**Media Contact:** Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs
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Speech of Marvin L. Franklin,

Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs,

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Oklahoma City University,

Oklahoma Education Association Convention, Indian Education Division,

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I am greatly honored to have the opportunity to respond to your invitation to speak to thi1 distinguished group of Indian educators. It has been my pleasure to appear before other divisional of the Oklahoma Education Association in years gone by and I have participated in many of the annual meetings of the Association.

Many of you are aware that Oklahoma is my native state -but few of you know that Oklahoma City University is my Alma Mater. For these two reasons I am especially pleased to be here. But most of all, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to you -- for it is you and your co-worker that have made Indian education the most successful and progressive system in the United States!

Your Secretary of the Interior, Rogers C. B. Morton shares that view and it is my great pleasure to extend to each of you his personal greetings. I have recently travelled with him to some of our reservation areas and shared his feelings of concern and compassion for the American Indian, particularly the youth in those matters of education and his economic future.

Too few in America really understand or appreciate the true role Indian education plays in the life of the Indian student or the Indian parent. It ii most unique -- and certainly a role without parallel in our modern society. It is difficult for those in the dominate culture of the United States, particularly in these affluent times, to understand the need for boarding schools -- or, the need for bilingual education. Fortunately the Indian community is well aware of the facts -- and I might say, grateful for the fact that their children have facilities which provide a home, comfortable surroundings, food and medical care in addition to academic achievement opportunities.

Since many of those in this division of the Oklahoma Education Association are teachers for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and in my official capacity I have observed the results of your endeavors, I want to congratulate each of you for the splendid work you are doing in the Indian School in Oklahoma. The Indian community is proud of what you have done, and are doing for our Indian youth in this great State. By any standard of measurement, your achievements have exhibited a competence and dedication that goes unexcelled in school administration and teaching performance. As professional educators, you have met your challenge to nourish young minds and develop talents that make good citizens for our State, and for our nation.

Your attendance at this annual meeting, as members of the Oklahoma Education Association, is further evidence of your concern and your desire to do an even better job of educating Indian students.

You can be proud of the achievements in Indian education. The 1970 census report, for example, revealed remarkable gains in the past decade. The number of high school graduates in the Indian community over 24-yeara of age had almost doubled. And perhaps, more significantly, the median year of schooling for the group between the ages of 20 to 24 was beyond the high-school range -- a median of 12.2 years.

According to the census report, the number of Indian college students doubled between 1960 and 1970. Bureau figures indicate an even greater increase! In 1960 only 612 Indian students received higher education assistance. In 1970 the number was 4,271. This year it is expected the Bureau will provide some $20-million and will assist approximately 15,000 students with grants for higher education.

The surge of Indian students onto the college campuses of this nation ii a significant indicator of the progress made in Indian education at all levels. Not only have new horizons been opened -new ambitions have been kindled. Graduation from high school for the Indian student has been surpassed as a goal and ii now a steppingstone to higher education.

Evidence of a new era in Indian education is found in many forms -- the professions particularly. Many have become outstanding educators of the nation. Some have become leading technicians, especially in the field of medicine -- a few have achieved the distinction of a physician or surgeon. A good example is the field of law. Seven year ago there were only a few Indians in the legal profession.

Today, through a special law school program, funded by the Bureau and administered by the Univer1ity of New Mexico, more than 100 Indian student are enrolled in some 40 law schools throughout the country.

Our goal, of course, ii one that would acquire an adequate opportunity for the development of Indian lawyers, doctors, engineers, architects, educator and other professional to serve the needs of the American Indian and his communities.

In addition to the achievements on the part of Indian students as individuals there have been other accomplishments in recent years most worthy consideration.

First, there has been an important development in the role of the Indian parent. They are exercising an influential voice in the directing of educational programs for their children. Since 1969, Indian advisory school boards have been in existence at all federally operated schools. Special training is provided for school board members to increase their effectiveness.

The administration and operation of various components of education programs have been contracted to tribal groups, including, summer programs. Elementary and Secondary Education Act “Title” programs and in some areas, the administration of Johnson-O’Malley public school assistance funds.

A significant new development of the 1970’s has been the beginning of the first Indian operated community colleges.

All schools receiving Johnson-O’Malley funds from the Bureau of Indian Affairs are now required to have Indian education committees involved in the planning, development, and monitoring of the program for

Indian children public schools. This alone has led to a greater general involvement in public school operations because we now see some 80 public school boards are predominantly Indian.

Finally, we see the trend of tribal groups expressing a desire to operate their own schools with funding by the Bureau under a contract agreement. Two of the requirements are a parent referendum indicating the community's desired to operate its own school and tribal council resolution supporting this option. Today there are thirteen school operated by Indian communities and it is expected that other BIA schools will be turned over to tribal control in the future.

The general public and even some of us closer to the situation have difficulty comprehending the complexity of the Federal School System operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Geographically the schools are located from the Artie Circle to Southern Florida. There are 199 school serving more than 51,000 1tudent1, 76 are boarding schools and 121 are day school. The BIA education budgets is slightly over $200-aillion for the current year.

The President, the Congress, and indeed the Nation, are becoming increasingly aware of the needs of Indian people and are responsive to these needs. Special educational approaches and material, have been initiated, if not fully developed, Bilingual education is an essential element in some areas. Bicultural curriculum materials are equally important in other areas. Pre-school pilot programs and the establishment of special education schools or classes are a reality. Our goal -- yours, mine and those thousands of others involved in Indian Education, is to make the 701 1 the greatest period of achievement in the history of Indian education. And why not? With modern facilities, parental involvement, a cooperating private and public sector -- and moat of all with your enthusiastic leadership, we can give our Indian youth their greatest opportunity.

It would be an injustice to leave this forum without making a few remarks about the Bureau of Indian Affairs as it relates generally to the American Indian. Having headed an Indian Tribe for a number of year and being intimately familiar with many reservations prior to my duties an assistant to the Secretary, it has not been difficult to find the companion and understanding necessary to measure performance.

Just before my arrival in Washington the Bureau had suffered an unprecedented amount of disarray. The Commissioner had been dismissed, the top leadership had left, the building had been wrecked with records stolen or destroyed. Field offices and schools had been forced to seek protective measure -- and even tribal governments felt threatened. Wounded Knee, with its roots of unrest having been planted in the fall became a full bloomed confrontation at the time I assumed office •

There were four goals I had set for myself that seemed most important to secure the future for the Indian community:

A constitutional amendment to prevent the unilateral termination of federal services to a federally recognized lndian Tribe.

An improved financial condition for the American Indian by having a more responsive budget, revenue financing for physical improvement1, and a banking institution owned by Indians.

An intensive ten-year reservation renewal program that would not only improve reservation conditions but alleviate the chronic unemployment situation and develop turn-over dollar capabilities through the establishment of consumer goods and service outlets, and,

A thorough study of all the laws, codes, rules and regulations with a view to bringing them into harmony without modern education – our technological advances – and our present day need.

All but one of these goals are now a reality in some form of actual progress. A bill has been promised in the Senate for the agricultural amendment. The budget processes have been improved and the American Indian National Bank has been chartered with its opening scheduled for November 15, 1973. A bill has been introduced in the senate to establish a commission to revise all laws and regulations pertaining to Indians. Only the reservation renewal goal remains to be acted upon and model legislation is being drafted.

It has always been my belief and it continues to be my belief and it continues to be my belief that the Bureau of Indian Affairs is a “resource” of the American Indian. The Secretary of the Interior exercises his trust responsibilities entrusted to him by treaty, agreement or statute, but the important thing to remember is that our American Indian has the exclusive right to shape the destiny of the manner in which the many services shall be delivered. To this proposition I am totally dedicated and will resist all elements of society that tend to diminish this right.

Viewing the progression of events from today’s vantage point, it is clear to me that the complexity and magnitude of those functions conferred upon the Bureau of Indian Affairs commands the dedicated services of a very special group of people. I see in this room today an excellent sampling of that group. I urge you to continue the loyal dedication that you have so generously exhibited in the past and keep the image of the Indian youth ever before you. It is that youth that represents not only the future but the inheritance of a rich and meaningful culture. That future will be even more meaningful because of you. I wish you continued success.