

Summary: Investigation of Theft of Individual Indian Money Account

Report Date: October 31, 2016

In March 2015, a Fiduciary Trust Officer, U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST), Rapid City, SD, alleged that Danelle Newman, illegally obtained and sold her mother's tribal trust lands and negotiated a *Cobell v. Salazar* (*Cobell*) Settlement check belonging to her mother.

Our investigation determined that from January 2013 through July 2014, Newman devised a scheme to defraud her mother of her tribal trust lands. First, Newman executed an OST Form 001-004, Individual Indian Money Account (IIM) Instructions for Disbursement of Funds and Change of Address and then placed several follow-up calls to the Trust Beneficiary Call Center. These actions allowed Newman to change her mother's address and depository method, add herself to her mother's IIM account, and obtain a Chase Bank debit card in her mother's name.

Second, Newman forged her mother's signature on three Deeds to Restricted Indian Lands for parcels of land belonging to her mother, obtained fraudulent notary seals, and sold the parcels to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in conjunction with the Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations. OST subsequently electronically transferred \$22,372.62 to her mother's debit card for the fraudulent sale. Newman also received an additional \$77.57 in lease payments. Finally, our investigation found Newman forged her mother's signature on an \$873.33 *Cobell* Settlement check.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of South Dakota accepted the case for prosecution. Newman subsequently pled guilty to mail fraud, was sentenced to 50 months' probation, and ordered to pay \$23,246.95 in restitution. On August 3, 2016, all of her mother's tribal trust lands were returned to her trust inventory.

This is a summary of a report of investigation that was issued to OST for information.

