

## Southwest Research and Information Center's

# Board of Directors

Southwest Research and Information Center (SRIC) wants to take this opportunity both to introduce you to our board, and honor their hard work. In each issue we will introduce you to three Board Members.

### ESTHER YAZZIE-LEWIS



Esther Yazzie-Lewis grew up south of Farmington, New Mexico on the Navajo Reservation. She worked for the Navajo Police Department, and later the Window Rock District Court. While working in Window Rock, shortly after

the 1979 Churchrock Uranium Mill Tailings Spill, she learned about Southwest Research and Information Center (SRIC).

Esther attended the University of New Mexico (UNM) and graduated in 1985 with a Bachelor of Science in Political Science. While getting this degree she became involved with the Tonantzin Land Institute — first working with Navajo communities under threat of relocation, and later with communities affected by uranium mining. Esther continued her education by commuting from Window Rock to Albuquerque and received a Master's in Public Administration (M.P.A.) at UNM in 1990. That year she received a second Master's in American Studies.

In 1985, Esther and Navajo Nation Chief Justice Robert Yazzie put together the *English/Navajo Glossary of Legal Terms* ([www.navajocourts.org](http://www.navajocourts.org)), published for the U.S. District Court Navajo and the Nation Justice System. Currently, Esther is employed as the Official Navajo Court Interpreter for the United States District Courts in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She is also a leading staff member and trainer to the National Center for Interpretation Testing, Research and Policy (NCITRP) based at the University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona. Esther also teaches a Navajo language course for UNM Continuing Education.

Esther's work on uranium issues has taken her around the world — she's traveled to Salzburg, Austria for the World Uranium Hearing. She also helped organize the First Indigenous Uranium Forum in 1987 with Anna Rondan, John Redhouse, and Ray Morgan (former SRIC employee). Esther has also worked with Doug Brugge and Timothy Benally as part of the "Navajo Uranium Miner Oral History and Photography Project." This project eventually led to the publication of *The Navajo People and Uranium Mining* in 2006.

Esther continues to work with Navajo communities. She was the founder and director of the Diné Spiritual Land Recovery Project, and is a member/spokesperson for the Southwest Indigenous Uranium Forum (SIUF). Esther has lectured both nationally and internationally on Native American issues, and is a consultant for the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond in New Orleans, Louisiana. It is because of this work that Esther was invited to be on the SRIC board in 2001. She is currently our Board Vice-President.

### ROBERT NOFCHISSEY



Robert Nofchissey was introduced to SRIC by Esther Yazzie-Lewis. Esther was teaching a Navajo language course at UNM and mentioned SRIC to the class. Robert was interested in our work in Navajo on uranium issues, primarily because he is from the Crownpoint, New Mexico area and knows local issues.

Robert has a Bachelor of Sciences degree from the

University Of New Mexico (UNM). He has worked for UNM's Health Sciences Center (UNM-HSC) in the Department of Internal Medicine for the last 13 years. Robert has been involved in numerous clinical trials, studying Herpes, West Nile, Influenza and Cystic Fibrosis. During this time Robert has continued to do field and clinical research studies dealing with hantavirus. Robert also works part time for UNM's Pathology Department, doing research projects with Powassan virus and West Nile virus. Robert's research has taken him to various parts of the world, including El Salvador, Honduras, and Russia to study emerging diseases.

Robert has taken numerous classes through the Masters in Public Health Program at UNM. In these classes a number of issues have been brought up concerning public health and the environment. As a member of the Navajo Nation, he has always been interested in ecology, and environmental justice. He is also concerned about the ongoing uranium issues in Crownpoint and in many parts of the Navajo Nation.

Working with UNM-HSC has led to collaborations with other entities doing disease studies and field work: UNM's Biology Department (Museum of Southwestern Biology) and the U.S. Army's Center for Health Promotion and Preventative Medicine-West (CHPPM-West). Collaborations have taken Robert to Idaho, Missouri, Utah and Alaska gathering small mammals and ticks for research. Much of the current Pathology work is on flavivirus — a class of viruses including West Nile and Tick-Borne Encephalitis.

Robert will be going to Alaska in August as part of collaborative team with the Museum of Southwestern Biology and the Alaska Forestry Services doing rodent studies. Among other things, the Museum is looking at the potential linkages between animal strains that may have traveled along the Bering Strait. While in Alaska, Robert will be collecting ticks, blood and tissue samples to continue research into emerging diseases.

Robert joined SRIC's board in 2008 and feels "the work that SRIC does is very important," and hopes to do more in the future. Robert is also a supporter of UNM's student chapter of the Wilderness Alliance.

### ANN WATSON



Ann Watson is another board member introduced to SRIC by Esther. In 2009, Ann took Esther's Navajo language class to help her better communicate with her Navajo relatives. Esther urged Ann to get involved with the work of SRIC. After some research into our work, and talks with

SRIC staff, Ann soon joined the board.

Ann grew up in the Farmington, New Mexico area. She has fond memories spent camping in southwestern Colorado as a child, and of fishing, swimming, and playing near wetlands. These memories helped influence her future, and in 1994 she graduated from New Mexico State University with a Bachelor's degree in Fisheries Science. Her background is in fishery biology and riparian restoration.

Currently, Ann is the Director of the Natural Resources Program at Santo Domingo Tribe. She has been employed at Santo Domingo since December 2005. Prior to becoming the Director, Ann was the Tribal Ecologist. Ann finds the job both rewarding and challenging, and is learning a tremendous amount of information — she's writing grants and representing the work of the Natural Resources Program to the public.

Prior to working for the Santo Domingo Tribe, Ann spent 15 years working for the U.S. government in different capacities. She was employed as a fishery biologist by the Bureau of Land Management in Wyoming and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Arizona as a threatened and endangered species biologist, with emphasis in native fish and riparian habitats.

In 2003, Ann decided to leave government service for a time and traveled around the world. She started her travels in Fiji and New Zealand. She later volunteered with native communities in Australia and Botswana, gaining a new perspective on how natural resource management needs to be addressed. From there, she moved on to Swaziland, Namibia, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil, before coming back to New Mexico.

Ann currently sits on the board of the New Mexico Riparian Council and has served on several grant technical review panels for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Forest Service, in addition to her work with SRIC. 🦅



## VOICES from the EARTH

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