

Summary: Former White Horse Lake Chapter House Community Services Coordinator Embezzled Funds

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The OIG investigated allegations that Relda Martinez, former community services coordinator of the Navajo Nation's White Horse Lake Chapter House (WHLCH) in Prewitt, NM, embezzled WHLCH funds.

We found that, between 2014 and 2016, Martinez embezzled \$26,885 from the WHLCH. As the community services coordinator at the WHLCH, Martinez had access to the WHLCH financial accounting system. She "used her access to issue numerous checks to other parties ostensibly as payments for legitimate work," but which were actually "issued in amounts greater than the actual cost of the work or for work that was not performed."¹ Martinez admitted that the money went to her family members, her friends, and herself.

On July 14, 2021, Martinez pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court for the District of New Mexico to one count in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 666, "Theft or bribery concerning programs receiving Federal funds." On February 10, 2022, the court sentenced Martinez to 60 months of probation and 50 hours of community service and ordered her to pay \$26,885 in restitution plus a \$100 special assessment. We worked on this case jointly with Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation.

This is a summary of an investigative report we issued to the Bureau of Indian Affairs Director.

¹ <https://www.justice.gov/usao-nm/pr/former-navajo-nation-employee-sentenced-federal-program-fraud>.

