Senior Indian affairs officials to encourage students to maximize learning, realize potential

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WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs David W. Anderson and Office of Indian Education Programs Director Edward F. Parisian are traveling this week to North and South Dakota as part of their continuing tour of Bureau of Indian Affairs funded schools. Starting today, Anderson and Parisian will be attending an honor roll banquet at the Turtle Mountain High School in Belcourt, N.D., where the assistant secretary will stress the importance of encouraging and inspiring all BIA students to grow through learning.

“Every child should have the opportunity to reach their potential,” Anderson said. “Our schools must help students climb the academic ladder, regardless of which rung they’re on, and prepare them to become contributing members of their families and tribes.”

In addition to their appearance at Turtle Mountain High School, the assistant secretary and OIEP director will spend several hours this week meeting with students, parents, faculty and staff at schools on the Pine Ridge Reservation, Cheyenne River Reservation and Lower Brule Reservation in South Dakota.

“BIA schools are vital centers of learning for the communities they serve,” Parisian said. “Our mission to bring accountability and high standards into every classroom has never been more urgently needed to help students realize their maximum learning potential.”

DAY ONE: Monday, April 5, 2004

Location: Turtle Mountain High School, a BIA-funded, tribally-operated grant day school for grades 9-12 in Belcourt, N.D. Student population: 530 (school year 2003-2004).

Activities: Attend honor roll banquet and meet with students, parents, faculty and staff.

DAY TWO: Tuesday, April 6, 2004

Location: Pine Ridge School, a BIA-operated on-reservation boarding school for grades K-12 in Pine Ridge, S.D. Student population: 1,063 (school year 2003-2004).

Activities: Meet with students, parents, faculty and staff and visit local Boys and Girls Club.

DAY THREE: Wednesday, April 7, 2004

Location: Cheyenne-Eagle Butte School, a BIA-operated cooperative boarding school for grades K-12 in Eagle Butte, S.D. Student population: 906 (school year 2003-2004).

Activities: Speak at assembly, tour school and meet with students, parents, faculty and staff.

DAY FOUR: Thursday, April 8, 2004

Location: Lower Brule Day School, a BIA-funded, tribally-operated grant day school for grades K-12 in Lower Brule, S.D. Student population: 293 (school year 2003-2004).

Activities: Speak at assembly, tour school and meet with students, parents, faculty and staff.

The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs oversees the BIA, the 180-year old agency that provides services to individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the 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 contracts or grants.