

# Interior official meets with Southwestern Indians

Ross Swimmer, the Interior Department's assistant secretary for Indian affairs, told tribal leaders, state officials and his own employees in New Mexico and Arizona that the Bureau of Indian Affairs is looking for a new way of doing business.

Swimmer was in the Southwest last month, and he explained several major initiatives being proposed in the BIA's 1988 budget request.

The BIA, which educates only about 10 percent of the nation's Indian children, is not providing the quality of education available in local systems as the public schools and oftentimes duplicates existing educational facilities, according to Swimmer.

"What I am proposing is that the BIA contract with another system to provide education for that 10 percent of the Indian population," Swimmer

told tribal leaders in Albuquerque. "First and foremost, we will contract with tribes."

Swimmer told Indian leaders in Phoenix that he was talking with state leaders only to explore their willingness to manage BIA schools if the tribes opt not to contract.

Also among the education initiatives are plans to charge a tuition for students attending the BIA's two post-

secondary schools and a proposal to require recipients of BIA graduate scholarships to serve one or two years in their profession with the bureau or a tribe.

Swimmer said the initiatives are not budget-cutting efforts. They were proposed in the 1988 budget to allow for planning and consultation during 1987.