Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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American Indians are attacking on all fronts in the war against poverty, with youth programs leading the field, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall said today.

More than 18,000 Indian boys and girls from 71 communities in 21 States have taken part in Neighborhood Youth Corps, which enable them to stay in school by providing work opportunities. Earning $1.25 per hour, corpsmen work as aides in hospitals, libraries, records maintenance, building maintenance and tour guide services for various public agencies. The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs predicts an even larger enrollment during the coming school year.

Indian children from 116 communities were enrolled in Project Head Start during the past summer--the program that smooths the path to school for deprived children from needy families. Nearly 10,000 Indian children gained experiences in organized play and classroom adjustment, one-fifth of them through tribally sponsored programs.

By the end of August, 68 proposals for Community Action Programs had been submitted from Indian communities and 29 had been approved for a total expenditure of $4.1 million. Plans were underway for such projects as nursery schools and day-care centers for children of working parents, pre-employment training for service jobs, and studies of manpower available on reservations.

Requests for more than 600 workers from VISTA (Volunteers in Service in America--the domestic Peace Corps) poured in from 56 Indian communities. Approval has been granted for 280 requests and more than 190 workers already have been assigned to reservations.

Three Job Corps Conservation Centers have opened in Indian areas: Winslow, Arizona near Navajo country; Mexican Springs on the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico; and Neah Bay on the Makah Reservation in Washington. Seven additional camps were reported in various stages of construction on the following reservations: Colorado River and San Carlos in Arizona; Mescalero in New Mexico; White Earth in Minnesota; Flathead in Montana; Cheyenne River in South Dakota; and Yakima in Washington.

Nearly 200 unemployed Indian adults had enrolled in Work Experience projects under Title V of the Economic Opportunity Act by summer's end. On the Ft. McDermitt Reservation in Nevada, 16 men and women began training; while 175 men started the program on Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota.

In addition, reports indicate that hundreds of individual Indians have applied for small loans under Title III of the Act, for farm improvements or to develop small businesses as a supplement to farm income.

Both the Department of the Interior and the Office of Economic Opportunity are cooperating with Indian tribes and individuals in their self-help efforts.