Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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A four-day camp-in at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago is planned by Montana's Blackfeet Indians for March 9-12.

Tribal Chairman Earl Old Person and veteran Boy Scout Leader Francis Guardipee will preside over the event in the lobby of the windy city's biggest hotel as a promotion, not a protest.

The Tribe hired exhibit space for the national convention of the American Camping Association, hoping to interest camp owners and operators in establishing residential camps on the Blackfeet Reservation.

The reservation abuts Glacier National Park and faces the Canadian province of Alberta, in an area considered ideal for summertime swimming, boating, fishing and hiking.

An economic feasibility study by the Bureau of Indian Affairs showed that a parcel of land on the shores of Lake St. Mary, adjacent to Glacier National Park, has outstanding potential for this kind of use-and revenue from the lease of this property would help the tribe invest in further community improvements.

Lake St. Mary is 10 miles long and a mile wide. Nearby is Duck Lake, known the world over for its fishing and waterfowl. The annual North American Indian Days summer event at Browning is also within driving distance. Although the area is virtually unspoiled, transportation by bus and rail is good, and hospital and medical facilities are available nearby.

Blackfeet Indians are in tune with the times. Most of them speak English fluently; many are farmers or stockmen; others are employed in businesses or are in public service jobs.

It is not unusual to see older Blackfeet men with hair in braids, and women wearing shawls in place of coats. Some are still versed in the sign language of the Plains and can communicate with other Tribes in this fashion. Blackfeet names are sometimes as picturesque as the tribal name, but many families have French and Scottish surnames, a reminder of their early contacts and intermarriage with Canadian trappers and traders.

The Indian children of Montana generally attend public schools and a growing number are enrolling each year in colleges.

Young and old alike, all Indians are citizens of the Unites States, with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of citizenship. At present there are many young men from the Blackfeet Tribe serving in the armed forces.

Mr. Guardipee, one of the old-timers, has been active in Boy Scouting since the Scout movement started in the United States in 1910. He was Tribal Chairman Old Person's Scoutmaster about 24 years ago when the Blackfeet Troop attended an International Jamboree in France. Both men are today ardent advocates of organized outdoor training and education programs for young people.

The Blackfeet Tribe is one of several Western Indian tribes interested in developing sites for residential

youth camps.