



THE FIRST AMERICANS: STEWARDSHIP, INVESTMENT, HOPE

We should begin this new century by honoring our historic responsibility to empower the first Americans.

President Bill Clinton, State of the Union Address, January 27, 2000

President Clinton's July 1999 visit to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation – the first President to visit an Indian reservation since Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936 – signaled this Administration's commitment to addressing the institutionalized poverty that besets far too many American Indians. In the wake of the President's visit, Interior expanded its budget consultation process with Tribes to identify their needs and priorities. The 2001 budget request for the Bureau of Indian Affairs is \$2.2 billion, an increase of \$331.9 million above the 2000 enacted level. This budget provides the largest increase ever for school construction. It continues the trust management infrastructure reforms being conducted by the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians and provides an increase of nearly 50 percent for trust services in BIA. Most importantly, the budget seeks to meet needs identified by the Tribes themselves: maintaining safe communities, improving housing, ensuring safe educational facilities for Indian children, and ensuring sound management of trust resources. These increases support the Federal government's commitment to support Indian self-determination and will strengthen the government-to-government relationship it has with Indian Nations.

Promoting Safer Schools in Indian Country - The

185 Indian schools managed by BIA compose one of only two school systems managed by the Federal government. Many of these school facilities have serious health and safety deficiencies that pose a real threat to student learning. Many schools have leaking roofs, peeling paint, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate heating and cooling systems. At many schools, students attend class in aging portable classrooms. In addition, many Indian students lack access to computer and science labs, gyms, and other basic resources that are critical to ensuring the success of the younger generation.

In recognition of the Federal government's direct responsibility for improving the conditions of these facilities, BIA's 2001 request includes \$300.5 million for education construction and maintenance programs. This is an increase of 126 percent over the amount provided for these programs in 2000.

An investment of \$126.1 million is requested to replace six schools: Tuba City Boarding School in Arizona, Second Mesa Day School in Arizona, Zia Day School in New Mexico, Baca Consolidated Community School in New Mexico, Lummi Tribal School in Washington, and Wingate Elementary School in New Mexico. Up to \$30.0 million of this funding may be used to help Tribes participate in



the Administration's school construction bonding initiative. In addition, a total of \$171.2 million is requested to complete repair and maintenance work at existing schools to address BIA's \$800 million backlog of education repairs.

Protecting Indian Communities - According to a February 1999 Justice Department report on American Indians and crime, the rate of violent victimization for American Indians is well above that of other U.S. racial or ethnic subgroups and is more than twice as high as the national average. Such statistics were the impetus behind the creation of a joint effort to address the public safety crisis throughout Indian Country. In 1997, Secretary Bruce Babbitt and Attorney General Janet Reno worked with tribal leaders to develop a four-year collaborative initiative to combat rising crime rates in Indian Country.

Over the past two years, as a result of this initiative, BIA and the Justice Department have hired additional officers and investigators, provided funding to replace dilapidated detention center facilities, bolstered tribal court systems, and funneled additional resources to at-risk children. In 2001, the Administration is proposing a third year of increases for this multi-year Presidential initiative. An \$18.8 million increase is requested by BIA to strengthen core law enforcement functions, such as increasing the number of criminal investigators and uniformed police on reservations, upgrading radio systems, and strengthening basic detention center services. To ensure appropriate adjudication, a \$1.5 million increase is requested for tribal court systems.

In conjunction with BIA's efforts, the Justice Department is requesting \$173.3 million to support tribal law enforcement programs. Of this amount

\$61.0 million would support targeted programs such as drug testing and treatment, tribal courts, and juvenile justice; \$34.0 million would support detention center construction; and \$78.3 million would strengthen other law enforcement programs. This funding would be distributed primarily through grants to Tribes.



Improving Trust Management - Resolving Indian trust fund management issues is one of the priorities of this Administration. Funds have been held in trust for American Indians by the Federal government since 1820. The Department's responsibilities for Indian trust assets were greatly expanded with the passage of the Dawes Act in 1887, and there have been problems ever since. With support from Congress, Interior has made significant progress in reforming its trust management systems. By October 1999, OST had converted 193,000 of 285,000 individual accounts to its commercial grade, contractor owned and operated trust fund accounting system. The remaining accounts will be converted by May 2000.

In June 1999, BIA began piloting its Trust Asset and Accounting Management System in Billings,



Montana. This system replaces BIA's antiquated land records system, and will provide BIA with a national, state of the art, asset management system. This spring, BIA expects to begin deploying TAAMS at additional locations, commencing with its title plants. Ultimately, TAAMS will be deployed at over 200 BIA and tribal locations.

problems: fractionation of allotted Indian lands. A total of \$12.5 million is requested in OST for the Indian Land Consolidation program, an increase of \$7.5 million. BIA has been implementing a pilot program on three Indian reservations since 1999. By the end of 2000, BIA will have acquired, on behalf of Tribes from willing sellers, over 36,000 fractional interests in allotted Indian lands.

Providing Safe Housing - While visiting the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, President Clinton met with Geraldine Blue Bird, whose shack and trailer housed 28 people in five bedrooms. Ms. Blue Bird pointed out nearby homes that lacked windows and discussed the incredible housing needs on her reservation. The BIA's most current inventory indicates that over 100,000 Indian families are in desperate need of better housing. In response to this critical need, BIA's 2001 request includes a \$16.3 million increase to double funding for the Housing Improvement Program, which provides funds for housing repair, renovation, and replace-

We will do our part. You have suffered from neglect, and you know that doesn't work. You have also suffered from the tyranny of patronizing, inadequately funded Government programs, and you know that doesn't work...We're not coming from Washington to tell you exactly what to do and how to do it, we're coming from Washington to ask you what you want to do, and tell you we will give you the tools and the support to get done what you want to do for your children and their future.

*President Bill Clinton, July 1999
Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota*

A total of \$58.4 million is requested for trust management improvements under OST in 2001. This is a reduction of \$6.9 million and reflects progress toward meeting Secretary Babbitt's commitment to trust management reform. For BIA, the 2001 budget requests a \$35.1 million or 48 percent increase for trust management functions in order to ensure that trust management improvements funded through OST are sustained. These additional resources are critical to ensuring that accumulated trust management problems do not reoccur. Increases are sought throughout BIA's budget request for trust programs including, most significantly, \$12.0 million to strengthen real estate services, \$3.0 million to provide sufficient staff for probate functions, \$5.3 million to perform cadastral surveys, and \$4.8 million for land titles and records programs.

The 2001 request also expands a key program aimed at curing a root cause of trust management

ment to families unable to meet even the Department of Housing and Urban Development's minimum income guidelines. These funds are made available to Tribes and tribal organizations to reduce substandard housing and homelessness on or near reservations.



Improving Educational Programs for At-Risk Indian Children - The Federal government has a special, historic responsibility for the education of Indian children. The 185 BIA day and boarding schools in Indian Country serve over 50,000 children. These schools are located on remote and isolated reservations, and incur greater operational costs as a result.

The 2001 budget includes an investment of \$506.6 million for school operations, an increase of \$39.7 million over 2000. The increase will cover additional costs for teachers, transportation, and increasing tribal participation in school operations. The school operations total includes a \$6.8 million increase for the Family and Child Education Program and an \$8.2 million increase for a new therapeutic residential treatment pilot program. The additional FACE funding would be used to improve children's readiness for school and adult literacy by establishing 22 new program sites. Funds for the therapeutic treatment pilot would be used to hire mental health professionals in six boarding schools to meet the needs of high-risk students.

Implementing Management and Administrative Improvements - In August 1999, the National Academy of Public Administration released a set of recommendations for improving BIA's internal management and administrative systems. NAPA found that BIA lacks the internal structures and

staffing needed to produce managerial and administrative excellence.

The report's foremost recommendation was to provide additional staff support to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs to lead BIA in planning, budgeting, finance, human resources, and information resources management. Additional recommendations were based on the finding that BIA's education, law enforcement, and tribal services components operate semi-independently through their own field organizations, and yet only the tribal services programs had resources for administrative support. NAPA recommended new administrative personnel at all levels of the education and law enforcement programs. The BIA 2001 budget includes \$9.0 million to implement these fundamental changes at central and field office locations.



Rocky Boy's Reservation Indian Water Rights Settlement (Montana) - After many years of technical and legal negotiations, the Rocky Boy's Water Settlement was authorized by Congress and signed into law in December 1999. This water settlement defines the Tribe's on-reservation water rights and will lead to the development of additional water supplies to meet tribal needs. The 2001 request includes \$8.0 million for BIA and \$16.0 million for BOR to implement the terms of this settlement.

I believe the future is bright. But all of us need to acknowledge the fear in our communities, and in ourselves, and resolve to replace it with hope as we move into this next century. All of us need to make this commitment to instill a feeling of hope and independence among our children, and among all our people. All of us need to stand up and look toward a brighter future and turn away from indifference and the feeling of looming defeat. The signs are all there. All we need to do is see them, and then act on them. This year has produced many unforgettable moments, harbingers of hope for our people.

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Kevin Gover, October 1999