Funding for BIA-funded schools to improve reading skills in grades K-3

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WASHINGTON – Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Aurene M. Martin today announced that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has been awarded a Reading First grant by the U.S. Department of Education totaling $27 million over the next six years. Office of Indian Education Programs Director Edward Parisian officially received the award today from Education Department officials at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians 50th annual conference in Pendleton, Oregon.

“I am very pleased that the BIA has been awarded a Reading First grant,” Martin said. “This funding will allow BIA schools to help students establish a foundation of reading for a lifetime of learning.”

The Reading First program was established under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 as a new, high quality evidence-based program to enable all students to become successful early readers. Under the program’s guidelines, states must compete to receive a six-year grant that will, in turn, fund competitively awarded sub grants to local school districts. The BIA applied as a state education agency. BIA-funded schools may submit applications via a competitive grant process to OIEP’s Center for School Improvement in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

For the next six years, the BIA will receive $4.5 million per year to fund 16 to 20 BIA-funded schools. Eligible schools will receive funding for three years with another round of schools applying through the same competitive process for another three years. The size of each grant will be approximately $180,000 per year. The grant is to raise reading achievement in grades K3 through professional development of staff using scientifically researched-based reading programs

“Improving our students’ reading ability is one of our highest priorities,” Parisian said. “This Reading First grant will enable us to help BIA schools raise their students’ reading levels. I commend our Center for School Improvement staff for their hard work in producing a winning application.”

There are 185 BIA-funded elementary and secondary day and boarding schools serving approximately 48,000 Indian students living on or near 63 reservations in 23 states. In School Year 2001-2002, the BIA directly operated one-third of its schools with the remaining two-thirds tribally-operated under BIA contracts or grants. The BIA also directly operates two postsecondary institutions of higher learning and provides funding to 25 tribally-controlled colleges and universities. In addition, the BIA offers financial assistance grants to Indian undergraduate and graduate students through, respectively, tribal scholarship programs and the American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC) in Albuquerque, N.M.

The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Department’s trust responsibilities to individual and tribal trust beneficiaries, as well as promoting the self-determination and economic well-being of the nation’s 562 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native

tribes. The Assistant Secretary also oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is responsible for providing education and social services to approximately 1.4 million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the federally recognized tribes.

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