

Secretary Jewell Announces Partnership With Verizon and Microsoft to Provide Wireless Broadband and Tablets to Native American Students

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Initiative enhances academic and cultural learning, spurs wider adoption of information technology

WINSLOW, Ariz. –As part of President Obama’s [Generation Indigenous \(Gen-I\)](#) initiative to remove barriers to Native youth’s success and the [ConnectED](#) program to provide more students access to the Internet, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today announced a new partnership with Verizon and Microsoft to provide wireless tablets and high-speed wireless services to more than 1,000 Native American students.

Secretary Jewell and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Director Dr. Charles “Monty” Roessel today celebrated the partnership with representatives from Verizon and Microsoft at the Winslow Residential Hall near the Navajo Nation reservation in Winslow, Arizona. Winslow Hall is one of 10 dormitories to receive broadband access under the public-private partnership between the Interior Department and the two companies.

“This exciting partnership helps ensure students continue learning after they leave the classroom,” said Secretary Jewell, who [outlined the partnership](#) during the President’s seventh White House Tribal Nations Conference earlier this month. “Access to today’s technology and wireless Internet are important parts of the equation as we work to assist tribal communities in providing students with a high-quality and culturally-relevant education. I applaud Microsoft and Verizon for their commitment to remove education barriers for Native American students.”

Verizon has already established wireless broadband connectivity at eight of 10 dormitory locations, and expects to complete its work on the project early next year. Verizon has installed enhanced network infrastructure for the dorms and will provide free wireless data service to the students for two years. In conjunction with Verizon’s donation, Microsoft is providing the students with wireless tablets that will run on broadband service from Verizon at no cost for up to two years.

Verizon has also partnered with and funded the Boys & Girls Clubs of America in Indian Country to provide two years of free digital training, services and support for students, teachers and dormitory staff. The services include comprehensive solutions to digital connectivity problems, learning and classroom management applications, and math and language arts enrichment. The initiative is part of Verizon's ongoing support of Indian Country and its commitment to the President’s ConnectEd program.

“Mobile technology puts learning in kids’ hands, gives them the freedom to create, to problem solve and collaborate – critical skills for the digital future,” said Rose Kirk, chief corporate social responsibility officer at Verizon. “We are pleased to provide Native students with the access and tools to thrive.”

The Native students participating in this initiative reside in the following Bureau of Indian Education-funded dormitories: the Aztec Dormitory in Aztec, New Mexico; the Blackfeet Dormitory in Browning, Montana; the Chickasaw Children’s Village in Kingston, Oklahoma; the Eufaula Dormitory in Eufaula, Oklahoma; the Jicarilla Dormitory in Dulce, New Mexico; the Kinlani Bordertown Dormitory in Flagstaff, Arizona; the Richfield Residential Hall in Richfield, Utah; the Sicangu Owayawa Oti (Rosebud Dorm) in Mission, South Dakota; the Tiisyaatin Residential Hall (Holbrook Dormitory) in Holbrook, Arizona; and the Winslow Residential Hall in Winslow, Arizona.

“Under our [Blueprint for Reform](#) to assist tribal leaders in strengthening educational self-determination, we are committed to fostering partnerships that provide the support Bureau of Indian Education students need in order to be ready to learn,” said BIE Director Roessel. “Wireless broadband connectivity is an integral part of that support network and will empower tribal communities to not only provide academic enrichment to their students, but also assist them in maintaining a unique way of life, cultural customs and language by transmitting the essence of their heritage to their children using the best information technology strategies.”

President Obama launched the Gen-I Initiative at the 2014 White House Tribal Nations Conference to remove the barriers that stand between Native youth and their opportunity to succeed. Through new investments, increased engagement and multiple partnerships, the initiative takes a comprehensive, culturally appropriate approach to ensure all young Native people can reach their full potential.

This challenge invites Native youth and organizations across the country to join the [National Native Youth Network](#), a White House effort in partnership with the Aspen Institute’s Center for Native American Youth and the U.S. Department of the Interior. Under its auspices, the Gen-I Initiative also includes a demonstration program called Native Youth Community Projects, administered by the Department of Education; a Cabinet Native Youth Listening Tour; and the first-ever [White House Tribal Youth Gathering](#) held last year.

The President’s ConnectEd initiative, launched in June 2013, enriches K-12 education for every student in America by empowering them and their teachers with the best technology, training, and interactive, personalized learning experiences. Under ConnectED, 99 percent of American students will have access to next-generation broadband by 2018. That connectivity will help transform the classroom for all students, regardless of income.