



## **Russell – Page 2**

She left the tribe to enter private practice in Great Falls, Mont., and later joined the firm of Smith, Guenther and Monteau where she represented numerous tribes in the state as well as in Nevada and Washington State on Indian housing, Indian child welfare and tribal self-governance matters.

In 1996, she established the Elk River Law Office in Billings, and with her partner, Sam Painter, represented tribes, tribal businesses and local governments, and where she worked with the Crow Tribe on a major rewriting of its constitution. Until her recent appointment, she represented tribes on state and federal litigation efforts, tribal government development, tribal court enhancement, water rights negotiations, mineral and natural resource development, trust management reform and gaming, and has litigated Indian Child Welfare Act cases. She also has represented several national organizations in the areas of Indian education, trust reform and wildlife restoration.

Russell is a graduate of Lodge Grass High School on the Crow Indian Reservation and from Eastern Montana College (now Montana State University – Billings), where she earned her degree with dual majors in psychology and sociology and where she received the “Outstanding Senior from EMC’s Class of 1984” award, the school’s highest honor. In 1991, she received the “Outstanding Senior Award” as a member of UM’s law school graduating class that year. She is licensed to practice law in the State of Montana and has been admitted to the United States Supreme Court.

The Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs serves as the first assistant and principal advisor to the Assistant Secretary on policies regarding the administration of Office of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) programs.

*Note to Editors: The photo of Majel Russell that accompanies this release may be viewed via the Interior Department’s website at [www.doi.gov](http://www.doi.gov).*

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