

## Cobell Settlement Land Buy-Back Program Speaker Bio

### Denise Mesteth, Director, Oglala Sioux Tribe Land Office

The Oglala Sioux Tribal Council pushed to be one of the first nations involved in the land buy-back program for tribal nations for two main reasons: to increase the income of tribal members, even if on a temporary basis, and to promote economic development at Pine Ridge. The nation had many meetings with John McClanahan and his staff in working through the buy-back. One of the issues the nation thought was very important early on was setting a minimum purchase price for an allottee's interest. Another priority interest was the land around the national park, which the tribe will be taking back. Not only is that land ripe for economic development associated with the park but the park is also an opportunity for the tribe to tell its own story in its own way. A great concern to Ms. Mesteth is the need to create economic development at Pine Ridge quickly, so that the nation can reap the benefits of buy-back income to tribal members rather than off-reservation towns. Learn about some of the things Pine Ridge did to reach out to tribal members and inform them of the buy-back, as well as possible opportunities to consolidate lands into more usable parcels.



Denise Mesteth was born and raised on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Ms. Mesteth earned a BA in business management and gained seven years experience maintaining an official working relationship with the Bureau of Indian Affairs as director of the Oglala Sioux Tribe Tribal Land Office. She currently works with the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council and BIA staff at Pine Ridge Agency to implement a government-to-government relationship to carry out all governmental trust and programmatic responsibilities of the BIA to the Oglala Sioux Tribe.