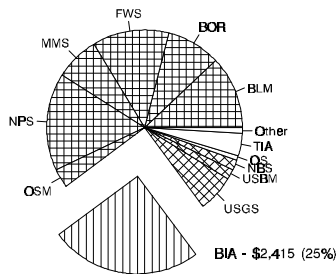




# Bureau of Indian Affairs

**T**he Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is the Federal agency with primary responsibility for working with Indian tribal governments and

FY 1994 BIA Budget Authority  
(\$ in millions)



Total DOI Budget Authority - \$9,663

Alaska Native village communities. Other Federal agencies may deal with Indians or Alaska Natives as members of an ethnic group or as individuals, but the Bureau of Indian Affairs is distinctive in that it deals with them as governments, in a government-to-government relationship.

While the Federal trust obligation lies at the heart of this special relationship, the scope of the United States responsibilities to American Indians extends beyond basic trust obligations to include a wide range of Federal service obligations delivered in concert with the enhancement of Indian Self Determination.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs provides services to 550 Indian or Alaska Native tribal groups with diverse needs in the 48 contiguous United States and in Alaska. Tribes range in size from a few to about 165,000 members.

BIA and the tribes administer programs dealing with education; law enforcement; social services programs for children, families, the elderly, and the disabled; management of the forest, mineral, fishery and farmland resources on more than 56

million acres of trust land; maintenance of over 20 thousand miles of roads on rural and isolated reservations; and economic development programs on some of the more depressed areas in the United States. Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to Federally recognized tribes or communities and live on-or-near reservations constitute the BIA's service population.

The BIA has made significant personnel and administrative reductions and realignments to meet the goals of the National Performance Review and to actively promote Indian Self Determination. As a result, the BIA is more decentralized than most Federal entities with over 85 percent of the BIA



Navajo pottery.

workforce concentrated at the front line at the agency, school, or reservation level.

## Indian Self Determination

The first goal of the Bureau is to encourage and support tribes in governing themselves and in providing needed programs and services on the reservations.

A key component of Self Determination is the ongoing Self Governance program, where Tribes exercise wider discretion over funds and the design of Tribal programs to meet local circumstance and need. The number of Self Governance Tribes is expected to increase to 50 by 1996. The

Department is also expanding the Self Governance program so that Tribes can elect to include eligible non-BIA programs in their compacts, further enhancing our government-to-government relationship with Tribes.

One of the principal programs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs is the administration and management of some 53 million acres of land held in trust by the United States for Indians. Developing forest lands, leasing mineral rights, directing agricultural programs and protecting water and land rights are included in this responsibility.

Educational programs, to supplement those provided by public and private schools, are also provided by the Bureau. The BIA funds 182 elementary and secondary Indian schools, many of them operated by tribes under contract with the Bureau. Other programs provide assistance for Indian college students; for vocational training; and for adult education.

Finally, the Bureau works with tribal governments to help provide a variety of local-government services. These include road construction and maintenance; social services; police protection; economic development efforts; and special assistance to develop governmental and administrative skills.

### **Assets Held in Trust**

The Secretary of the Interior has responsibilities as fiduciary for over \$2 billion in tribal and individual Indian trust funds. This responsibility requires an even higher level of care than the traditional fiduciary. The Secretary is required to invest funds in the highest interest bearing securities allowed under law, while at the same time maintaining their safety.

The Department and the Bureau of Indian Affairs



*Navajo park worker.*

have been aggressively pursuing improvements in trust funds management over the past year, as well as improvements in the management of underlying ownership records and natural resources, in accordance with the Secretary's reform plan.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has begun a comprehensive consultation process with individual Indians and Tribes on a proposed solution to one of the effects of the General Allotment Act. As allotted land held in trust has passed from generation to generation, ownership has often been divided among increasing numbers of heirs. It is not uncommon for as many as 100 to 300 individuals to hold undivided interests in a single allotment.

This fractionation has created an overwhelming administrative burden that has made trust fund management difficult. The proposal is aimed at alleviating this administrative burden; it would also improve the economic viability of trust lands. BIA would purchase highly fractionated interests in Indian lands. Given the extraordinary constraints on Federal spending, an integral part of the proposal is the recoupment of these acquisition costs. Consolidation of these fractional interests will do much to prevent the collapse of the Bureau's realty, land records, and accounting management systems that support its responsibilities as trustee of Indian lands.