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Indian tribes have found that projects to enhance natural beauty get more results than meet the eye, according to the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Clean-up campaigns have prevented accidents and fires.

Efforts to stop unsightly erosion and to start landscaping programs have resulted in better soil conservation.

But, best of all, "face lifting" of the reservations has helped the tribes' tourist business and lifted the morale of tribal members.

"Acre by acre, BIA personnel and tribal officials are attacking eyesores on the reservations and we're making progress," says Commissioner Philleo Nash. "We believe visitors are noticing a constant improvement in appearance of the 50 million acres of Indian lands in this country."

Nash said that Indian beautification projects have centered on three main themes: (1) recreational development; (2) community improvement; and (3) natural resource conservation. All Bureau area offices have reported accomplishments in one or more of these activities, he said.

Spurred by the need to attract more visitors to reservations, tribes are developing more recreation facilities each year and improving their appearance. More than 100 campgrounds are under tribal management, with many reservations offering motel and restaurant facilities for tourists, also. Encouraged by public response, they have embarked upon many scenic roadside projects, including the control of billboards and standardization of information signs. The largest project is the clearing of junk and trash--an accumulation of many years--from beside major roadways.

Greatest need in community areas has been the establishment of sanitary landfills for garbage and refuse disposal. On the Gila River Reservation in Arizona, for example, refuse had been dumped about a half-mile from the main entrance to the Pima Agency, in full view of all residents and visitors. Through a joint BIA-tribal project, the dump has been moved to a convenient but outlying area, and the refuse is plowed under periodically.

Other projects include paving of streets and sidewalks, extensive building repairs, landscaping, and fencing. Community-wide clean-up campaigns have been initiated in all areas, sometimes by means of tribal-sponsored contests.

Reservation leaders have found that what is good for soil conservation is also good for natural beauty. Old car bodies removed from roadside areas have been put to good use as rip-rap for controlling erosion on streams and canals, for instance. After this is done, vegetation is planted at stream side to screen the rip-rap. Farm ponds established for water conservation also add to the beauty of the countryside, as do the seeding of roadsides and other erosion control projects.

By far the greatest advancement in beautifying reservations, however, has come with the new Indian

housing program developed by BIA in conjunction with the Public Housing Administration. As time and funds permit, low-rent housing units and attractive individual homes are being constructed by tribal members in planned residential areas in many cases, replacing the scattered sub-par dwellings on the reservation. Construction of 560 low-rent units and nearly 300 individual homes has been completed or started already, and the housing program is beginning to swing into a 2,000-units-a-year pace.

"Within a few years," Nash said, lithe tribes will have eliminated many of the eyesores detracting from the natural charm of their reservations. We look for more and more travelers to visit these areas as Indian paved road networks are linked to State and Federal highway systems."