Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
For Immediate Release: January 15, 2009
Print PDF

WASHINGTON – The latest class to graduate from an Indian Affairs-supported pilot project to train American Indians in the commercial building trade will hold its commencement ceremony on January 16, 2009, in Phoenix, Ariz. The current class has 12 trainees, all of whom are from the Navajo Nation, the largest federally recognized tribe in the state. The ceremony will take place at the Pappadeaux Seafood Kitchen in Phoenix immediately following a luncheon for graduates and guests that starts at 11:30 a.m. (local time).

The project is the result of an agreement between the Indian Affairs Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED) and United Association (UA), the 326,000-member journeymen and apprentice plumbers and pipe fitters union in North America, to offer unemployed and underemployed American Indians from economically challenged tribal communities in the U.S. the chance to acquire new job skills that can lead to job opportunities back home or elsewhere.

The program's first class, who graduated on December 19, 2008, attended the Pipe Fitters Training Center, Local 597, in Mokena, Ill. The trainees came from several tribes including the Blackfeet Tribe of Montana, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of South Dakota, the Ho-Chunk Nation and the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, the Seneca Nation of New York and the Spokane Tribe of Washington. The current graduates attended the Arizona Pipe Trades Apprenticeship Training Center, Local 469, in Phoenix.

All participants spent 16 weeks away from their homes and families undergoing intensive in-class instruction and hands-on training, with funding provided by the IEED to support them during that time.

The Secretary of the Interior created the IEED to encourage economic development in Indian Country. Its mission is to foster strong American Indian communities by creating jobs, Indian-owned businesses and a trained workforce, as well as developing Indian energy and mineral resources and increasing access to capital.

WHO: Dr. Robert W. Middleton, Director, Indian Affairs Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development, U.S. Department of the Interior The Honorable Albert Hale, Arizona State Senate (District 2) The Honorable Ben Shelly, Vice President, Navajo Nation Virgil Pablo, Director, Community Services, Navajo Nation Mike Wall, Director, Arizona Pipe Trades Apprenticeship Training Center, Local 469
WHAT: Luncheon and graduation ceremony for the second class to graduate from the IEED-UA American Indian plumbers and pipe fitters training program.
WHEN: Friday, January 16, 2009, starting with a luncheon at 11:30 a.m. (local time) followed by the graduation ceremony.
WHERE: Pappadeaux Seafood Kitchen, 11501 N. Black Canyon Highway, Phoenix, Ariz.
CREDENTIALS: This invitation is extended to working media representatives, who are required to display sanctioned media credentials for admittance to the event.
