Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Displaced teachers and students return to the Bureau of Indian Education campus now equipped with new modular units, six new classrooms, a new dining facility, new computers, and refurbished buildings

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SELLS, Ariz. – Today, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Tara Mac Lean Sweeney reopened the Santa Rosa Ranch School (SRRS), located on the Tohono O'odham Nation reservation. The school provides education for grades K-8 and serves approximately 66 students. The school had been closed since December 13, 2018, when the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) leadership and safety personnel identified several high priority deficiencies during a campus walk-through.

"I am proud to return to the Santa Rosa Ranch School after working closely with Tohono O'odham Chairman Edward Manuel and I was delighted to welcome back our students, teachers and staff today. I applaud the diligent and expedited response made by our leadership, staff and the SRRS Community to improve the school's facilities and upgrade its equipment," **said AS-IA Tara Sweeney**. "My priority is for our BIE students to receive a quality education and study in safe facilities and environments, and I continue to look forward to working with the community on future improvements."

"The Nation has been very pleased to work with Assistant Secretary Sweeney and BIE to facilitate the prompt improvements and reopening of the Santa Rosa Ranch School," **said Tohono O'odham Nation Chairman Edward D. Manuel**. "Providing our youth with safe, accessible places to learn and grow is vitally important. We will continue working with our federal partners to ensure that schools on the Nation meet that standard."

ASIA Sweeney toured the school's new five modular units and refurbished buildings, which include several classrooms and a kitchen. Additional improvements at the school include:

- The installation of new access ramps, access platforms and stairs.
- The installation of fencing around the campus area.
- The installation of a new fire alarm system.
- The installation of six new classrooms.
- The new kitchen includes a dining room facility with new furniture, appliances and ice machine.
- Preexisting buildings received new doors and fresh paint.
- The Indian Affairs Office of Information Technology (IT) installed new computers with internet access and landline phones.

While the Office of Facilities, Property and Safety Management for Indian Affairs made improvements, the BIE provided daily transportation for displaced students and teachers to the nearest BIE school, Santa Rosa Day School, where the facilities include a gym, computer lab and cafeteria. Indian Affairs

leadership and the Tohono O'odham leadership worked closely together to ensure an efficient time table was planned and followed for the SRRS to reopen on the target date set for when the students returned from Spring Break.

The Assistant Secretary–Indian Affairs advises the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs policy issues, communicates policy to and oversee the programs of the BIA and the BIE, provides leadership in consultations with tribes, and serves as the DOI official for intra- and inter- departmental coordination and liaison within the Executive Branch on Indian matters.

The Office of Facilities, Property and Safety Management for Indian Affairs is responsible for policy, oversight, and technical assistance for facilities management, facilities construction, asset management, safety management, property management, and real property leasing for all of Indian Affairs, including Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). These responsibilities are carried out through the Division of Facilities Management and Construction, Division of Safety and Risk Management, Division of Property Management, and the Real Property Leasing Program.

The Bureau of Indian Education implements federal Indian education programs and funds 183 elementary and secondary day and boarding schools (of which two-thirds are tribally operated) located on 64 reservations in 23 states and peripheral dormitories serving over 48,000 students. BIE also operates two post- secondary schools, and administers grants for 30 tribally controlled colleges and universities and two tribal technical colleges, and provides funding for higher education scholarships to Native youth.

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