



CENTRAL COUNCIL
Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
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PRESS RELEASE

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Chief Justice Appointed to Co-Chair NCAI's VAW Task Force



Michelle Demmert

Juneau, AK (March 14, 2018) – Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit & Haida) is pleased to announce tribal citizen and Chief Justice Michelle Demmert has been appointed as co-chair of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Violence Against Women (VAW) Task Force.

Demmert joins NCAI Secretary Juana Majel-Dixon in co-chairing the task force which was established in 2003. Despite federal trust obligations, violence against American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) women has reached epidemic proportions and greatly exceeds that of any other population of women in the United States. The focus of the task force is to support congressional restoration of tribal authority to prosecute non-Indians who commit domestic violence and related crimes on tribal lands. It also supports national legislation and policy that contains tribal specific provisions that would provide tribes with the resources needed to prosecute violent crimes committed against indigenous women and to adequately serve Native

victims, as well as enhance tribal sovereignty.

“The Tribe congratulates Chief Justice Demmert on her appointment and is grateful for her continued work to protect our indigenous women,” said President Richard Peterson. “She has long been a proponent of tribal courts and integral in building the capacity of tribes to address domestic violence in Southeast Alaska.”

“I am honored to be a part of this grassroots movement which has been instrumental in advancing real legislative progress to improve protections to American Indian and Alaska Native women and raise awareness of the disproportionality of violence against our Native women,” said Demmert. “Women are murdered at 10 times the national rate in Alaska. This has to be addressed. I believe we, as Native people, can lead the way for change through advocacy and education.”

Demmert was elected as Tlingit & Haida’s Tribal Court Chief Justice in 2016. She graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in Psychology and a Juris Doctorate. She is a licensed attorney and has served as a Tribal Court Judge for the Northwest Intertribal Court System and Reservation Attorney for the Tulalip Tribe in Washington State. She is the daughter of Sharon and the late Lawrence Demmert Sr. of Klawock, Alaska. Her Tlingit name is *Jaagal Aat* is *Ch'aak'* and she is *Ch'aak'* (Eagle) from the *Kaax'oos.hittaan* (Man's Foot) clan and the child of the *Taakw.aaneidi*.

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