



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
**U.S. Department  
of the Interior**

www.doi.gov

## News Release

### Secretary Jewell Lauds Isleta Pueblo's Landmark Transition to Full Operation and Management of Tribal Elementary School

**First BIE-funded school to transition to full tribal control under Blueprint for Reform**

**08/01/2015**

Contact us

Contact: Interior\_Press@ios.doi.gov

Kevin Thompson (Interior), 202-695-0707

**ISLETA PUEBLO, N.M.** – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Director Dr. Charles 'Monty' Roessel today joined U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich and Isleta Pueblo Governor Edward Paul Torres Sr. to celebrate the landmark transfer of the pueblo's elementary school to full tribal control. The transition is the first enabled by the Obama Administration's Blueprint for Reform promoting educational self-determination for tribal communities and the President's Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) initiative to improve the lives of Native youth by removing barriers to their success.

"I commend Governor Torres and Isleta Pueblo's Tribal Council for their vision, courage and initiative in taking over the operation and management of Isleta Elementary School, which can serve as an example for other tribes seeking educational self-determination," said Secretary Jewell, who chairs the White House Council on Native American Affairs, which launched the Blueprint for Reform. "All of Isleta Pueblo's leaders, including the new School Board and Pueblo administration staff, worked closely with our Bureau of Indian Education throughout this landmark transition, setting a standard for how we hope to work with other tribal governments in the future."

Encouraged by the Administration's support for tribal educational self-determination, the Pueblo decided last year to convert the school to local control, concluding that the Tribal Council and School Board were better suited to address the school's problems, which included declining enrollment, high turnover of leadership and dissatisfaction with educational priorities. Among planned innovations for the school is adding the Pueblo's culture and traditions to the curriculum, including a native Tiwa language program, and updating and improving the school's technology.

"Tribal Nations understand the unique needs of their communities and schools better than federal officials in Washington, D.C.," said Assistant Secretary Washburn. "Our encouragement and support for tribal efforts to manage BIE-funded schools struck a responsive chord with Pueblo leaders. As a Tribally Controlled Grant School, the Pueblo will now run all operations, while the Bureau will honor its trust responsibilities and continue to fund the school."

Interior authorized the conversion of the school from federally operated to tribally controlled on March 23, 2015, after thoroughly evaluating the Pueblo's application, which included a description of the academic standards, program plan, policies and procedures for procurement and accountability for equipment, financial accounting, and personnel systems. On July 1, 2015, the Pueblo officially assumed control of Isleta Elementary School, which has about 150 students, 11 teachers and about 10 support staffers. Principal Frank Fast Wolf and education program administrator Eileen Montoya will oversee a new school year beginning on August 10, 2015.

Officials Joseph Lucero, Pueblo of Isleta Elementary School Board Chairperson and Tribal Council President Frank Lujan and Vice President Michael A. Lente also joined the celebration.

Another major priority of the Blueprint for Reform, Assistant Secretary Washburn noted, is aligning Interior's budget to support educational self-determination for tribes. In the FY 2015 omnibus spending bill, Congress appropriated an additional \$14.1 million for Tribal Grant Support Costs over FY 2015 levels, which increases the percentage of administrative cost grants paid to tribally controlled schools from 68 percent to 87 percent of the calculated need.

The President's FY 2016 budget proposes an increase of \$12.9 million to fund 100 percent of administrative costs for BIE-funded schools operated by tribes or local school boards. Interior also recently announced additional funding to help further the Department's goal of transforming and improving the quality of education students receive at tribal schools funded by the BIE.

"This represents a significant investment by the Administration in tribally-operated schools," said Washburn, who emphasized BIE's strong financial, technical and institutional support for schools transitioning to tribal control. "Tribes should be able to assume local control of schools and decide what is best for their children without having to face a financial disincentive – and now they can."

Isleta Pueblo, located about 12 miles south of Albuquerque, has 3,461 enrolled tribal members, 2,854 of whom are 18 and older. Between 2000 and 2010, there was a 7.4 percent increase in the population. As of 2010, Isleta was one of only three tribal communities in New Mexico where more than 80 percent of families had secure employment. Pueblo industries include gaming and recreation.

**<< Previous**

Interior Department Selects  
Philadelphia as Priority City to  
Connect Youth to the Great  
Outdoors

**Next >>**

Secretary Jewell Statement on  
Obama Administration Clean  
Power Plan