

Swimmer challenges BIA to do something for Indians

Ross Swimmer, newly sworn-in assistant secretary for Indian affairs in the Department of the Interior, invited Bureau of Indian Affairs employees to share with him the challenge and opportunity to "get some things done for the Indian community." Swimmer said there had been too many delays, "too many studies." He said it was time "to set an agenda, decide what to do and to do it." Interior Secretary Donald Hodel, who administered the oath of office to Swimmer on December 13, described his job as Interior's "most difficult," because it involved a broad spectrum of activities across the country and dealt with people, not just resources. Swimmer said he would not have taken the job without a commitment from the president and the Secretary to support him

and help him provide better opportunities for the Indian community. Swimmer noted that for the past ten years he has seen the BIA from the viewpoint of a tribal leader and "it seemed the right time to transfer that viewpoint to the Bureau." He asked Bureau employees, in Washington and in the field, to "help me, give me advice." He said he would establish a system to allow freedom of expression directly to the top, adding that those who work most closely with tribes in the field frequently have the best ideas about what needs to be done. The assistant secretary told the BIA employees they needed to work to reduce tribal dependence of the Bureau. Then he promised "anytime you succeed in working yourself out of a job, I'll find something for you that pays twice as much."