

Patrice H. Kunesh, of Standing Rock Lakota descent, is the commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans, at the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In her role as Commissioner, she serves as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs and as Chair of the HHS Intradepartmental Council on Native American Affairs.

Kunesh has worked at the Native American Rights Fund, where she began her legal career, and has served as in-house counsel to the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. She also served on the faculty at the University of South Dakota School of Law.

Kunesh held appointments as the deputy undersecretary for rural development at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and as the deputy solicitor for Indian affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior. In addition, she established the Center for Indian Country Development, an economic policy research initiative, at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

She founded Peñi Haha Consulting, a social enterprise committed to fostering culturally-centered Native economic development, and she was appointed to the U.S. Treasury Community Development Advisory Board (CDFI Fund) as the representative for Native communities.

Kunesh holds a J.D. from the University of Colorado School of Law and an M.P.A. from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.