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**(SD)-Probation In Reservation Embezzlement Case**

By: John Axtell Posted at: 07/30/2019 10:28 PM

HOT SPRINGS, S.D. (AP) - A former secretary of the Oglala Sioux Credit and Finance Office has avoided prison after pleading guilty to embezzlement.

Helen Hernandez of Pine Ridge has been sentenced to five years of probation and \$42,100 in restitution to the tribe after facing a maximum of 5 years in prison.

Hernandez was indicted by a federal grand jury earlier this month of stealing from a tribal program that provides loans and repayment plans for qualified tribal members.

She stole the money by issuing payroll deduction loans in the names of people who didn't qualify, keeping the money herself for personal items and never repaying the loans to the tribe.