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For Immediate Release: April 14, 1966
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One little, two little, three little Indians--and 206 more--are brightening the homes and lives of 172 American families, mostly non-Indians, who have taken the Indian waifs as their own.

A total of 209 Indian children have been adopted during the past seven years through the Indian Adoption Project, a cooperative effort of the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Child Welfare League of America Adoptions are arranged through customary court procedures.

The rate of Indian adoptions is increasing. There were 49 in 1965, compared to 35 in 1964.

At the time of adoption, the Indian children have ranged in age from birth to 11 years, with more than half under the age of 1 year. Five sets of twins, and a number of other groups from the same families have been adopted.

The 209 Indian adoptees have come from 11 States, with the majority from South Dakota (64) and Arizona (52). Almost all the placements have been in the east and Midwest, with 49 in New York alone.

Parents who have adopted Indian children vary considerably in economic and social backgrounds, but all share the desire to adopt a child who "needs someone", as one couple expressed it. Many of the adoptive parents had not indicated preference as to race or sex. Among the adoptive parents are farmers, small business operators, industrial workers, several teachers, a college president, and a number of newspapermen.

"One problem we don't have to face is that of 'matching' parents and children," said Director Arnold Lyslo of the Child Welfare League. "Indians and non-Indians generally don't look at all alike, and the question of whether the child is adopted is out in the open from the beginning."

Reporting to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Lyslo said further: "The Indian Adoption Project has been one of the League's most satisfying activities. Gloom mongers forecast that our Indian adoption project wouldn't work, when we started seven years ago. But the close follow-up that we maintain has proved that it does work. Indian children adapt happily to a non-Indian environment in almost all cases--even the older ones. While the adoptive parents have sometimes been overly protective at first, they have soon found out that the Indian youngsters slip easily into family and neighborhood patterns."

The Child Welfare League of America serves as coordinator for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in finding homes for Indian children through licensed public or private adoption agencies. The League's headquarters are at 44 East 23rd Street, New York City.