

Assistant secretary of Indian education named

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SANTA FE— The New Mexico Public Education Department has hired a new assistant secretary of Indian education.

Lashawna Tso began the position the week of Oct. 12. She served most recently as legislative chief of staff in the Navajo Nation Office of the Speaker, where she supported policy development and reviewed intergovernmental issues.

At PED, Tso will lead the Indian Education division, which directs state policy on effective implementation of the Indian Education Act, including significant and meaningful collaboration and communication with Native communities and leaders.

Specifically, she will work with Public Education Department Secretary Ryan Stewart, tribal leaders, Native American students and other stakeholders to ensure that Native American students are provided a culturally and linguistically responsive education that prepares them for college, career and service to their community.

“There were many fine candidates for this position, and it was a hard process, but we know we found the best candidate for the job, and we’re thrilled to welcome her aboard,” Stewart said. “The assistant secretary for Indian education is essential in helping the Public Education Department serve our Native American population with a quality education that is culturally and linguistically relevant.”

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New Mexico is home to 23 federally recognized tribes, and Native Americans make up roughly 10 percent of the population.

The New Mexico Indian Education Act, passed in 2003, requires the assistant secretary for Indian education to ensure resources are allocated to develop and implement culturally relevant curriculum and programs; establish and support the Indian Education Advisory Council; ensure school districts and charter schools are engaging in tribal consultation; and seek funds to implement a plan to increase tribal teachers and school leaders.

Tso will also oversee implementation of solutions for the Martinez and Yazzie (Martinez/Yazzie) Consolidated Lawsuit, monitoring progress and coordinating activities and initiatives with other agencies, including the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department.

“Ms. Tso will be an incredible asset to the Public Education Department,” Indian Affairs Department Secretary Lynn Trujillo said. “Her work on behalf of Native families has helped prepare her to be an effective leader for New Mexico’s students and parents.”

Tso has a master’s degree in public administration from Grand Canyon University and a bachelor’s degree from Arizona State.