Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Kelly- 343-4214
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The National Community Christmas Tree for 1965 which will be erected in the Ellipse, just south of the White House in Washington, is being donated by the White Mountain Apache Indians from the Fort Apache Reservation near White River, Arizona, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall announced today.

Secretary Udall added that this marks the first time an American Indian Tribal Council has provided a Christmas Tree for the Pageant of Peace ceremony, and the first tree from the state of Arizona tor this pageant.

The tree will be selected by Lester Oliver, chairman of the White Mountain Apache Tribal Council, from three specimens of Engelmann and Colorado blue spruce. These majestic trees tower to heights of 60 or more feet on the higher elevations - above 8,000 feet - in the 1,600,000 acre Apache Reservation.

Following its erection on the Ellipse, the tree will be decorated with thousands of colored bulbs and ornaments by National Park Service personnel.

The National Community Christmas Tree Ceremony has been an annual event in Washington since 1923. In 1954, the Christmas Pageant of Peace, Inc., was organized and the scope of the National Community Christmas Tree Ceremony was expanded to emphasize the desire of this nation and other nations to find peace through the spirit and meaning of Christmas.

The President’s Christmas Message given at the tree lighting ceremony is broadcast throughout the Nation, and by the Voice of America to remote areas of the world.