New assistant secretary for Indian affairs seeks to inspire students to realize their potential

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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SALEM, Ore. – Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs David W. Anderson shared his message of hope and the philosophies he credits for the personal and business successes in his life at a visit today with the students, faculty and staff of Chemawa Indian School, a Bureau of Indian Affairs-operated boarding school for grades 9-12 located just outside of the city of Salem. This was the new assistant secretary's first visit to the school since his swearing-in last month.

"Chemawa students, like other young people, continually face difficult choices that impact their lives and their families," Anderson said. "They are vital members of our national Indian community and possess a tremendous source of untapped potential. By teaching all BIA students the benefits of positive thinking and how to make healthy life choices, I believe we can empower them to realize that potential."

Anderson also continued to emphasize his belief in the benefits of healthy life choices and positive thinking with the BIA school's students. Chemawa is the second in a series of visits Anderson plans to make to BIA field offices and education facilities during his administration. He addressed students and met with school officials at Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, Calif., yesterday.

The Chemawa Indian School is the oldest of four BIA-operated off-reservation boarding schools. The school was founded in 1880 as the Indian Industrial Training and Normal School and eventually renamed Chemawa Indian School in 1885. Chemawa's 287 students represent dozens of tribes from 17 western states, including Alaska.

The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the department's trust responsibilities to individual and tribal trust beneficiaries, as well as promoting tribal self-determination, self-governance and economic development for the nation's 562 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and their 1.8 million members.

The Assistant Secretary also 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.