have safer communities and that public dollars are used for public benefit," Branch continued.

To report tips and complaints about waste, fraud, and abuse in the Navajo Nation government, contact the Navajo Nation Fraud Hotline at 1-844-747-2767 or fraudline@nnooc.org.