Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, College of Menominee Nation and Oneida Nation High School to Receive Awards at Interior Ceremony

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced the winning college and high school teams that designed and built the most efficient portable wind turbine systems as part of the 2010 Indian Education Renewable Energy Challenge with the Argonne National Laboratory. The awards were presented today at the Interior Department's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

"I am proud to announce the winners of the first annual Student Energy Challenge and I welcome the partnership we have forged with Argonne National Laboratory," Secretary Salazar said. "Finding unique and stimulating ways for students to translate their classroom learning to the real world is a key to developing our future scientists in Indian Country. In a few years, these students will be leaders in developing renewable energy resources for their tribes and the reservation economies."

"I believe that innovation and creativity are important skills that Indian Country needs to achieve energy and economic sustainability," said Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk. "This youth initiative will help develop those skills by placing an emphasis on critical thinking and innovative design through science and engineering."

At the college level, the first place award was shared by the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) from Albuquerque, NM, and the College of Menominee Nation from Keshena, WI. At the high school level, the first place winner was the Oneida Nation High School from Oneida, WI.

The focus of the contest was to promote renewable energy development for Indian Country among students and teachers at the high school and college level. The contest is co-sponsored with the Bureau of Indian Education, the Indian Affairs Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development and the U.S. Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory.

"The Energy Challenge is a great opportunity for a team of students to use scientific and technical skills in a real-world application," said Harold Myron, director of ANL's Division of Education Programs.

The challenge was a two-part contest. In Phase I, student teams organized by the schools were asked to submit designs for a portable wind turbine installation that generated energy, stored it mechanically or electronically and then used the stored energy to power an array of light emitting diodes. The best 10 designs (five high schools and five tribal colleges) were selected in the fall and those teams each received $1,300 to construct a prototype for Phase II. A panel of judges chose the winners based on their final constructed models and submitted videos.

"We support and encourage science and engineering programs to get Indian students engaged in

renewable energy resources and we would like to congratulate all of the schools that participated in this initiative to make it a success," said Bart Stevens, acting director of the Bureau of Indian Education in the Interior Department.

The winning teams received their awards at a ceremony in the Interior Department's South Interior Building Auditorium. For more information visit: http://www.dep.anl.gov/indianed_energychallenge/.