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**Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada Deer announces resignation;
Secretary Babbitt notes accomplishments**

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada Deer today announced her resignation. Deer, appointed by President Clinton in 1993, is the first American Indian woman to serve in this position.

At the request of Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, Deer has agreed to remain in office until a successor is in place. Deer said she is not ready to announce her future plans publicly at this time.

"It has been an honor to serve in this office during the first term of the Clinton Administration," said Deer, "and I will leave this position knowing we have succeeded in achieving some significant milestones on behalf of American Indians. I am proud to have been in a leadership role during this Administration and to have played a part in advancing President Clinton's commitments to Indian people. I have deeply appreciated the support of tribal leaders these last four years and I extend my warmest appreciation to my staff for their dedication and hard work."

Secretary Babbitt thanked Deer for her leadership during a period of great progress on American Indian and Alaska Native issues. "Ada has been the catalyst for significant changes in the way the Department approaches Indian Affairs," said Secretary Babbitt. "Her priority has been on righting historic wrongs. She has worked to resolve longstanding disputes and to settle problems without long, expensive court battles. Ada has overseen the transfer of greater authority to tribal governments, and, as a result, tribes are better equipped and more empowered than ever before. Her accomplishments over the last three and a half years are just the most recent chapter in a lifetime of outstanding public service and leadership."

Assistant Secretary Deer is known as a champion of Indian rights. She is the former Chairman of the Menominee Restoration Committee where she led a successful campaign to restore federal recognition to the Tribe.

"Secretary Deer has been a forceful and persuasive advocate for the rights and powers of Tribes throughout the United States," said Lawrence A. Aschenbrenner, directing attorney of the Native American Rights Fund. "She is simply the most admired, most respected and most loved



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY - INDIAN AFFAIRS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 15, 1997

Contact Ralph E. Gonzales (202) 219-4150

WINTER STORM IN THE DAKOTAS - A DISASTER

TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

LAUNCH COUNTERATTACK

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada E. Deer expresses concern about the well-being of the Indian people who are directly affected by the inclement weather in the northern part of the country.

"Eight federally recognized Indian tribes and approximately 56,000 Indian people have been adversely affected by the recent disastrous weather in South Dakota," Ms. Deer said.

The Dakotas have been hit by freezing temperatures and record snowfall. Snow has drifted to as high as 15 feet in some areas closing all roads and stranding people in remote areas. "Mercifully, there has been only one reported Indian death as a result of this bad weather." Mr. Delbert Brewer, Area Director for the Aberdeen Area Office said.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has been working around the clock to respond to this emergency. The Aberdeen Area Director has established a Disaster Team to respond to this crisis which is operating 24 hours a day to coordinate and direct BIA's efforts to assist tribes within their jurisdiction. In addition, a field coordinator has been dispatched to Pierre, South Dakota to directly assist in the coordination of the efforts of the State, National Guard and FEMA.

"Our crews are working 24 hours a day in two shifts in an attempt to open roads on the reservations to get food and water in," Mr. Brewer said. "At this juncture the main objective is to ensure that the basic needs of the people are met." In order to respond to this crisis, snow blowers were shipped in from the Billings Area Office. However, the Aberdeen Area is now experiencing difficulty getting adequate fuel for equipment, and keeping them maintained. Extra costs for supplies and labor that are being incurred by Aberdeen and other Area Offices as a result of this storm is causing havoc with current operating budgets, but the BIA remains committed to assist tribal governments during this crisis.

Wind chill factors of -70' below zero have not helped the ground efforts in Aberdeen. Snow blowers were directed to free those in need of medical attention first, but in some cases the critically ill had to be air lifted by National Guard helicopters to local hospitals. The BIA has established shelters close to

emergency care units for those that require ongoing medical attention.

BIA, Area Offices in storm affected regions are working directly with tribal, state and federal agencies to respond to the needs of the Indian community caused by this disaster.

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NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 6, 1997

Contact: Thomas W. Sweeney
(202) 219-4152

BIA 1998 BUDGET SUPPORTS LOCAL TRIBAL PROGRAMS AND EDUCATION

Strengthening local tribal programs, Indian education, and critical infrastructure projects are among the key components of the Fiscal Year 1998 Bureau of Indian Affairs' \$1.73-billion budget request.

"This budget represents an increase of \$127 million above the 1997 level to meet basic tribal priority needs. I want to emphasize that this budget reflects very low BIA administrative costs," said Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada E. Deer. "The entire administrative budget of the Bureau constitutes less than ten percent of its operating budget. I am proud to say that this administrative overhead is among the lowest in the federal government and allows more than 90 percent of funds to be delivered directly to the tribes."

Tribal Priority Allocations (TPA), which are the tribes' chosen spending priorities, are funded at \$757.3 million, an increase of \$76.5 million over 1997. TPA is used for basic necessities such as tribal courts, law enforcement, housing repairs, social services, and adult vocational training. TPA programs comprise approximately one-half of the operating budget.

"The increase to TPA will allow tribes to collectively maintain an additional 1,250 miles of reservation roads," said Deer. "It also will allow tribes to hire another 400 law enforcement staff members, to repair an additional 75 homes for needy families, and to fund an additional 220 child welfare cases each month."

The Indian Education budget request for School Operations is \$467 million and represents a \$16.8-million increase over 1997 in order to meet a 3,000-student increase that is anticipated between now and the 1998-99 school year. The additional funds also are necessary so that the 185 BIA schools can maintain accreditation and provide safe transportation for an expected 52,400 Indian children. The budget also includes an additional \$3 million for the 24 tribally controlled community colleges funded by the BIA.

To help meet infrastructure needs, the bureau requests \$125.1 million for construction, which includes \$49.2 million for education construction. Currently BIA schools require \$475 million to bring them up

to

-BIA-

national standards. Education construction includes \$14 million to replace the Many Farms School in Arizona, which now has numerous safety problems that could endanger students. An additional \$8 million is requested for various school facility improvement and repair projects. Because of overcrowded conditions at the Ute Mountain Ute Detention Facility in Colorado cited in a recent consent decree, the Bureau has requested \$9.1 million for construction of a replacement facility. The budget also includes a \$22-million request to repair structural deficiencies on high hazard dams on reservations. The total need for hazardous dam repair exceeds \$400 million.

To fulfill requirements related to the federal Indian trust responsibility, an increase of \$7.8 million is requested for critical programs such as environmental cleanup, water-rights studies and negotiations, and the Indian land title program.

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NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**OFFICE OF THE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY - INDIAN AFFAIRS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 1997

Contact Ralph E. Gonzales (202) 219-4150

M. FRANKLIN KEEL, Esq.

APPOINTED DIRECTOR, EASTERN AREA OFFICE

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Ada E. Deer, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs announced that Mr. M. Franklin Keel has been appointed as Area Director for the Eastern Area Office. "During this critical time for our Indian people we need dedicated, qualified, caring administrators to respond to the needs of our Indian people," Ms. Deer, said. "We welcome Mr. Keel to our senior management staff."

Mr. Keel has been acting as the Eastern Area Director since September 1996. Prior positions with BIA include serving as the Deputy Director of the Office of Trust Responsibilities, Staff Assistant to the Director of the Office of Trust Responsibilities, Superintendent of Concho Agency in Oklahoma, and Senior Legislative Specialist on the Bureau's Congressional and Legislative Affairs Staff. Additionally, he also served as a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Information Agency in Athens, Greece, and as an Administrative Assistant with the U. S. Naval Weapons Laboratory.

"Mr. Keel brings with him many years of experience and formal training to our upper level administrative staff," Ms. Hilda Manuel, Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs said.

Mr. Keel has earned a bachelor's degree at the Oklahoma College of Liberal Arts, and attended Oklahoma City University where he completed law school earning a Juris Doctorate degree. He also pursued graduate work at the University of Denver Graduate School of International Studies and at the George Washington University School of Public and International Affairs.

Mr. Keel a Choctaw and Chickasaw from Oklahoma has dedicated most of his career to Indian Affairs and has concentrated his efforts in the area of Indian Trust Administration within the Bureau. He is married to Ms. Kathie L. Pett - Keel. He has three sons, Christopher, Joseph and Andrew.

As Area Director for the Eastern Area he will oversee the operation and administration of the Bureau's Eastern Area Office which has responsibility for the Indian tribes in the eastern seaboard, which extends from Maine to Florida, and the Atlantic Coast to the Mississippi River.

-more-

The Eastern Area Office:

Eastern Area Office
Bureau of Indian Affairs
3701 N. Fairfax Drive
Mail Stop 260-VASQ.
Arlington, VA 22203
(703) 235-2571 FAX (703) 235-8610

The Eastern Area Offices serves Indian tribes in: New York, Maine, Louisiana, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Mississippi.

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NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 1997

Contact: Thomas W. Sweeney (202) 219-4152
Stephanie Hanna (202) 208-6416

Special Assistant to the Secretary Faith Roessel Resigns

Faith Roessel, a special assistant to Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt has announced her resignation. Roessel is a native of Round Rock, Arizona, and is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation.

Roessel served as a special assistant to Interior Secretary Babbitt, and had responsibility for issues that included military base closures involving Indian tribes, environmental justice, tourism, and tribes. Roessel also staffed the White House Domestic Policy Council's Working Group on American Indians and Alaska Natives, which Secretary Babbitt chairs. As special assistant to Secretary Babbitt for the Working Group, Roessel served as a liaison to the agency cochair of the five subgroups to help develop their work plans on interagency collaboration in: protecting the environment and natural resources that affect Indian people and lands; promoting reinvention opportunities to better serve Indian tribes; improving consultation between federal agencies and tribes; strengthening educational opportunities for Indian youths and adults; and recognizing and preserving Indian religious freedom. The Working Group, created at the urging of Secretary Babbitt, is a focal point in coordinating and carrying out President Clinton's policies toward tribal governments. President Clinton signed two executive orders originating from the Working Group.

"Faith has assisted me greatly in her counsel on Indian issues and helped create an interagency Working Group that is productive and result-oriented," said Secretary Bruce Babbitt. "She has taken on some tough issues for the department and I will miss someone of her caliber and dedication."

For the immediate future, Roessel plans to spend time with her family. She is married and has two young children. Prior to her current position, Roessel was the Interior Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. She joined the Clinton Administration in 1994 and has served as a political appointee of President Clinton in both capacities as Special Assistant and Deputy Assistant Secretary.

In Washington, D.C., Roessel has served as the director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office, senior staff attorney for the Native American Rights Fund, and legislative assistant for U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM). Prior to coming to Washington, Roessel was an associate in a Phoenix law firm.

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NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Immediate Release

February 12, 1997

Contact: Thomas W. Sweeney

(202) 219-4142

**BIA PROPOSES RECOGNITION TO WESTERN WASHINGTON GROUP:
COWLITZ INDIAN TRIBE FOUND TO MEET CRITERIA**

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada E. Deer today signed a preliminary decision that proposes extending Federal acknowledgment to the Cowlitz Indian Tribe of Longview, WA.

Assistant Secretary Deer said the petitioners meet the required criteria in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 25, Section 83.7 as modified by Section 83.8, which applies to petitioners who had prior unambiguous Federal acknowledgment.

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe, concentrated in Lewis County, Washington, now will be subject to a 180-day public comment period, after which the Bureau of Indian Affairs will issue a final determination. If this final determination also is positive, members of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe will be eligible for certain rights and benefits accorded tribes that have federal recognition, which establishes that a special government-to-government relationship exists between the tribe and the United States. Currently there are 554 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes.

The BIA's Branch of Acknowledgment and Research found that the Cowlitz Indian Tribe represents the amalgamation of two separate bands, the Lower Cowlitz Indians and the Upper Cowlitz Indians. The Cowlitz negotiated a treaty with the Federal Government in 1855, but their chiefs refused to sign it because the treaty provisions would have removed them from their traditional homeland along the Cowlitz River. Both Cowlitz bands were headed by traditional chiefs from the mid-19th century through 1912. Since 1912, the group has maintained a single combined tribal organization that has elected officers and held regular meetings. The group has approximately 1,400 members.

The address of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe is 1417 15th Ave., #5, P.O. Box 2547, Longview, WA 98632-8594, telephone: (360) 577-8140. The chairman of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's General Council is John Barnett.

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NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**OFFICE OF THE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY - INDIAN AFFAIRS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 5, 1997

Ralph E. Gonzales (202) 219-4150

\$34,615,385.00 IS AVAILABLE

IN BUSINESS LOAN GUARANTEE AUTHORITY

FOR AMERICAN INDIAN ENTREPRENEURS

Ada E. Deer, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is thrilled to announce that there is \$34.6 million in loan guarantee authority currently available to assist tribal and individual enterprises on or near Indian reservations.

“In 1974, the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Financing Act to assist Indian tribes, Native Alaska groups, and their individual members with financing of business enterprises to develop Indian reservation and tribal economies,” Ms. Deer said. “Many tribes credit the loan guaranty program for spurring economic activity in their communities. The loan guaranty program is currently funded with authority to guarantee payment of up to 90 percent of the \$34,615,385.00 in loans to eligible Native Americans. Tribal and American Indian entrepreneurs are encouraged to contact a local lending institutions to begin the process for a loan guaranty under this program.”

The Bureau of Indian Affairs guaranteed loan program's general requirements are:

- **Eligibility** - A borrower must be a Federally recognized Indian tribe or Alaska Native group, or American Indian (an enrolled member of a federally recognized Indian tribe or Alaska Native group), or a business organization with no less than 51% American Indian ownership. The business must be on or near an Indian reservation.
- **Loan Purpose** - must be to finance American Indian and Alaska Native owned commercial, industrial, agriculture or business activity organized for profit.
- **Loan Amount** - A maximum of \$5.5 million to a tribe or tribally owned business, and \$500,000 to individuals or business entities other than tribes.
- **Equity Requirements** - a minimum of 20% of project funding in either cash or unencumbered



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 14, 1997

Contact: Thomas W. Sweeney
(202) 219-4152

PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT ON PROPOSAL TO EXPEDITE ALASKA NATIVE ALLOTMENT APPLICATIONS

Public comment is sought on a proposal by the Secretary of the Interior to allow the statutory approval of Alaska Native allotment applications in cases where protests against such actions have been withdrawn. A notice requesting comment is published in today's Federal Register (62 Fed Reg 7033).

The proposed action by the Secretary would overrule an Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) interpretation of Section 905 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). In Section 905 of ANILCA, Congress provided for the approval of pending allotment applications as long as certain conditions are met and unless a timely and sufficient protest is filed. The 1906 Alaska Native Allotment Act was intended to give individuals the opportunity to obtain legal title to lands they used and occupied. Section 905 of ANILCA was enacted to expedite the approval of allotment applications and to fulfill the commitments of the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), which repealed the 1906 Alaska Native Allotment Act. Section 905 was enacted in 1980 to facilitate the approval of allotment applications that were pending on or before ANCSA was passed. The IBLA has ruled that allotment applications must be adjudicated even when the protesting party has dismissed its protest. Approximately 1,800 allotment applications could be approved as a result of the Secretary's proposal.

Interested persons and organizations may submit comments respecting the Secretary's proposal to lift this bar to statutory approval of uncontested allotment applications. The Secretary has requested a legal opinion from the Interior Department Solicitor on this matter. Written comments must be received by April 11. Comments should be mailed to the Bureau of Land Management, Administrative Record, Room 401LS, 1849 C Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240. Comments may also be hand-delivered to the Bureau of Land Management, Administrative Record, Room 401, 1620 L Street, Washington, D.C. Comments may also be transmitted electronically, via the Internet to WOCComments@wo.blm.gov. Please include "Attn: Secretarial Decision," and your name and address in the message. If you do not receive a confirmation that your Internet message has been received, contact that office directly at (202) 452-5030.

assets to be used in the proposed business is required.

- **Terms of Loan** - maturity is determined by lenders making the loan and is based on the type of loan, (e.g., manufacturing, retail, construction, seasonal, etc.) and the applicant's repayment capability, except 30 years is the maximum maturity term.
- **Loan Guaranty** - the percentage of a loan that is guaranteed is the minimum necessary to obtain financing, but may not exceed 90% of the unpaid principal and interest on the loan.
- **Application Procedures** - The applicant should work directly with a BIA approved lender and use the lenders' loan application and security documents. The applicant must have a fully completed business plan which demonstrates fiscal responsibility and sound management capability. **The lender** must initiate the request for a BIA Loan Guaranty. Complete guidelines can be obtained by referring to Title 25 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 103, or contacting the local BIA Area Office, see listing below.
- **Initiation Request** - Requests for BIA loan guarantees may be submitted to the appropriate BIA Agency or Area Office at any time during the fiscal year (October 1 - September 31) but approval is always subject to availability of funds.

"Loan guarantees have helped to finance Indian-owned business in construction, cattle ranching, commercial fishing, air carrier charter services, shuttle bus services, convenience/grocery stores, charter and sightseeing, hotel/conference centers, office building rentals, bulk fuel stations, and others," Nancy Jemison, Director of the Office of Economic Development said.

Aberdeen Area Office
(Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota)
Bureau of Indian Affairs
115 4th Avenue, S.E.
Aberdeen, South Dakota 57401
(605) 226-7343 FAX (605)228-7448

Albuquerque Area Office
(Colorado and New Mexico)
Bureau of Indian Affairs
615 First St., N.W.
P.O. Box 26567
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87125
(505)766-3754 FAX (505)766-1964

Anadarko Area Office
(Kansas and West Oklahoma)
Bureau of Indian Affairs
WCD Office Complex
P.O. Box 368
Anadarko, Oklahoma 73005
(405) 247-6673 FAX (405)247-5611

Billings Area Office
(Montana and Wyoming)
Bureau of Indian Affairs
316 North 26th Street
Billings, Montana 59101
(406) 247-7943 FAX (406)247-7976

Eastern Area Office
(N.Y., Maine, Louisiana, Florida, North Carolina, and Mississippi)
Bureau of Indian Affairs
3701 N. Fairfax Drive
Mail Stop 260-VASQ.
Arlington, VA 22203
(703) 235-2571 FAX (703) 235-8610

Juneau Area Office
(Alaska)
Bureau of Indian Affairs
P.O. Box 25520
Juneau, Alaska 99802-5520
(907) 586-7177 FAX (907) 588-7169

Minneapolis Area Office
(Minnesota, Iowa, Mich, & Wisc.)
Bureau of Indian Affairs
331 S. Second Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55401
(612) 373-1000 FAX (612) 373-1188

Muskogee Area Office
(East Oklahoma)
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Old Federal Building
Muskogee, Oklahoma 74401
(918) 687-2296 FAX (918) 687-2571

Navajo Area Office
(Navajo Res. Only, Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico)
Bureau of Indian Affairs
P.O. Box 1060
Gallup, New Mexico 87305
(505) 863-8314 FAX (505) 863-8324

Phoenix Area Office
(AZ, Nevada, UT, California, and Idaho)
Bureau of Indian Affairs
One North First Street
P.O. Box 10
Phoenix, Arizona 85001
(602) 379-6600 FAX (602) 379-4413

Portland Area Office
(Oregon, Washington, and Idaho)
Bureau of Indian Affairs
911 N.E. 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232
(503)231-6702 FAX (503) 231-2201

Sacramento Area Office
(California)
Bureau of Indian Affairs
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, California 95825
(916) 979-2600 FAX (916) 979-2569

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NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**OFFICE OF THE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY - INDIAN AFFAIRS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 9, 1997

Ralph E. Gonzales (202) 219-4150

Statement of Ada E. Deer, Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs

on the Death of

Thomas Richard Tippeconnic

I am sad to announce that Mr. Thomas Richard Tippeconnic passed away on April 7, 1997 at the University Medical Center in Tucson, Arizona. He was an Assistant Area Director for the Navajo Area Office, before retiring from the Bureau of Indian Affairs after 35 years of service. He spent most of his adult life working on the Navajo reservation.

He was born on February 10, 1937 in Phoenix, Arizona and was a member of the Comanche Tribe of Oklahoma. Mr. Tippeconnic earned a bachelors degree in Range Management from Oklahoma State University.

Mr. Tippeconnic is survived by his wife Alberta, two sons, Jon and Jay, a daughter-in-law, Lisa and three grandchildren, Thomas, Troy, and Tristan. He is also survived by a sister, Mary Jo Fox and four brothers, Norman, John, Robert, and David. He was preceded in death by his father and mother John and Juanita Tippeconnic and a sister Joan Marie.

"Mr. Tippeconnic will be greatly missed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a whole, but in particular by the Navajo Area Office," Ms. Deer said. "Tom always gave his best effort and was a dedicated employee. He will leave a long legacy of beneficial programs and opportunities for the Navajo people."

Mr. Tippeconnic will be laid to rest in the grasslands of the Wichita Mountains of Oklahoma. Memorial services will be held in Cache, Oklahoma at the Deyo Comanche Church at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, April 11, 1997 and the Fort Defiance Presbyterian Church, Fort Defiance, Arizona, on Monday April 14, 1997 at 10:30 a.m. The family requests that in place of flowers donations be made to the John W. Tippeconnic Memorial Scholarship Fund at the Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona.



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 11, 1997

Stephanie Hanna (O) 202/208-6416

STATEMENT OF SECRETARY BABBITT ON RELEASE OF STRATEGIC PLAN BY SPECIAL TRUSTEE FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS

I was briefed this morning for the first time by Special Trustee Paul Homan on his final Strategic Plan to reform trust fund management for Tribal and individual trust funds and resources.

The plan represents his views, independent from the Department of the Interior or the Office of Management and Budget. Before I make final recommendations, I intend to give the Strategic Plan close and thorough study.

However, based on a brief review and today's briefing, I have significant concerns. First, it adds another new layer of bureaucracy by creating a quasi-private, quasi-government agency to manage and administer trust funds. Creating new bureaucracies does not necessarily serve the goal of solving problems. Second, it requires large, new budget outlays, and we will need to evaluate each aspect of the proposal. Third, and most important, it seems to lack a fundamental understanding of the relationship of sovereign tribal governments and federal trust responsibilities. Indian Tribes are sovereign nations, not business enterprises to be run for profit.

I cannot support, and I believe that most tribes will not support, the separation and dissipation of the government-to-government trust relationship that extends well beyond funding to upholding the social, economic and cultural best interests of tribes and individual tribal members.



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**OFFICE OF THE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY - INDIAN AFFAIRS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 18, 1997

Ralph E. Gonzales (202) 219-4152

**LAW ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM OF THE
CHEROKEE NATION OF OKLAHOMA ASSUMED**

**BY THE
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS**

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada E. Deer today announced that the Bureau of Indian Affairs will assume the operations of law enforcement for the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma effective immediately for a period of approximately two months. This period will allow the Nation to resolve internal difficulties which have recently developed.

The decision by the BIA is based upon recent events that have occurred at Cherokee. "The BIA is committed to ensure that law and order is maintained within the Cherokee Nation," Ms. Deer said. "We will assume the Cherokee Nation's law enforcement program as a cooperative effort with the Nation and local officials."

This action does not indicate any BIA position in the Cherokee Nation's internal dispute over local matters and the Nation must use its own governmental procedures to resolve the conflict between the judiciary and the executive branch. "Of course, the BIA will provide necessary technical assistance and advice as requested, but BIA's law enforcement's mission will be to ensure the safety of the community and its property," Ms. Deer said. "The BIA is prepared to assist the Nation in this assumption initiative until the situation has stabilized and the Nation is able to reassume its own law enforcement program"

The BIA Muskogee Area Office will be the field office responsible for initiating this action. The Official in charge during the transition of the Law Enforcement Program is Criminal Investigator Mr. Perry Proctor.



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**OFFICE OF THE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY - INDIAN AFFAIRS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 24, 1997

Ralph E. Gonzales (202) 219-4152

INTERNET

ACCESS IMMINENT FOR AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS

Ada E. Deer, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs announces that the Office of Indian Education Programs (OIEP), within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Projectneat, Inc., have entered into a partnership whereby Projectneat will provide Internet appliances to every elementary and secondary school in the BIA school system by September 1, 1997.

Projectneat, is an independent, non-profit public charity organized under I.R.S. 501(c)(3) and is based in Santa Clara, California. Founded in July, 1996, it has assembled a team of leading companies and associations to donate the hardware and software to connect schools to the Internet. Projectneat's mission is to connect every K-12 school in America to the Internet, with emphasis being placed on connecting under served schools first.

"This initiative will connect the 187 schools serving American Indian students in 23 states providing access to the information superhighway and expanding education programs at the schools," Ms. Deer said. "We are thrilled that our American Indian students will have this access because there is a wealth of educational material available on the Internet that they will now be able to use. This is truly a dynamic initiative."

The Internet appliance provided by Projectneat, is a simple push-button access system which displays information on a large television screen instead of a computer monitor. These devices are considerably cheaper and easier to use than a conventional computer hook-up, because of the 27" TV screen, an entire class may share information in a classroom setting. In addition, one system can serve an entire school. Schools will be able to access the Internet by dialing in through the Educational Native American Network (ENAN) which has been sponsored by the OIEP since 1988.

"The installation of this equipment addresses one of OIEP's primary goals -- to connect every school

and tribal community to each other and the world -- as well as President Clinton's challenge to link every school to the Internet," Joann Sebastian Morris, Director of the Office of Indian Education Programs said. "I am very excited about this program. It will provide our isolated, rural schools a resource that they have not previously had."

The BIA's OIEP provides educational services to reservations across the United States from Maine to the State of Washington. More than one half (105) of the 187 schools are operated by Indian tribes through grants from the BIA with the remainder operated by the OIEP.

"This partnership is a natural one, as our initial goal states we want to serve schools in rural areas and BIA schools certainly fall into this category. Our preliminary discussions with the BIA have been very positive and many important milestones have already been achieved," Mr. Tom Rahimi, President, Projectneat said. "The distribution of the equipment will happen during the 8th, week of July in conjunction with a conference at Snowmass, Colorado."

"I can think of no better way to bring excitement to our classrooms then connecting them to the vast information superhighway. Our students have much to learn from others and a great deal to contribute to the pool of information available on the Internet," Mr. Peter Camp, Projectneat Coordinator said. "Through Projectneat Indian students will have the same access that other students have in urban areas."

For additional information on Projectneat, access www.projectneat.org. The Office of Indian Education Program's home page may be accessed through the BIA's home page www.doi.gov/bureau-indian-affairs.html. Mr. Camp, BIA Project Coordinator can be reached at (202) 208-4411 and Mr. Tom Rahimi, Projectneat's contact is at (408) 235-7760.



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**OFFICE OF THE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY - INDIAN AFFAIRS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 1997

Ralph E. Gonzales (202) 219-4152

ADA E. DEER

ANNOUNCES A SUMMER PLAN FOR ACTION

On May 20, 1997 Ms. Deer, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs called an all employees meeting at BIA Headquarters, Washington, DC. The purpose of this meeting was to provide information relative to current matters taking place within the Bureau of Indian Affairs and to present a Summer Action Plan. "I would like to see the Bureau become a dynamic entity accomplishing positive things at the end of this Summer," Ms. Deer said.

The Summer Action Plan

BIA employees were equated to being front line troops in the "war supporting tribal sovereignty," and Ms. Deer challenged the employees to accomplish the following ten goals within the next 90-days.

1. Gear up for the "fight of our lives" regarding proposals to tax Indian gaming and all anti-sovereignty proposals. Requests from Congressional Affairs are going to require rapid response and quick turn around when Congress returns in June.
2. Improve the overall quality of our internal communications. An all employees meeting will be conducted once a month for the remainder of Ms. Deer's term so that everyone will have good information about what is happening. The meetings will take place on the third Wednesday of each month at 10:00 AM.
3. The Office of Indian Education Programs will work to complete the Five Year plan supporting tribal colleges as required by the President's Executive Order on Tribal Education.
4. Continue work and cooperation with the Office of Audit and Evaluation to maintain the excellent progress we have achieved in resolving audit findings and to continue to improve and strengthen our operations.

5. Supporting the BIA's budget process and the Office of Management and Administration in pulling together by providing effective, well-prepared, and timely submitted budget justifications.
6. Re-double our efforts in drafting performance measures as part of the National Performance Review and Government Performance Results Act.
7. Finalize the Self-Governance draft regulations and have them sent to OMB for clearance by the end of August.
8. Complete the Tribal Shares process.
9. As a personal work assignment Ms. Deer pledges to work more directly with the White House and the new House Native American Caucus in advocating for Indian Country and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
10. Form a new working group to develop plans for a Summer Indian Affairs picnic. Schedule date is Wednesday, June 25, 1997, Little Bighorn Day.

Ten BIA employees were recognized for "On the Spot" awards for accomplishing and performing extra "hard work" over the last few months. The ten individuals are:

Ross Mooney
Division of Water & Land Resources

Marge Wilkins
Office of Congressional & Legislative Affairs

John Nicholas
Equal Employment Opportunity Programs

Bill Mehojah
Office of Indian Education Programs

Deb Purvis
Office of American Indian Trust

Thelma Harjo
Office, Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs

Paula Hart
Indian Gaming Management Staff

Thomas Sweeney
Office of Public Affairs

Cate Vandemoer
Office,
Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs

Harriett Brown
Office, Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 28, 1997

Stephanie Hanna (O) 202/208-6416

SECRETARY BABBITT ASKS CONGRESS TO TRANSFER PARCELS OF FEDERAL LAND TO SEVERAL CALIFORNIA TRIBES

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt today transmitted proposed Congressional legislation to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives that would allow several small parcels of Bureau of Land Management land to be transferred to California tribes throughout the State.

“The draft bill I submitted fulfils a promise made by the Clinton Administration to several California tribes with an inadequate land base that we would try to help them,” Babbitt said. “This land will be used to build housing or for non-gaming businesses that will benefit their economies and those of surrounding communities.”

The land being proposed for transfer has been the subject of broad local consultation and has received formal support from governing bodies of adjacent non-Indian communities. The land under consideration does not include habitat for threatened or endangered species. No disturbance of the land’s sub-surface would be authorized in the draft bill.

If Congress passes legislation and the President signs it into law, the following tribes would receive land taken in trust for future benefit: 561.69 acres to the Pit River Tribe; 40 acres to the Bridgeport Indian Colony; 240 acres to the Utu Utu Gwaitu Paiute Tribe (Benton Paiute reservation); 200.06 acres to the Fort Independence Community of Paiute Indians; 5.03 acres to the Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians; 40 acres to the Morongo Band of Mission Indians; 59.20 acres to the Pala Band of Mission Indians; 1,360 acres to the Cuyapaipe Band of Mission Indians; 1000.78 acres to the Manzanita Band of Mission Indians; and 299.04 acres to the Fort Bidwell Community of Paiute Indians.

All of the parcels are adjacent to existing reservations, and will be added to the reservation lands if the draft bill is enacted. All valid existing rights will be preserved, and any grazing privileges will be maintained for two years from the date of enactment. No appropriation of funds will be necessary to accomplish the transfer, and each parcel has been subject to environmental analysis. Further environmental analysis would be required by the Bureau of Indian Affairs before any development activities could take place.

“This legislation could provide great relief and economic benefit to tribes that were never given an adequate reservation area,” Babbitt said. “This is a win for the tribes and a win for nearby communities who can expect more economic opportunities as a result of these transfers. I urge Congress to move quickly to support and sponsor this draft bill.”



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office of the Secretary
For Immediate Release
June 9, 1997

Contact: Thomas W. Sweeney
(202) 219-4150

STATEMENT BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS ADA E. DEER

Proposals to tax Indian Tribes violate tribal sovereignty and hold tribes to an unfair standard not applied to states

I join Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and Attorney General Janet Reno in strongly opposing proposals by some members of Congress to levy taxes on tribal government revenues from gaming and other economic activities. As they noted in a joint letter to U.S. House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Archer, H.R. 325 and H.R. 1554 are contrary to the United States' longstanding protection of tribal self-government and the Federal trust responsibility. Moreover, taxation of tribal gaming revenues contradicts Congress' own intent when it enacted the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988, which explicitly states that the purpose of revenue derived from Indian gaming is to "promote tribal economic development, self-sufficiency, and strong tribal governments."

Tribal enterprises produce revenues that are invested in tribal development and the delivery of tribal government services. Unlike private-sector businesses, profits from tribal enterprises accrue to the benefit of entire communities just as profits from state-owned enterprises flow back into state treasuries. Indian nations, like state governments, are an integral part of our nation's Constitutional structure. Tribes are governmental entities with the same authorities and responsibilities of any government. Lawmakers have a responsibility to the citizens of this nation to understand these Constitutional principles and to act consistently with them. To do otherwise breaches the trust the American people have placed in their elected officials and, in this regard, the special trust between the Government of the United States and the Indian nations.

Until now, the rule has been that governments do not tax other governments just as the Federal government does not tax states. The rules should not change just because the government in question is a tribal government. Indian tribal governments struggling to overcome centuries of poverty should be supported by the United States and not unfairly singled out for punitive treatment.

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NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office of the Secretary
For Immediate Release
June 16, 1997

Contact: Thomas W. Sweeney
(202) 219-4150

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada E. Deer Praises Rejection of Tribal Taxation

I was delighted and gratified that the House Ways and Means Committee rejected proposals to tax proceeds of tribal commercial enterprises. If enacted, it would have constituted a major reversal of federal Indian law and policy and would have wiped out tribal economies which are only now for the first time in American history beginning to show signs of economic growth. It would have been ironic indeed were the Congress to have undermined its own thirty-year effort to effect economic and business development in Indian Country just as these efforts were beginning to show some signs of progress.

I would like to thank those on both sides of the aisle, Democrats and Republicans, who showed leadership in defeating this punitive action against tribes. To the 22 members who voted to reject federal taxation on American Indian tribal governments, I thank you for refusing to break faith with America's first peoples. Your vote serves to not only to reaffirm the solemn commitments this nation has made to American Indians, but reflects favorably on our nation as a whole. Great nations keep their word.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, Attorney General Janet Reno, and Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin also deserve praise for defending the tribes' long-established position as members of this nation's Constitutional family. Tribes are governments and deserve to be treated as such. I am proud that the President and his Administration have demonstrated such a strong commitment to this principle.

I commend the following House members for their votes to reject tribal taxation: Rep. Xavier Becerra (CA); Rep. Dave Camp (MI); Rep. Benjamin Cardin (MD); Rep. William Coyne (PA); Rep. Philip English (PA); Rep. William Jefferson (LA); Rep. J.D. Hayworth (AZ); Rep. Amo Houghton (NY); Rep. Nancy Johnson (CT); Rep. Barbara Kennelly (CT); Rep. Jerry Kleczka (WI); Rep. Sander Levin (MI); Rep. John Lewis (GA); Rep. Robert Matsui (CA); Rep. Michael McNulty (NY); Rep. Richard Neal (MA); Rep. Jim Nussle (LA); Rep. Jim Ramstad (MN); Rep. Charles Rangel (NY); Rep. Pete Stark (CA); Rep. John Tanner (TN); and Rep. Karen Thurman (FL).



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
For Immediate Release
June 24, 1997

Contact: Thomas W. Sweeney
(202) 219-4150

**BIA PROPOSES FEDERAL RECOGNITION FOR MICHIGAN GROUP:
Match-e-be-nash-she-wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians Found to Meet Criteria**

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada E. Deer on June 23 signed a preliminary decision that proposes extending Federal acknowledgment to the Match-e-be-nash-she-wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians of Bradley, MI. Assistant Secretary Deer said the petitioner meets all seven of the required criteria in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 25, Section 83.7, as modified by Section 83.8, and therefore qualifies for a government-to-government relationship with the United States.

The Match-e-be-nash-she-wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians (MBPI) now will be subject to a 180-day public comment period, after which the Bureau of Indian Affairs will issue a final determination. If this final determination also is positive, members of the tribe will be eligible for certain rights and benefits accorded tribes that have federal recognition. Currently there are 554 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes.

The BIA's Branch of Acknowledgment and Research found that MBPI has been a predominantly Potawatomi Indian entity continuously since 1837 when two bands amalgamated on a 360-acre reserve known as the Griswold Mission, and now referred to as the Bradley settlement. The settlement is located 25 miles southeast of Grand Rapids, MI. The petitioner's ancestors participated as signatories of treaties in 1795, 1815, 1821, 1833, and 1855. The MBPI was named for Match-e-be-nash-she-wish, an ancestor who was a prominent 18th-century warrior in the Great Lake region. Currently more than two-thirds of the band's 140 members reside within 25 miles of the Bradley settlement.

The address of the tribe is 112 W. Superior Street, Wayland, MI 49348. The tribal representative is Bill Church, telephone (517) 627-0244.

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NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY - INDIAN AFFAIRS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 21, 1997

Ralph E. Gonzales (202) 219-4152

TRIBAL SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY IN

JEOPARDY

Ada E. Deer, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, condemned a provision in the Department of the Interior's Appropriations bill reported out on Friday, July 18, by the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior. Section 120 of the bill would require a tribal government to waive its sovereign immunity before the tribe could receive Tribal Priority Account (TPA) funds. TPA funds are used by tribal governments to provide services to Indian children, the elderly and families, such as child protection, education benefits, and family support services. These funds are for many tribes the sole source of funds available to provide governmental services for their tribal members.

"I strongly oppose any amendment to the 1998 Interior Appropriations Bill which would diminish or extinguish Tribal sovereign immunity. This amendment, which provides for the waiver of tribal sovereign immunity is tantamount to termination of the tribe's governmental status." Ms. Deer, said. "This amendment flies in the face of longstanding federal policy, law, and federal courts' interpretation of treaties with American Indian Tribes."

During the formative years of the United States, the federal government recognized American Indian tribal governments as independent nations vested with all inherent powers of a sovereign nation. The recognition of Indian tribal sovereignty has remained a fundamental tenet of Federal Indian Policy. More than 160 years ago the United States Supreme Court re-affirmed this principle in *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S. (6 Pet.) 515 (1832) when Chief Justice Marshall noted that [the dependent status of Indian tribal governments] does not strip them of their inherent sovereignty. This U.S. Supreme Court ruling has never been overturned and is currently the law of the land.

"The provision, waiving Indian tribal sovereign immunity in federal courts would create internal havoc within the 554 tribal entities presently federally recognized by allowing tribal members to circumvent tribal forums. Lawsuits by third parties also would place a tremendous burden on tribes and expose them to financial ruin. I have experienced the ravaging affects of termination first hand because my tribe - the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin - was terminated in the 1950s. Our people and tribal government were devastated. The Congress cannot allow this to happen to any tribal government in the 21st century." Ms. Deer said.



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 26, 1997

Ralph E. Gonzales (202) 219-4152

**AMERICAN INDIAN TRIBES BENEFIT FROM
HIGH TECH. , ASSISTANCE FOR
NATURAL RESOURCE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

Three Denver based Offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) are assisting tribes to prepare for the 21st Century by providing access to state-of-the-art science in resource management. The Division of Energy and Mineral Resources, Geographic Data Service Center, and the Division of Forestry's Branch of Forest Resources Planning provide highly technical assistance and services to the Indian Community. "These offices offer the latest technology and software programs available. With the assistance of these offices participating Indian tribes have comprehensive data and sophisticated information management systems at their disposal to effectively manage their natural resources," Hilda Manuel, Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs said.

Tribes are increasingly recognizing the importance of these tools to achieve the goals of self-sufficiency and self-determination. Budget cutbacks require tribes to do "more with less" necessitating the use of advanced technologies such as spatial information systems. The primary challenge in using these tools is the technological complexities and computer skills and resources that are required. The Geographic Data Service Center meets this challenge by providing tribes the training, consultation services, support, and equipment access necessary to meet their goals.

"Through this direct technical assistance the Indian community has been able to negotiate mineral leases that have higher yields than non-Indian mineral owners on the average." Manuel said. "It is important for tribal governments to have the best data available regarding their natural resources to actively, and intelligently manage their resources. The services that these offices offer to individual resource owners and Tribes are free of charge and designed to assist those with little or no technical expertise or computer experience."

The Division of Energy and Mineral Resources (DEMUR) provides the best available technical and economic advice and assistance to Indian Mineral Owners. The Division's programs include (1) Native American Energy and Mineral Institute, (2) Mineral Assessment, (3) National Indian Energy and

Mineral Resource Data Base, (4) National Indian Seismic Evaluation, (5) Outreach and (6) National Indian Oil and Gas Evaluation and Management System.

The Division of Forestry's Branch of Forest Resources Planning (BOFRP) is located in the same building and has established a partnership to share office infrastructure and communications with the DEMR. This Branch provides Bureau wide coordination, direction, and assistance in forest management planning activities e.g., forest inventories, analysis of data, forest management planning, and forest environmental assessments. This Branch maintains the National Indian Forestry Data Base and Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) System which are invaluable management data resources for the Nation and participating Indian tribes.

The Geographic Data Service Center (GDSC) provides tribes with advanced spatial information processing capabilities such as, Geographic Information systems (GIS), Global Positioning Systems (GPS), and satellite image mapping. These powerful tools are used to effectively manage natural resources and engineering level applications (i.e., road design and management) and are now being used to solve tough technical problems with real estate management in Indian Country.

"In order for the Indian community to become more familiar with these services, there will be updates on each program area relative to their innovative initiatives and major accomplishments." Ms. Manuel said. A four part series focusing on each of the major BIA activities in Denver will appear in the Department of the Interior's *People, Land and Water* publication.



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**OFFICE OF THE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY - INDIAN AFFAIRS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 9, 1997

Ralph E. Gonzales (202) 219-4152

CHEROKEE NATION OF OKLAHOMA

RESUMES LAW ENFORCEMENT FUNCTIONS

Ada E. Deer, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, announced today that the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma will resume their Law Enforcement activities.

On April 22, 1997, the Bureau of Indian Affairs announced that at the request of the Cherokee Nation it was assuming the Law Enforcement function "until a determination was made that the imminent threat to the public safety no longer existed and that the nation was ready and able to assume control of the program once again." Since that date the Cherokee Nation has been working to resolve internal disputes and to ensure that its governmental functions could be properly administered. After reviewing the progress the Nation has made, the BIA determines that no imminent danger currently exists that would warrant the continued BIA Law Enforcement presence. Accordingly, at the request of Principal Chief Byrd the BIA will begin an orderly transfer of the Law Enforcement function to the Nation. This transfer will begin immediately.

"I commend the Cherokee Nation and the work everyone has done to bring internal disputes to resolution." Ms. Deer said. "This demonstrates how Indian Self-Determination can work at the tribal government level. I wish the Nation much success in the future and commit to assist them in the future as required."



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**OFFICE OF THE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY - INDIAN AFFAIRS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 9, 1997

Contact Ralph E. Gonzales (202) 219-4150

TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

LAUNCH COUNTERATTACK - WINTER STORM IN THE DAKOTAS

“Eight federally recognized Indian tribes and approximately 56,000 Indian people have been adversely affected by the recent disastrous weather in South Dakota,” Ms. Deer said.

The Dakotas have been hit by freezing temperatures and record snowfall. Snow has drifted to as high as 15 feet in some areas closing all roads and stranding people in remote areas.

“Mercifully, there has been only one reported Indian death as a result of this bad weather.” Mr. Delbert Brewer, Area Director for the Aberdeen Area Office said.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has been working around the clock to respond to this emergency. The Aberdeen Area Director has established a Disaster Team to respond to this crisis which is operating 24 hours a day to coordinate and direct BIA’s efforts to assist tribes within their jurisdiction. In addition, a field coordinator has been dispatched to Pierre, South Dakota to directly assist in the coordination of the efforts of the State, National Guard and FEMA.

“Our crews are working 24 hours a day in two shifts in an attempt to open roads on the reservations to get food and water in,” Mr. Brewer said. “At this juncture the main objective is to ensure that the basic needs of the people are met.” In order to respond to this crisis, snow blowers were shipped in from the Billings Area Office. However, the Aberdeen Area is now experiencing difficulty getting adequate fuel for equipment, and keeping them maintained. “Extra costs for supplies and labor are being incurred by the Aberdeen Area which were not budgeted for,” Deborah Maddox, Director of Tribal Services said. “But we will continue to support Aberdeen for as long as it takes to get the tribes out of this terrible situation.”

“The BIA is diligently working on options which may provide additional assistance to meet increased costs caused by this storm,” Ms. Deer said, “and we are committed to continue the cooperative and coordinated effort initiated by Aberdeen.” Wind chill factors of -70’ below zero have not helped the ground efforts. Snow blowers were directed to free those in need of medical attention first, but in some cases the critically ill had to be air lifted by National Guard helicopters to local hospitals. The BIA has established shelters close to emergency care units for those that require ongoing medical attention.

News releases may be downloaded from the DOI Homepage at URL <http://www.usgs.gov/doi/bia>



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 11, 1997

Contact: Thomas W. Sweeney
(202) 208-2535

BIA DELIVERS NEW FUNDS TO SMALL AND NEEDY TRIBES TO STRENGTHEN TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS AND OPERATIONS

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Kevin Gover today announced that \$16.5 million will be distributed this month to 310 small and needy American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes to provide adequate funding for tribal governments and operations. Small and needy tribes are those that have less than \$160,000 in annual funding and have 1,500 or fewer members enrolled. Tribes in Alaska must have less than \$200,000 in annual funding to qualify.

“These funds will provide some of the neediest tribes with a critical economic boost to strengthen their governments and operations,” Gover said. “These funds are by no means a cure-all, but will help small and needy tribes to create and maintain a basic government structure. We thank Congress for approving this important step to further Indian self determination and the government-to-government relationship.” The distribution of the \$16.5 million to the tribes’ tribal priority allocations will ensure that all tribes receive at least \$160,000 annually, which has been determined to be the minimum amount needed to fund a tribal government in the lower 48 states. The minimum amount in Alaska is \$200,000.

This minimum funding initiative will be felt most strongly in Alaska, which has 209 small and needy tribes. Seventy-six small and needy tribes in California will receive the additional funds. Small and needy tribes in New York, Michigan, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Nevada, and Utah also will share in the distribution.

The Joint Tribal/Bureau of Indian Affairs/Department of the Interior Task Force on BIA Reorganization initiated the first small and needy tribes funding increase in 1994 with a report to Congress entitled “*The Tribal Budget System - Preliminary Assessment of Most Needy Small Tribes.*” The task force’s recommendation resulted in a FY 1995 appropriation of \$2 million to 100 small and needy tribes. Congress also appropriated \$4 million in FY 1997 that was shared by 160 of the 310 small and needy tribes. The Bureau considers this initiative as a high priority and continues to include funding requests for small and needy tribes in the annual budgets it presents to Congress.

-BIA-

Richard La Course 509/865-2794



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office of the Secretary

Contact: John Wright

For Release: December 18, 1997

202/208-6416

Secretary Babbitt Selects Robert T. Anderson to be Counselor to the Secretary

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt today announced the appointment of Robert T. Anderson as Counselor to the Secretary. Anderson will be based in Seattle and advise the Secretary on a wide variety of policy matters, including Native American, environmental and Northwest issues.

"Bob Anderson is an experienced professional with an enormous grasp of the complexity of our trust responsibilities and Alaska Native and American Indian tribes," Babbitt said. "He has demonstrated his ability as a decisive lawyer and manager, and has a solid reputation as a problem-solver and mediator."

Anderson, 40, joined the Interior Department in April 1995 as Associate Solicitor for Indian Affairs. As Associate Solicitor, he was the lead attorney and supervised a team of attorneys advising the Secretary, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and worked with tribes to assert and protect their legal rights. For the past year, he has advised the Secretary on legal and policy matters involving western water rights, Indian tribes, Endangered Species Act and hydropower issues.

Anderson is a member of the Bois Forte Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. Before joining the Interior Department, he worked as an attorney for 12 years with the Native American Rights Fund, a leading national Indian organization representing Indian tribes on issues of federal Indian law. Anderson is one of two attorneys credited with opening NARF's Alaska office, where he helped to develop the organization's substantive role in Alaska Native rights issues. He has served as counsel for Natives in a number of landmark cases involving tribal sovereignty and hunting and fishing rights.

In addition, Anderson also worked with tribes in the Lower 48 on water rights and a variety of other issues.

Anderson earned his B.A. Summa Cum Laude at Bemidji State University, and his J.D. Cum Laude (1983) at the University of Minnesota Law School. He is a member of the bar for the District of Columbia, Minnesota, Colorado, Alaska, and the United States Supreme Court.

-DOI-



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 19, 1997

Contact: Thomas W. Sweeney
(202) 208-2535

**BIA Declines Recognition to Alabama Group:
Mobile - Washington County Band of Choctaw Indians of South Alabama (MOWA)**

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs (AS-IA) Kevin Gover signed on December 16, 1997, a Final Determination that denies Federal acknowledgment of the Mobile - Washington County Band of Choctaw Indians of South Alabama (MOWA) of Mt. Vernon, AL.

The AS-IA found that the petitioner failed to meet one of the mandatory criteria set forth in 25 CFR 83.7, namely: descent from a historical tribe. The Final Determination means the Alabama group is not eligible for certain rights and benefits accorded tribes that are granted "Federal recognition" or "acknowledgment," and therefore it does not have a special government-to-government relationship with the United States.

The AS-IA determined that the Alabama group did not descend from the historical Choctaw tribe or from any one of the other five tribes it claimed. The Final Determination noted that the petitioning group is derived from two core families that were resident in southwestern Alabama by the end of the first third of the nineteenth century. All persons on the petitioner's membership (3,960) roll descend from these two families. About one percent of the members have documented Indian heritage but it derives from an ancestor whose grandchildren married into the petitioning group after 1880, and from another individual who married into the petitioning group in 1904. This insignificant Indian ancestry for a few individual members does not satisfy the criterion that the group as a whole descends from a historical tribe.

The MOWA ancestors, most of whom were well documented, were not identified as American Indians or descendants of any particular tribe in the records made in their own life times. The MOWA ancestors were not found in the records concerning the historic tribes. Although the MOWA presently have an oral tradition of descent from the Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, or other tribes, the stories could not be substantiated from the wealth of records submitted by the petitioner or researched by the BIA.

The BIA employs historians, anthropologists, and genealogists who research the claims of groups seeking recognition as Indian tribes. Each case is evaluated individually. Under current regulations, the MOWA and interested parties have 90 days to request reconsideration on the BIA's Final Determination with the Interior Board of Indian Appeals. All requests for reconsideration must contain a detailed statement of the grounds for the request, and include any new evidence to be considered. The request should be in writing and addressed to the Interior Board of Indian Appeals, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240.

-BIA-



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 19, 1997

Contact: Thomas W. Sweeney
(202) 208-2535

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GOVER COMMENDS PASSAGE OF CHIPPEWA AND OTTAWA INDIANS OF MICHIGAN JUDGMENT FUND SETTLEMENT

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Kevin Gover today thanked both Congress and President Clinton for approving a land claims settlement act that awards approximately \$70 million to five Ottawa and Chippewa tribes of Michigan.

The act, signed by President Clinton on Tuesday, provides a plan for the division, use, and distribution of the funds. The Indian Claims Commission in 1971 awarded \$10.3 million to the tribes and certain descendants to compensate them for underpayment for lands ceded to the United States through an 1836 treaty. The 1971 award has grown to nearly \$70 million with accrued interest. The act approved this week details the distribution of the funds to the Bay Mills Indian Community; Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians; Little River Band of Odawa Indians; Little Traverse Band of Odawa Indians; Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe; Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians; and certain descendants.

"I am extremely pleased that this long-awaited settlement is complete and that the funds finally will begin to assist the tribes. We are indebted to Rep. Dale Kildee for sponsoring the bill, to and to Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell and Sen. Don Young for their support of it."

-BIA-