



Tohono O'odham Nation
Office of the
Chairman and Vice Chairwoman

Ned Norris Jr. Wavalene M. Saunders
Chairman Vice Chairwoman



Tribute to
Hilda A. Manuel
January 21, 1951 – August 25, 2022

A tribute to a friend, mentor and true friend of Indian Country. I first met Hilda in 1978. She was the first Children's Court Judge for the Tohono O'odham Nation and was the person who founded and established the Nation's Children's Court system. As the second appointed Children's Court Judge in 1979, Hilda was one of many mentors that trained, guided, supported, counseled and taught me early on in my 40 plus years of public service to our great O'odham Nation.

Vice Chairwoman Wavalene Saunders and I wanted share some perspective on this remarkable O'odham woman.

Ms. Hilda Ann Manuel is a member of the Tohono O'odham Nation, Chukut Kuk District. Ms. Manuel graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of New Mexico, School of Law, and began her career as a Children's Court judge for the Tohono O'odham Nation in Arizona. During her tenure, Ms. Manuel established a Children's Court system which became a national model for Indian tribes across the United States. In 1987 Ms. Manuel began her tenure as Chief Judge of the newly established Tohono O'odham Judiciary.

Ms. Manuel also served as a Judge Pro Tem for the Colorado River Indian Tribes, Hualapai Tribe, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Gila River Indian Community, White Mountain Apache Tribe, San Carlos Apache Tribe, Salt River Pima Maricopa Community and the Hopi Tribe between 1978-1990.

In January, 1990, Ms. Manuel was hired to head the Branch of Judicial Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington D.C. Ms. Manuel was responsible for the funding and policy direction of all tribal and Courts of Indian Offenses under the auspices of the BIA. In 1992, Ms. Manuel became the director of the Indian Gaming Management Office, a staff office she created. In this position Ms. Manuel was responsible for the oversight and implementation of the Secretary's responsibilities under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988.

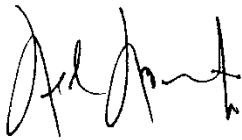
In October, 1994, Ms. Manuel was officially appointed Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs by Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt. As Deputy Commissioner, Ms. Manuel provided executive leadership to all major functions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs by exercising line authority over headquarters staff, offices, 12 regional offices and 87 agencies and field operations. Ms. Manuel had direct authority and served as the Bureau's Chief Financial Officer responsible for a \$1.9 billion budget. Ms. Manuel was the first Indian woman appointed as Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs and served with distinction for 5 years.

In 1983 Hilda Manuel and Stanley Throssell were candidates for the Office of Chairman and Vice Chairman for the Papago Tribe of Arizona. Although unsuccessful, Stanley and Hilda ran as a ticket at a time when running as a team was not required until the adoption of the Constitution of the Tohono O'odham Nation in 1986.

Throughout her career Hilda had established dedication and service to Indian Country, having served as Associate Counsel, Seneca Nation of Indians (2012 – 2014), Empire Resorts (2004 – 2009), Deputy General Counsel, the Gila River Indian Community (2002 – 2004), and Special Counsel, Steptoe & Johnson LLP (2000 – 2002) to name a few.

Services are set for Monday, September 26, 2022, mass at 9:00am at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church, Sells, Arizona. Burial of the urn immediately following mass at Sells cemetery (off highway 86 & Old Rental turnoff). In her honor flags will be flown at half mast on Monday, September 26th.

Rest In Peace Hilda, the impacts of your accomplishments will be felt for generations to come and you have served our Nation with distinction, honor and respect.



Ned Norris, Jr., Chairman



Wavalene Saunders, Vice Chairwoman