Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: June 1, 1999
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Denver, CO - The Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Service and the Administration for Native Americans are joining forces to hold the first national conference for Native American youth, parents and organizations serving Native American youth. The Youth First: The Future of Indian America Conference will be held on June 2, 3, and 4, 1999 in Denver, Colorado.

The purpose of The Youth First: The Future of Indian America Conference is to begin planning for a variety of Indian youth oriented activities and initiatives to be implemented by federal and private partners. The conference is being held in conjunction with the Native American Youth Weekend, an event which has been in existence for 14 years and annually draws 600-800 young people that participate in a All-West Native American Basketball Classic. The majority of events associated with the conference will occur at the University of Colorado-Auraria Campus, who is also a co-sponsor of the conference .

The conference will focus on four themes: wellness, youth leadership, culture and education with specific workshops intended for the youth, adults, and organizations that deal with Indian youth. Each workshop will provide a Native American professional to lead the sessions as they attempt to equip our Native youth with the tools to cope with the pressures that come from school, home, friends and society.

Keynotes speakers will include Kevin Gover, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Governor Mary Thomas, Gila River Indian Community, Olympic Gold Medalist Billy Mills, Actor Rodney Grant of film and television fame. Scotty Graham and Eric Bienemy from the NFL Players Association will so provide words of inspirations to the youth.

The Youth First: The Future of Indian America Conference will also feature social activities in the evenings for the youth, such as a pow-wow or dance, group meals, and other athletic and art related activities that will promote youth interaction and development of interpersonal skills.