Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON, D.C.— Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Director Keith Moore announced today that the Circle of Nations-Wahpeton Indian Boarding School in Wahpeton, N.D. and the Baca/Dlo' Ay Azhi Community School in Prewitt, N.M. have been nominated to receive the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Green Ribbon Schools award.

"I am pleased to see the BIE's schools meeting the challenging and competitive standards of the Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools pilot program," said Moore. "To be considered candidates for the Green Ribbon Schools award is an honor in itself and allows us to showcase how BIE schools are creating healthier learning environments for our students."

The Green Ribbon Schools (GRS) program was recently launched by ED to recognize schools that save energy and reduce operating costs, create environmentally friendly learning spaces, promote student health, and provide environmental education to incorporate sustainability into their curricula. The recognition award is part of a larger ED and BIE effort to identify and disseminate knowledge about practices proven to result in improved student engagement, academic achievement, graduation rates, and workforce preparedness, as well as a government-wide aim to increase energy independence and economic security. To date, 35 state agencies, which include the BIE, have announced their participation. Each participating agency has its own unique application meeting ED's program requirements.

The BIE worked with the Environmental Protection Agency regional offices to review and evaluate the applicants from its schools using a rubric and scoring method assessing the schools' activities in each of the GRS pillar areas. From here, ED will be assessing all nominations and making a final selection for the awards. Winning schools will be invited by Secretary Duncan to visit DC for the GRS award ceremony in May 2012.

According to ED guidance, Green Ribbon Schools receiving the national award will have achieved or made considerable progress toward the three pillars established in the program:

1) energy efficient buildings;

2) healthy students and school environments; and

3) environmental literacy of all graduates. The combined achievement in these three areas will be the basis for the Green Ribbon Schools award. All schools must meet high college and career-ready standards, be in compliance with federal civil rights laws, and all federal, state and local health and safety standards and regulations.

The Circle of Nations school is one of the select few schools nationwide to achieve the Gold Award for the Let's Move! cornerstone component known as the HealthierUS School Challenge The Challenge establishes rigorous criteria for schools' food quality, participation in meal programs, physical activity opportunities and nutrition education–the key components that make for healthy and active kids. BIE

Director Moore sent a memorandum out encouraging all BIE funded schools to apply for this challenge. The Gold level is a tremendous achievement. Also noteworthy of great achievement is the Baca/Dlo' Ay Azhi Community School, which has won a number of awards for its environmental and energy efficient buildings and overall approach to the environment within the school and community. The school was the first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certified building in the entire State of New Mexico.

The bureau has posted additional information on their website, including the BIE Green Ribbon Schools application, training opportunities, and program timeline. For more information about the bureau's participation in the program visit http://www.bie.edu/greenribbonschools/index.htm or visit the ED Green Ribbon Schools website at www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools to learn more about the program.

As part of this effort to promote a comprehensive approach to creating a healthier school environment in all BIE-funded schools, the bureau committed to the Let's Move! in Indian Country initiative in 2010 and encouraged all BIE-funded schools to sign up to become Team Nutrition Schools. The LMIC website http://www.letsmove.gov/indiancountry includes information about resources, grants and programs available to assist schools in becoming healthier places of learning.

Immediate questions or inquiries regarding the BIE's participation in the Green Ribbon Schools initiative can be emailed to greenribbonschools@bie.edu.

The Bureau of Indian Education in the U.S. Department of the Interior implements federal education laws, such as the No Child Left Behind Act, in and provides funding to 183 elementary and secondary day and boarding schools and peripheral dormitories located on 64 reservations in 23 states and serves approximately 48,000 students from the nation's federally recognized tribes. Approximately two-thirds of the schools are tribally operated with the rest BIE-operated. The bureau also serves post secondary students through higher education scholarships and provides support funding to 26 tribal colleges and universities and two tribal technical colleges. It also directly operates two post secondary institutions: Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kan., and the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque, N.M.