

BIA Deputy Commissioner Sharon Blackwell, in calling the BIA's Management and Administration and Information Resource Management Offices "the heartbeat of the BIA," saw the move to Reston as strengthening the Bureau's commitment to servicing its customers and improving its management of trust accounts and assets.

In his keynote address, Assistant Secretary Gover touched on the life and times of Ely Parker, who headed the BIA from 1869 to 1871. In a speech that was part history lesson, Gover acknowledged the paradox Parker faced as a Native American who, in his role as BIA Commissioner, was responsible with carrying out federal policies aimed at assimilating Indian people, but who tried to ensure that the United States honored its treaty obligations and sought to eliminate widespread corruption within the BIA at a cost to his personal reputation and professional career.

Speaking in the Seneca tongue, Norman Hill ("Taa-Wonyas"), Wolf Clan Runner from the Tonawanda Seneca Nation, gave a thanksgiving blessing for the day's event. Ms. Evelyn Jonathan ("Einjhonesh"), Wolf Clan Mother from Tonawanda, who accompanied Mr. Hill as his interpreter, presented greetings from the Nation's leaders to the attendees. Also present was Bernadette Hill ("Go-Seni-Sas"), Heron Clan Mother from the Cayuga Nation and a direct descendent of Ely Parker.

Ely Samuel Parker (1828-1895), a citizen of the Tonawanda Seneca Nation, was born into the Wolf Clan on the Tonawanda Reservation in New York State. Parker, who was made the sachem for his tribe and given the title Do-Ne-Ho-Geh-Weh, or "Keeper of the Western Door of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy)," was a remarkable person for his era. In a time when American Indians could not become U.S. citizens and were rarely seen in the professions, Parker was a diplomat, lawyer, and engineer. While the lack of American citizenship prevented him from practicing law, Parker's engineering degree led him to a career supervising federal public works projects in Galena, Illinois, in the late 1850s, where he met and formed a personal friendship with the future general and president, Ulysses S. Grant. On April 9, 1865, Parker, as Grant's military secretary, was present at Appomattox Court House in Virginia where he recorded the terms of surrender that ended the Civil War. In 1869, President Grant appointed Ely Parker Commissioner of Indian Affairs where he served until August 1871.

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