Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Ada E. Deer, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs announced today that the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the United States Geological Survey have entered into a Memorandum of Agreement to provide support for science and environmental education at the elementary and secondary levels in the BIA school system.

The MOA was signed last week by Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Ada E. Deer mid Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Patricia Beneke and was officially announced at the 27th., Annual National Indian Education Association convention held in Rapid City this week.

"The educational materials made available to the Bureau-funded schools by the USGS will provide a much needed resource for our teachers and students," Ms. Deer said. "They will provide access to science activities that will engage our students in hands on, minds on activities. In addition, these resources will be augmented by scientists working with our teachers as mentors and with students to highlight careers in science. I look forward to the enrichment programs this agreement will provide to our schools located throughout the nation."

The task of supporting science education is not a new one for the employees of the USGS. The USGS has made extensive and varied efforts in educational outreach to many American Indian and Alaska Native students and teachers, such as USGS hands-on workshops in rock identification, map reading, and mining activities for Alaska Native high school students from villages throughout Alaska held this past June.

"The Memorandum of Agreement will help expand exposure of American Indian students to important science, providing valuable real life educational opportunities," Ms. Beneke said. The MOA establishes a task force of representatives from the BIA Office of Indian Education Programs and the USGS. The task force will identify a point of contact in each state in the OIEP system to help identify, coordinate, and distribute the educational resources currently offered by USGS. The task force also will assess how currently available USGS educational resources meet teachers' needs and make recommendations to improve the process.

On October 15, the Assistant Secretaries traveled to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota to provide teachers, administrators, school board members, and tribal government leaders an overview of the material and resources available through the USGS.