



Wyoming Department of Education

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Presidential cabinet members discuss Native American Education in Riverton

RIVERTON - The Wyoming Department of Education's Native American Conference played host to history Thursday at Central Wyoming College in Riverton as the US Secretary of Education and the US Secretary of the Interior came together to discuss Native American education initiatives and challenges.

It was the first time in memory two Presidential Cabinet members came together in Wyoming to discuss Native American Education.

United States Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Interior Secretary Sally Jewell participated in a roundtable discussion where they answered questions, listened to concerns, and took suggestions for improving educational opportunities for students on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Central Wyoming. They were joined on the panel by tribal leaders, along with state and local education officials. Former Wyoming Department of Education Interim Director, Dr. Jim Rose, moderated the panel.

"I couldn't be more thrilled to have Secretary Jewell as a partner in doing this work," said Duncan. "The only way we're going to get better outcomes for children, whether they go to BIE schools or to public schools, it doesn't matter is to work together."

In opening remarks, Duncan noted that the cycle of poverty, unemployment and social issues that plague reservations can only be broken through high quality educational opportunities.

Jewell acknowledged that forward progress must be made on education, and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) under the Department of Interior (DOI) must uphold the federal governments' treaties and trust obligations with the tribes.

"Education is how we lift people from poverty to a bright future," she said. "Poverty is an enormous problem as we've heard here today. The only way to lift people out of poverty is to

give them an education; an education that honors their culture, their identity, and who they are as human beings.”

Jewell added that improving education in Indian Country will be a dual priority.

After the roundtable discussion and a short press conference, Secretary Duncan and Secretary Jewell took part in a basketball event at St. Stephens School as well as cultural event with native dancing at Arapahoe School.