Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Eddie F. Brown, newly-installed Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, today outlined an action plan for the next 90 days to focus on improving education programs, addressing tribal development on the reservations, and improving Bureau of Indian Affairs management at the central office, area and agency levels.

Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan, Jr., after meeting with Brown to discuss Indian affairs programs, strongly endorsed Brown's priorities.

"The approaches outlined by Eddie Brown are in full accord with the philosophy of President Bush and with my own concept of what we must do to fulfill our obligations to American Indians and Alaska Natives," Lujan said. "His job as the Administration's top official for Indian affairs is one of the toughest in government, but he is well-equipped to handle it."

Brown said that in keeping with Secretary Lujan's and this Administration's priorities in putting education at the top of the agenda, he will move quickly to seek out the best qualified educator he can find to fill the job as director of the Bureau's education programs.

"During our search I will be meeting with Intertribal groups and elected tribal officials around the country to get their ideas on the ways that we can improve our relations and meet their needs in helping them to attain self-sufficiency," Brown said.

The new assistant secretary said that he would especially look to the tribes for their assistance in laying out what they see as their needs to improve the economies on reservations. "To achieve tribal development," Brown said, "I'll use the skills that were so successful in developing intergovernmental relationships in my previous jobs in Arizona."

Brown said he would also have an orientation and Planning Team looking at the organization of his office, the BIA central office, the current and future Bureau budgets, and our methods of communicating with elected tribal officials.

Brown said that he will expect to report back to the Secretary within 90 days with a progress report on the issues they discussed. "I feel confident we will have moved forward in all of these areas," he said.

Brown, a native of Arizona, was confirmed by the Senate on June 21 and sworn into office June 26. This will be his first full week in Washington as Assistant Secretary after moving his family from Arizona to the Nation's Capital.