Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
For Immediate Release: April 22, 2003
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WASHINGTON – Acting Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Aurene M. Martin will observe Earth Day 2003 during a visit she will make to the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) on April 23 at 2:20 p.m.(local time) to view its new Science and Technology Building and reforestation project. SIPI is a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funded, two-year institution located in Albuquerque, N.M., that provides general education, business, science and technical instruction at the associate degree and certificate levels for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

"With this new facility, SIPI will prepare a new generation of Indian students for the world of science to keep our Earth healthy," said Assistant Secretary Martin, a member of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.

According to SIPI's president, Dr. Joseph Martin, a member of the Navajo Nation, the new 72,540 square foot science and technology facility "will serve as a teaching, learning and research laboratory where students will be prepared for careers and/or matriculation to four-year universities in science, mathematics and engineering."

The National Science Foundation (NSF) found that in 1997, the latest year available, American Indians comprised less than half of one percent of scientists and engineers in the United States. Currently, over 800 Indian students from more than 130 federally recognized tribes comprise SIPI's student population.

In addition, SIPI has formed partnerships with federal departments and agencies, private companies and research entities on renewable energy technology and sustainable agricultural projects. For example, SIPI is working with the U.S. Department of Energy, Sandia National Laboratories and an Indian-owned company, Sacred Power, to design and install photovoltaic, wind and solar hot water systems on campus to educate and train students in renewable energy technology and has developed an educational curriculum focusing on applicable renewable energy technologies and sciences. As part of its sustainable agriculture program, SIPI students have already grown 22,000 seedlings to reforest tribal lands burned in the Cerro Grande fire. The seedlings are from stock indigenous to those lands.

"Indian people have a proud history of applying what is now called 'science' to their everyday lives," Assistant Secretary Martin said. "Long before the first contact with Europeans, their ancestors had discovered the medicinal properties of plants, constructed housing made of environmentally compatible materials, cultivated hardy crops such as corn and wild rice, developed efficient ways of hunting, fishing and farming, and established methods and tools for measuring space, time and distance." The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Department's trust responsibilities and promoting self-determination on behalf of the 562 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments. The Assistant Secretary also oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs, an agency with 10,500 employees nationwide, which is responsible for providing services to approximately 1.4 million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the federally recognized tribes.

WHO: Aurene M. Martin, Acting Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs

WHAT:	Acting Assistant Secretary Martin will visit the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) to observe Earth Day 2003 and view SIPI's new Science and Technology Building and Greenhouse Compound.
WHEN:	Wednesday, April 23, 2003 2:00 p.m. – Welcome & reception at Cultural Learning Center & Museum. 2:10 p.m. – Prayer 2:20 p.m. – Martin tour of Science and Technology Building 3:00 p.m. – Tour of the Greenhouse Compound
WHERE:	Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), 97613 Coors Road, S.W., Albuquerque, N.M.

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