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President Bill Clinton today announced his intention to nominate Ada Deer, an educator and former chair of the Menominee Nation of Wisconsin, to serve as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs. The appointment, subject to confirmation by the U.S. Senate, will make her the first woman to serve as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

"Ada Deer is a strong leader with a lifelong commitment to American Indian rights, to improving the lives of American Indians, and to the strengthening of tribal governments," said Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt. "She was very highly recommended for this position by numerous tribes and tribal councils across America. She is an outstanding advocate with an impressive record of success and accomplishment."

Ms. Deer, currently a senior lecturer at the School of Social Work and American Indian Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, was a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives last fall. She was born on the Menominee reservation, led the struggle to restore federal recognition for the tribe, and was the tribal leader 1974 to 1976.

For more than 25 years she has worked with such national organizations as the Native American Rights Fund, Americans for Indian Opportunity, and the American Indian Graduate Program.

She was the first member of her tribe to graduate from the University of Wisconsin (1957) and the first American Indian to receive a master's degree from the School of Social Work at Columbia University (1961). She was a fellow at the Harvard Institute of Politics, John F. Kennedy School of Government, in 1977. In addition, her academic honors include Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Among numerous other honors, Ms. Deer was presented a National Distinguished Achievement Award by the American Indian Resources Institute in 1991 and was named Woman of the Year by Girl Scouts of America in 1982.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs has responsibility for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the bureau with the largest budget in Department of the Interior, $2.4 billion. BIA has 12,000 employees providing services and administering trust responsibilities for more than 500 tribes and Alaska Native villages. About one million members of federally recognized tribes live on or near the 56 million acres of Indian trust lands served by the BIA.