



Eleventh Judicial District Court

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Farmington attorney becomes first Native American district court judge in Eleventh Judicial District

AZTEC – Brenna Clani-Washinawatok, a Farmington attorney and enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, will be the first Native American to serve as a district court judge in the Eleventh Judicial District of San Juan and McKinley counties.

Judge Clani-Washinawatok will take the oath of office next month. She has served as a child support hearing officer, domestic violence commissioner and domestic relations hearing officer for the district court since 2022. She was appointed to the bench by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham to succeed retired District Judge Daylene Marsh.

“It is a great honor and humbling experience to serve the people of San Juan and McKinley counties as a judge. I am guided by the rule of law, and look forward to working with the dedicated employees and judges of the court to provide fair and impartial justice for all,” said Judge Clani-Washinawatok.

Chief Judge R. David Pederson said, “It is a privilege to welcome Judge Clani-Washinawatok to the bench. She has served with distinction on the court as a hearing officer and commissioner working on child support, parentage, divorce and custody cases as well as petitions for domestic violence orders of protection.”

Judge Clani-Washinawatok was born in Shiprock, and graduated from Gallup High School. She received a bachelor’s degree from Stanford University and graduated magna cum laude from the University of New Mexico School of Law in 2005.

She previously has worked as an attorney in the Child Support Services Division of the New Mexico Health Care Authority, an assistant district attorney in Eleventh Judicial District, a staff attorney for the Navajo Nation Department of Justice, and a senior policy analyst for the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department.

Judge Clani-Washinawatok is a fifth generation master Diné/Navajo weaver, born of the Ta’neezahnii clan and born for the Táchii’nii clan.

In addition to Judge Clani-Washinawatok, there currently are six Native Americans serving as judges on district, metropolitan and magistrate courts in New Mexico. That includes four magistrate judges in McKinley and San Juan counties.

District courts are general jurisdiction courts that hear adult and juvenile criminal cases as well as civil matters, including contract disputes, personal injury litigation and domestic relations cases such as divorce, custody and child support enforcement. Magistrate and metropolitan courts have limited jurisdiction and hear misdemeanors, traffic violations and civil actions up to \$10,000, and hold preliminary hearings to determine probable cause on felony charges.

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Editor's Note: The judge's name is pronounced, Klan-ee Wash-in-a-wah-took.



District Judge Brenna Clani-Washinawatok
Photo courtesy of the Eleventh Judicial District Court