Pueblo Pintado C.S. opening held August 9; Assistant Secretary Echo Hawk spoke at today's event for Rough Rock Community School

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WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk today celebrated the opening of the new educational facilities at Rough Rock Community School, noting the high-tech, culturally sensitive buildings and classrooms will better serve students and teachers on the Navajo Nation reservation in Arizona. Following his participation in a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the official opening of the Rough Rock Community School's new replacement school facilities, Echo Hawk spoke to attendees about the significance of the occasion.

"Two years ago, I was here to help break ground on the Rough Rock Community School replacement project, and today I am gratified at the results," Echo Hawk said. "Rough Rock students, teachers and staff can now work in greener, spacious, more culturally sensitive and more technologically connected learning and living environments thanks to the American Reinvestment and Restoration Act."

Echo Hawk was accompanied at the opening by Indian Affairs Office of Facilities, Environmental and Cultural Resources Director Jack Rever; Office of Facilities Management and Construction Deputy Director Emerson Eskeets; and Bureau of Indian Education Navajo Education Line Officer Gloria Hale Showalter.

This is the Assistant Secretary's second visit to the school. In September 2009, he participated in a groundbreaking ceremony for Phase II of the project (the Phase I portion had begun at the start of his administration just three months earlier).

Today's event follows one held August 9 to open replacement facilities at the Pueblo Pintado Community School, a BIE-operated off-reservation K-8 boarding school in New Mexico located west of the town of Cuba. Both schools are within the BIE school system. The replacement projects were undertaken by the Indian Affairs Office of Facilities Management and Construction with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

Opened in July 1966 as the Rough Rock Demonstration School, the RRCS, which is situated on adjoining campuses located 35 miles northwest of the town of Chinle, was the first Bureau of Indian Affairs school to be directly operated by American Indians themselves, as well as being the first Navajo-operated BIA school. The K-12 school, which currently serves approximately 440 day and residential students, is still a part of the Bureau school system, which is now administered by the BIE. The facility was included on the BIE's Replacement School Construction Priority List published in the Federal Register on March 24, 2004.

The RRCS project was built in two phases using $3.9 million in appropriated monies for planning and

design and approximately $56.1 million in ARRA funds for construction. Phase I, which started in June 2009, was the construction of a replacement K-8 dormitory for residential students. Phase II, which began in September 2009, replaced a K-8 academic building and two dormitories – one for 86 K-8 students and one for 102 high school students – along with a kitchen and dining facility. A bus garage/maintenance shop and a transportation office have also been added. The project, which was completed in just over two years, was developed to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Silver Certification criteria.

Pueblo Pintado was one of 12 schools on the BIE's replacement priority list published on July 9, 2003. The new $34.6 million campus will serve 387 students in a 71,000 square foot replacement school and a 21,000 square foot dormitory. ARRA funds totaling $5.2 million were used to build a second dormitory. The new K-8 school has a ground source heat pump, closed loop heating and cooling system, and a honeycomb-shaped roof-top heat recovery unit to capture heat from air leaving the building and warm it as it enters the building.

In addition to using green design, materials and technology for the replacement structures, both the Pueblo Pintado and Rough Rock projects met ARRA's requirements for being "shovel-ready" and creating jobs. The Office of Facilities Management and Construction (OFMC) estimates that both projects created 139 jobs.

The Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which serves the nation's 565 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, and the Bureau of Indian Education, which operates one of two federal school systems (the other is under the Department of Defense). The BIE funds 183 elementary and secondary day and boarding schools located on 64 federal Indian reservations in 23 states serving approximately 42,000 American Indian and Alaska Native students. The BIE also serves American Indian and Alaska Native post secondary students through higher education scholarships, and support funding to 26 tribal colleges and universities and two tribal technical colleges. It also directly operates two post secondary institutions: the Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) in Lawrence, Kan., and the Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) in Albuquerque, N.M.