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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