Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs David W. Anderson, in California for meetings with Bureau of Indian Affairs education line officers in San Diego, brought his message about the benefits of positive thinking and healthy choices in life to an assembly of students, parents, faculty and staff here at Sherman Indian High School, a BIA-operated off-reservation boarding school for grades 9-12. Today's visit illustrated the new assistant secretary's desire to visit BIA field offices and education facilities during his administration.

"Sherman students face incredible personal challenges that I, myself, have faced," Anderson said. "I want to impress upon them what I have learned: that positive thinking and healthy life choices can empower one to build a life based on hope for a better future."

Sherman Indian High School is one of four off-reservation boarding schools within the bureau school system. The majority of the school's 643 students, as reported for school year 2003-2004, represent approximately 90 to 100 federally recognized tribes located in great plains, midwest and western states and Alaska with most coming from reservation and urban communities in Arizona, California and New Mexico.

Given the variety of tribes and backgrounds they come from, Sherman students are situated in an environment that respects their tribal cultures and values, meets their health and safety needs and provides them with a well-grounded educational experience.

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.