Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Bureau of Indian Affairs Director W. Patrick Ragsdale today announced the BIA Great Plains Regional Office in Aberdeen, S.D., will hold the 8th Annual Great Plains Region/Tribal Economic Development Summit on April 26-27, 2006 in Sioux Falls, S.D. The theme for this year's summit is "Building Human Capital: Identifying Challenges and Creative Solutions in Indian Country." It will focus on breaking down barriers that exist in business and workforce development by bringing together resources that can be utilized to overcome them. The summit is expected to draw 500 attendees from tribes, businesses and state and federal agencies from the Northern Plains and Midwest.

"The BIA Great Plains Regional/Tribal Economic Development Summit is an exciting and highly informative venue for doing business in Indian Country," Ragsdale said. "For seven years this event has successfully carried out the BIA's mission to promote economic opportunity for tribes, and I anticipate this year's summit will continue that trend."

Among the featured speakers from the tribal, public and private sectors will be South Dakota Governor Mike Rounds, Lynn Jensen, State Director, USDA Rural Development, Chairman Harold Frazier, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Mark Allen, President, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Karen Atkinson, Executive Director, Native American Contractors Association, Lance Morgan, CEO, Ho Chunk Inc., Tex Hall, Chairman, Three Affiliated Tribes of North Dakota and Cecilia Fire Thunder, President, Oglala Sioux Tribe.

A tradeshow, receptions, panel discussions and workshops will address the needs of Indian entrepreneurs by providing attendees with opportunities to discuss start-up financing, marketing strategies, business plan development, contracting and other small business topics with representatives from state and federal agencies, private industry and academia. Finalists representing two categories will participate in the 2nd Annual Business Plan Competition for Native American youth from the Great Plains Region. The twenty finalists come from Junior / Senior High and college age students who have been selected to attend the summit, all expenses paid, where they will give an oral presentation for the judges, who will also conduct a question-and-answer session with the students.

For more information on the 8th Annual Great Plains Region/Tribal Economic Development Summit, contact Onna LeBeau in the BIA Great Plains Regional Office Branch of Economic Development at 605-226-7381.

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