Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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TAHLEQUAH, Okla. – As part of his continuing visits to Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs David W. Anderson today regaled students, staff and faculty of Sequoyah High School, a BIA-funded facility for grades 9-12 operated by the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, with his experiences and expertise that have ultimately led to both personal and business success for the highest-ranking American Indian at the Interior Department. At the same time, Anderson repeated his message about the beneficial impact that healthy life choices and positive thinking can have for young people and their future lives.

“It is vital that BIA students believe in themselves as contributing members of their families, schools and communities, Anderson said. “Building self-esteem through positive thinking and healthy life choices not only can make education more rewarding, it also can change the course of one’s life for the better, as I, myself, have learned.”

The Sequoyah High School was originally established by the Cherokee Nation in 1871 as an asylum for children orphaned by the Civil War. In 1914, then known as the Cherokee Orphan Training School, the facility was sold along with 40 acres to the Interior Department to operate as a BIA boarding school. In 1925, its name was changed to the Sequoyah Orphan Training School in honor of the tribe’s most famous member who developed the Cherokee Syllabary. The school was later known as the Sequoyah Vocational School. In 1985, the Cherokee Nation reassumed direct operation of the school, now known as Sequoyah High School, with funding from the BIA. The institution is regionally and state accredited.

Anderson began his visits to the BIA schools in March with appearances at the Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, Calif., and Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Ore. Earlier this month he visited the Turtle Mountain High School in Belcourt, N.D., and schools on the Pine Ridge Reservation, Cheyenne River Reservation and Lower Brule Reservation in South Dakota.

The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs oversees the BIA, the 180-year old agency that provides services to 1.8 million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the 562 federally recognized tribes, and the BIA school system. The 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 contract or grant.