



Seven Generations into the Future and Past

When deliberating an issue, the Iroquois Tribe took into consideration lessons learned by past generations and the potential impact on future generations. This simple, yet sage, approach provides an important framework for current policy decisions. The 2000 budget request for the Bureau of Indian Affairs is \$1.9 billion, an increase of \$155.6 million above the 1999 enacted level. This budget provides the largest increase since 1992 for education and school facility construction to provide opportunities for future generations; as well as increases for law enforcement to ensure safe communities; and for natural resources management and other areas of priority concern to Indian Country. The 2000 budget for the Office of the Special Trustee requests the resources necessary to successfully resolve the decades-old Indian trust fund management problems.

I see an Indian America where we all stand tall, and our children are proud to declare they are the descendants of a strong, powerful, and spiritual people, unified in the common experience of being Indian.

*Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Kevin Gover
October 1998*

Schools for the 21st Century--Bonds to Build Better Schools

Throughout Indian Country, Indian children are learning in schools that present serious health and safety threats. Many schools have leaking roofs, peeling paint, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate heating and/or cooling systems that impede students' ability to learn. With limited funding BIA has tried to make a difference. BIA was recently granted a "Hammer Award" for reducing the time it takes to plan, design, and construct new elementary and secondary schools on Indian reservations by 50 percent. This reduction in time translates into savings in inflationary costs and other efficiencies. In spite of improved efficiencies, BIA's education backlog of repairs is growing and now exceeds \$740 million.

In 2000, the Administration is proposing a School Construction initiative that would provide \$400.0 million in bonding issuance authority over two years. Tribal governments would be able to use this authority to issue zero interest bonds to investors who would receive tax credits for the life of the bond in lieu of interest. This financing mechanism will provide new resources for Tribes interested in replacing and/or repairing BIA funded schools. To help Tribes participate in this Initiative, \$30.0 million is included in BIA's 2000 budget request. This funding will be placed in escrow in the Treasury until the bonds mature. At maturity, these funds will be used to repay the principal to investors.

In addition to funding for the new initiative, BIA's request includes \$75.9 million to replace Seba

Dalkai School in Arizona and Fond Du Lac Ojibway School in Minnesota and to complete repair work at existing facilities.



School Operations

The Federal Government has a special, historic responsibility for the education of Indian children. In Executive Order 13096 on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, the Administration affirmed this responsibility by stating its commitment to improving academic performance and reducing the dropout rate of Indian students. The Order sets forth six goals, including improved reading and mathematics, increased high school completion, improved science education, and expanded use of education technology.

The 2000 budget includes an investment of \$503.6 million for School Operations, an increase of \$27.5 million over 1999. This increase will cover additional costs for teachers, transportation, and operations due to the growing student population. In school year 2000-01, BIA will fund 185 schools for 53,000 Indian children at many BIA day and boarding schools that are located on remote and

isolated reservations and therefore incur greater operational costs. Funding will also be dedicated to linking BIA schools to the Internet through partnerships with industry and other agencies.

BIA 2000 Goal: By September 30, 2000, increase student attendance to 94 percent.



Safer Communities in Indian Country

While violent crime is decreasing throughout most of America, it is rising on reservations. Due to limited resources and the isolation of Indian Country, people may wait hours or even days for a response from the police. In 1997, the Secretary of the Interior and the U.S. Attorney General worked with tribal leaders to develop a joint initiative between BIA and the Department of Justice to work with tribal leaders to combat rising crime rates in Indian Country.



Parallel with Interior efforts, Justice is requesting \$124.2 million for law enforcement programs on reservations. Of this amount, \$35.0 million would support targeted programs, such as drug testing and treatment, juvenile justice, and assistance to tribal courts; \$34.0 million would support detention center construction; and \$55.2 million would strengthen other law enforcement programs. This funding would be distributed primarily through grants to Indian Tribes.

“Bring Back the Bison”

The collective voices of the Tribes on this issue have been heard, as they stand together and insist the mistakes of the past with the buffalo not be made again. The story of the buffalo, and the resurgence of this great animal, and the resurgence of the buffalo culture has had a tremendous effect. The return of the buffalo with the help of the Tribes is one of the great examples of redemption in the history of the world. The Tribes of the northern and southern plains are telling this story to the world, and the world is listening.

Assistant Secretary Kevin Gover

BIA 2000 Goal: By September 30, 2000, reduce the Indian Country crime rate by one percent.

Over the past year, tribal leaders, BIA, and Justice have worked collaboratively to develop plans for implementing these recommendations. In 1999, Congress earmarked \$124.0 million in Justice grant funding and provided \$20.0 million for BIA to begin addressing law enforcement needs. These funds are being used to strengthen the police presence so Indian Country enjoys a level of security that is available to other citizens.

In 2000, the Administration is proposing a second year of funding increases for this multi-year Presidential Initiative. A \$20.0 million program increase is requested by BIA to strengthen core law enforcement functions such as increasing the number of criminal investigators and uniformed police, upgrading radio systems, and strengthening basic detention center services. To ensure appropriate adjudication, a \$2.6 million increase is requested for tribal courts.



A close spiritual and cultural connection exists among the buffalo, American Indians, and the ecosystem of the plains. For thousands of years the buffalo took care of Indian people, providing warmth, food, and a way of life. In recent history Tribes are re-establishing herds of buffalo and reinvigorating the buffalo culture. Over the last ten years, Tribes have created hundreds of jobs by raising buffalo. To strengthen tribal efforts to bring back the buffalo, a \$1.0 million increase is requested in the BIA budget. These funds will be used to refine tribal buffalo programs and rangeland management techniques and strengthen related economic development efforts.

Trust Management Improvement Project

One of the highest priorities of the Administration is to successfully resolve the Indian trust fund management problems that have accumulated over the last 70 years. The 2000 budget proposes the resources to put trust management on a new path; to close the books on Indian trust management problems as we enter the next century by completing the replacement of core BIA and OST Indian trust management systems; re-engineer MMS systems; perform an extensive data cleanup and backlog elimination effort; and strengthen support functions needed to ensure adequate internal controls, adequate record keeping, clear and cogent policies and procedures, and a well trained, capable cadre of staff.

The American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act of 1994, mandated the establishment of the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians and granted authorities to the Trustee to more effectively manage and discharge the Secretary's trust responsibilities to Indian Tribes and individual American Indians. Although significant reforms in the management of Indian trust funds were initiated prior to the Reform Act, the establishment of OST has given focus to reform efforts and the Secretary's special trust relationship with individual Indians and Indian tribes.

Following the completion of the Special Trustee's Comprehensive Strategic Plan in April 1997, the Secretary outlined aspects of the Strategic Plan that would be implemented. In July 1998, the Department issued its High Level Implementation Plan to execute these decisions, which provides a road map to guide implementation of trust reform efforts. Significant progress has already



been achieved. Contracts are in place with leading private sector organizations to replace key trust systems. OST will install an off-the-shelf trust fund accounting system nationwide by the end of 1999. To date, 40,000 accounts have been converted to the new system and 200,000 have undergone pre-conversion data clean-up. BIA will replace its key trust systems (lease management, accounts receivable, land records, and trust resources management) by the end of 2000, which will begin with a pilot in Billings, Montana, scheduled for June of 1999.

OST 2000 Goal: By September 30, 2000, ensure that 90 percent of Tribes have access to trust asset information.

The 2000 budget requests \$100.0 million for OST, which will provide \$65.3 million for continued implementation of the trust management improvement project for trust reform activities of OST, BIA, and the Office of Hearing and Appeals. The OST request also includes \$10.0 million for continued implementation of the Indian Land Consolidation Project, which will commence in 1999 on

three reservations in Wisconsin. The 2000 request will allow the pilot program to be expanded to one or more additional reservations in 2000.

In addition to these discretionary budget proposals, the 2000 budget includes a significant change in the budgetary classification of tribal trust funds. Beginning in 2000, approximately \$2.1 billion of tribal trust funds will be reclassified as non-bud-

getary, similar to the classification of individual Indian money accounts. The change in budgetary classification specifically acknowledges tribal ownership of these trust funds, a fact that has long been acknowledged in the Secretary's day-to-day management of these funds. This change will have no impact on the ownership of these accounts or on the trust fund services provided to Tribes and the obligations of the Secretary will remain intact.

Bring back the warrior tradition of dedication to a cause greater than oneself. We need clear-eyed warriors, men and women, young and old, artists and lawyers, construction workers and teachers, writers and musicians working together for a better life for our 7th generation. The 7th generation for which our patriot warriors fought and died walks among us today. Let this generation of young people be the one that breaks our century-old cycle of poverty, disease, and despair. Let this generation of young people be the one that frees us all from the nightmare of alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, and suicide.

Assistant Secretary Kevin Gover