

Summary: Former Executive Director Embezzled Federal Funds from Alaska Native Organization

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The OIG investigated allegations that between 2014 and 2016, Joni Bryant, former Executive Director of the Alaska Native Harbor Seal Commission, stole Federal funds from the commission. The commission was primarily funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with additional grant funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

We determined that between 2014 and 2016, Bryant embezzled \$174,290.67 through unauthorized personal use of the commission's checking account, credit card, and wireless telecommunications account. Bryant made unauthorized cash withdrawals and wrote checks to herself. She also used the debit card attached to the commission's checking account and the commission's credit card for personal purposes, such as gas purchases, travel, and bill payment. Finally, we found Bryant misused the commission's local wireless telecommunications account.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Alaska accepted this case for criminal prosecution. On May 5, 2021, Bryant pleaded guilty to one count of 18 U.S.C. § 1163, "Embezzlement from an Indian Tribal Organization." On January 14, 2022, Bryant was sentenced to time served and 3 years of supervised release and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$174,290.67 plus a special assessment fee of \$100.

This is a summary of an investigative report we issued to the BIA Director.

