Bureau of Indian Education Works to Implement Recommendations from American Indian Education Study Group's Blueprint for Reform

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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WASHINGTON, D.C. – As part of the Obama Administration's historic commitment to ensure that all students attending Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)-funded schools receive a world class education, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Kevin K. Washburn today announced that six federally recognized tribes have been awarded $1.2 million in Sovereignty in Indian Education (SIE) enhancement funds to promote tribal control and operation of BIE-funded schools on their reservations. The funds implement a recommendation contained in the Blueprint for Reform of the Bureau of Indian Education issued on June 13, 2014, by the American Indian Education Study Group convened by Secretary Jewell and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

"Increasing tribal control over BIE-funded schools not only promotes tribal self-determination, but also provides greater tribal discretion in determining what American Indian children should learn, increasing accountability throughout the school system," Secretary Jewell said. "With school management authority, these communities will have more power to create lessons with tribal cultural values and Native languages, both of which can ensure their children stay connected to their heritage and help them to succeed in the future. These enhancement funds can make the difference in an effective, relevant and rigorous education for American Indian children."

"The Sovereignty in Indian Education Enhancement Initiative furthers President Obama's commitment to tribal sovereignty in education by empowering tribes to assume greater control over their schools and their children's education," said Assistant Secretary Washburn. "Teaching culture, tradition and language in schools is crucial to engaging Indian students and preserving tribal identities. Tribes have a comparative advantage over a federal agency in prioritizing these important subjects, which are different for each tribe, but they need federal support in building their capacities. This initiative will provide that support."

"With the Sovereignty in Indian Education Enhancement funding, the Bureau of Indian Education begins its transformation into a school improvement agency that provides support to tribes as they begin to create tribally managed school systems through self-determination," said BIE Director Dr. Charles 'Monty' Roessel. "We will continue working to implement the recommendations."

The purpose of the Sovereignty in Indian Education Enhancement Initiative is to provide funds to federally recognized tribes and their tribal education departments to create tribally managed school systems. The six tribes announced today will each receive an award amount of $200,000 for researching, assessing and developing an implementation plan to establish a tribally managed school system. Tribes will conduct a comprehensive analysis and an aligned implementation plan of their tribal

education departments and school systems in four areas of school reform: Finance, Academics, Governance, and Human Resources. The following tribes will receive enhancement funding:

- Gila River Indian Community, Sacaton, Arizona
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Fort Yates, North Dakota
- Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Belcourt, North Dakota
- Tohono O'Odham Nation, Sells, Arizona
- Navajo Nation, Window Rock, Arizona
- Oglala Sioux Tribe, Pine Ridge, South Dakota

The Sovereignty in Indian Education enhancement funds respond to the findings and recommendations of the American Indian Education Study Group for improving how federal education services and resources are delivered in Indian Country. Secretary Jewell and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan convened the Study Group in 2013 under the White House Council on Native American Affairs to propose a comprehensive reform plan to ensure that all students attending BIE-funded schools receive a quality education.

Increasing tribal control over BIE schools recognizes the sovereign status of federally recognized tribes, provides them greater discretion in determining what their children should learn, and helps increase accountability throughout the BIE-funded school system. Tribal control of federally funded government programs often improves local service delivery because tribal governments better understand the needs of their communities, are more responsive and better able to be flexible to changes in those needs, and are more accountable for results by their constituents.

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