



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

October 18, 2012

**PICURIS PUEBLO WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO
EMBEZZLING \$132,000 FROM PUEBLO**

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning in federal court in Albuquerque, Norma Mermejo, 61, a member and resident of Picuris Pueblo, entered a guilty plea to an indictment charging her with embezzlement and theft from an Indian tribal organization.

U.S. Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Mermejo pled guilty to embezzling approximately \$132,000 belonging to Picuris Pueblo between Feb. 2008 and April 2010. At the time, Mermejo was employed as a file clerk in the Pueblo's accounting office. Picuris Pueblo terminated her employment in April 2010, when Pueblo officials learned of her unlawful activities.

During today's plea hearing, Mermejo admitted that she embezzled an aggregate of \$132,000 of funds belonging to Picuris Pueblo on 144 occasions during a two-year period. In her plea agreement, Mermejo admitted that she embezzled the money to support her gambling habit and make ends meet with regard to such matters as utility bills.

At sentencing, Mermejo faces a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Mermejo remains on conditions of release pending sentencing, which has yet to be scheduled.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services, Northern Pueblos Agency, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul H. Spiers.

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