



Ojibwa Indian School in North Dakota to be Rebuilt

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – President Bush’s pledge on education that “no child shall be left behind” was reaffirmed today with the release of his Fiscal Year 2002 budget request of \$2.2 billion for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The request includes \$292.5 million for BIA school construction – an increase of \$162,000 over the 2001 enacted level – of which \$122.8 million is to replace six aging BIA school facilities around the country, including the Ojibwa Indian School located in Belcourt, N.D. “President Bush and I are committed to providing all BIA students with healthy and safe schools,” said Interior Secretary Gale Norton. “For far too long, Indian children have been left behind. This budget request shows the Bush Administration’s dedication to creating environments where the minds, spirits and aspirations of thousands of Native American children may flourish. Children can best learn, and teachers can best teach, when they aren’t worrying that their classrooms will fall down.”

The Ojibwa Indian School is comprised of 10 portable and four temporary buildings, some of which were built in the 1930s, that serve 351 students in grades K-8 from the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in North Dakota. Eighty percent of the student body attends class in the portable buildings. The budget request includes \$29.0 million for the Ojibwa Indian School Replacement project to replace both building types with one facility that meets safety, environmental quality, and accessibility standards; that can accommodate an increasing student enrollment; and provides a setting conducive to learning. At present, the buildings pose a serious safety and health threat to students, school employees, and visitors. For example, portable buildings are located on ground with a steep grade and slippery conditions that create hazards for children and adults. In addition, pipelines freeze under the extreme winter weather conditions found in North Dakota, and critical servicing components, including mechanical, electrical, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, ventilation, communications, fire, and safety systems, require major repairs to bring them up to acceptable health and safety standards. In contrast, the replacement school will be a warm, safe, modern-day K-12 teaching and learning facility serving a projected 728 day-school students from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Tribe.

The BIA’s 185 schools and dormitories have suffered for decades from neglect and disrepair. The five additional school facilities slated for replacement in FY2002 are: Polacca Day School, Polacca, Ariz.; Holbrook Dormitory, Holbrook, Ariz.; Santa Fe Indian School, Santa Fe, N.M.; Wingate Elementary School Dormitory, Ft. Wingate, N.M.; and Paschal Sherman Indian School, Omak, Wash. The President’s request for BIA education also includes \$5.0 million for advance planning and design of future replacement schools, \$161.6 million to fund maintenance and repair projects to reduce the backlog of needed repairs to BIA school buildings, \$504.0 million to fund BIA school and dormitory operations, and a \$1.0 million increase for operating grants to 25 tribally controlled community colleges. The BIA’s mission is to fulfill its trust responsibilities and promote self-determination on behalf of Tribal governments, American Indians, and Alaska Natives. As part of its mission, the BIA provides services to approximately 1.4 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who are members of the 561 federally recognized Tribes in the 48 contiguous United States and Alaska.
