Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Department of the Interior Associate Deputy Secretary Jim Cason today announced that the Department has released the final increment of $1 million to the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe in Fort Thompson, S.D., to address costs stemming from a serious fire that broke out on April 24 at the Crow Creek High School, a BIA-funded, tribally operated boarding school that serves over 400 students in grades 6-12 on the Crow Creek Reservation. The fire damaged the school's dormitory, kitchen and dining area, and miscellaneous offices, and displaced more than 100 dormitory residents for the balance of the 2004-2005 school year.

"These funds will help the Crow Creek Tribe and Crow Creek High School recover from the devastating April 24 fire and alleviate costs borne by the local fire departments that provided firefighting services that day," Cason said. "We will continue working with tribal and school officials so that Crow Creek High School will be ready to start the new school year."

The funds announced today bring the total amount provided by the Interior Department to $1.4 million, $100,000 more than its original pledge to help the school recover. They include $1.3 million to provide temporary kitchen, dining and dormitory facilities lost in the fire and $100,000 to pay for the services of seven local fire departments who responded to the emergency.

Separate classroom buildings which were not affected by the fire allowed students to attend classes without disruption.

The Crow Creek High School ranks ninth on the BIA's list of 14 schools scheduled for replacement over the next few years. A replacement school is currently programmed for construction beginning in 2009.

The BIA school system serves approximately 48,000 American Indian children in 184 elementary and secondary day and boarding schools located on or near 63 reservations in 23 states. The BIA directly operates one-third of these schools and the remaining two-thirds are tribally operated under BIA contracts or grants