Jewell, Roberts thank Mike Black – the longest-serving BIA Director – for his service to Indian Country and continued service in senior role

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Lawrence S. Roberts, who leads the Office of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs, today announced new leadership for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). Weldon 'Bruce' Loudermilk will succeed Michael S. Black as Director of the BIA and Tony Dearman will be the new Director of the BIE.

Michael Black, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, has served as BIA Director since April 2010. Mr. Black will move to a new role as Senior Advisor to the BIA Director, ensuring a smooth transition and continuing to be a senior member of the BIA team.

"It's vitally important to our Nation-to-Nation relationship that BIA and BIE leadership remains strong as we transition between Administrations," said Secretary Jewell. "Our actions today ensure that Indian Country will continue to be well-served at the highest career levels. Bruce and Tony bring talent and experience as managers of Indian Affairs offices and programs and will be advocates for tribes, playing critical roles in carrying out our trust and treaty obligations, and furthering our commitment to tribal self-governance and self-determination."

Weldon 'Bruce' Loudermilk is a longtime veteran of federal service to Indian tribes and Alaska Natives. He is a citizen of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Montana and has served as the BIA Regional Director for the Alaska Region since January 2014.

Prior to serving as the Alaska Regional Director, Loudermilk served as the Great Plains Regional Director from 2010 to 2014 and before that, as the Deputy Regional Director-Indian Services, Great Plains Region from March 2008 to June 2010. Prior to joining the BIA, Loudermilk provided leadership in the Interior Department's Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) as a Financial Trust Services Officer and as a Fiduciary Trust Officer. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from Montana State University-Billings and a Master's Degree from Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Tony Dearman, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, had served as the Associate Deputy Director for bureau-operated schools since November 2015, where he helped implement the BIE reorganization and reform, overseeing 17 schools, four off-reservation boarding schools, and one dormitory. Before that, Dearman served as the superintendent at Riverside Indian School, a BIE-operated boarding school, where he helped develop and plan a new academic high school building and two residential dormitories.

Dearman earned an Associate of Arts Degree from Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. He also received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education and a Master's Degree in School Administration from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. He currently holds science, physical education, principal, and superintendent certifications.

As Director of the BIE, Dearman will oversee all facilities providing schooling for nearly 50,000 American Indian and Alaska Native students from the country's federally recognized tribes. He also oversees the Deputy Bureau Director for school operations, Chief Academic Officer, and three Associate Deputy Directors who are responsible for education resource centers serving 183 BIE-funded elementary and secondary day and boarding schools and peripheral dormitories located on 64 reservations in 23 states. The BIE also serves post-secondary students through higher education scholarships and support funding to 27 tribal colleges and universities and two tribal technical colleges.

Jewell further said, "Mike Black deserves our thanks and admiration for his dedicated service as Director of the BIA, especially focusing on the important work of restoring tribal homelands, returning leasing decisions to the hands of tribal communities, and facilitating tribal economic opportunities. Mike is the longest serving Director in the BIA's history, and we are grateful for his dedication, enthusiasm and commitment to public service."

Black will now be stationed in Billings, Montana where he will help BIA manage implementation of the Land Buy Back Program, the Indian Energy Service Center, and assistance to regions in western time zones.

Black thanked the Administration for the opportunity to serve Indian Country as BIA Director, saying, "It has been an honor and a privilege to work with this policy team and the many people, both BIA and Tribal, who demonstrate their commitment and dedication to Indian Country every day. I want to thank everyone who supported me and helped to carry out our mission."

On the new leadership announcements, Roberts said, "Bruce's commitment to Indian country, his wealth of knowledge having served in a leadership role for two regions, and his years of experience in leadership with Mike and the other Regional Directors will ensure a seamless transition in our service to Indian country. Tony's record as a senior leader in the BIE, in school administration, and in the classroom, demonstrates his passion to serve Indian Country and our children, and I know he will ensure that BIE's progress continues to provide Native students the world class education that they deserve."

Roberts also thanked Mike Black, noting he led BIA's successful effort to return 500,000 acres of tribal homelands to trust status and was key to the implementation of new leasing and right-of-way regulations. "Mike's commitment to Indian Country has shown in every aspect of his work, and that will continue in his new role as a senior member of the BIA team."

Ann Marie Bledsoe Downs, who served as interim BIE Director since March 2016, will remain in her role as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Economic Development.

On her service as interim BIE Director, Secretary Jewell said, "I commend Ann Marie for stepping up to serve as interim BIE Director, leading the important transformation effort. Ann Marie's vision, guidance and persistence have served BIE students, staff and teachers well and we commend her for her tireless and effective leadership in support of tribal youth."

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