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When the first year's operations under the War on Poverty were summed up recently, the record showed that Indian reservation communities were among the most responsive of all groups to the self-help challenges of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

Projects for young people -- Operation Head Start for the preschoolers and the Neighborhood Youth Corps to help needy high school students stay in school -- have become the most popular EOA activities in Indian communities. The impact of these programs also has led to a growing interest, and demand for participation, in the broader Community Action Programs which call for a heavy measure of local initiative and persistence. Meanwhile, ten Indian areas have agreed to play host to hundreds of unemployed and untrained young men in the Job Corps.

The record of Indian participation in EOA activities to date is as follows:

Neighborhood Youth Corps

More than 15,000 young Indians have been enrolled in these part-time work and part-time study programs designed to put $1.25 per hour into the pockets of needy students and thereby enable them to complete their schooling. The demand at present is greater than current funding can meet; and while 28 Indian communities in 21 States are conducting NYC programs, another 12 communities have asked for funds to enroll an additional 4,000 students.

One Indian leader commented, in pleading for more funds, that the NYC not only provides needy young people with necessary money for personal expenses and family help, but also gives them a chance to discover their way in the working world. NYC enrollees are placed in part-time public service jobs such as hospital aides, assistants in libraries, maintenance helpers in schools, clerks, conservation and reclamation aides, and helpers in daycare centers for children of working mothers.

Operation Head Start

Commenced last 'summer as a means of easing the way for culturally deprived children who would be faced with the fearsome First Grade in September, this program had lived up to its name. All communities report excellent school adjustment on the part of the 1,700 head-starters on the reservations and several thousand others in off-reservation head-start programs.

Since the summer venture, Head Start has now been incorporated into the Community Action Program.

Community Action Programs

Over $7.3 million in grants have thus far been made to 49 Indian reservation communities to launch a variety of self-help community improvement programs. Typical projects planned by the Indians include training for available jobs in the community; surveys of manpower availability; operation of nursery schools for children of working mothers; surveys of educational levels of reservation residents;

recreation and physical fitness classes for adults; home management and home care courses for women; community garden projects; and Operation Head Start. More than $1.8 million of CAP money thus far distributed to Indian areas has gone to the Navajos, who constitute about 25 percent of the total Indian population on reservations.

VISTA

At least 235 Volunteers in Service to America (the domestic equivalent of the Peace Corps) have already been assigned to Indian areas, and applications are pending from tribal authorities for nearly as many more. Among the 70 projects now under way by VISTA workers are adult education classes, preschool programs, remedial reading classes, recreation activities and services to agricultural extension workers.

Job Corps

Six of the ten Job Corps Centers scheduled for Indian areas are already activated. They are: Winslow, adjacent to the Navajo Reservation in Arizona; Mexican Springs, on the New Mexico side of the Navajo Reservation; Poston, on the Colorado River Reservation near Phoenix, Arizona; San Carlos, on the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Arizona; Neah Bay on the Makah Reservation in Washington State; and Kicking Horse on the Flathead Reservation in Montana.

Other EOA Programs

Activities under two other provisions of the anti-poverty legislation are moving ahead: Loans to generate small business; and "work experience" programs which combine actual job experience with training for the hard-core untrained-unemployed.

Work experience projects administered under the Bureau of Family Services, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, are now in operation on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation on the Canadian border of North Dakota, one of the Indian poverty centers; and on the Fort McDermitt Reservation in Oregon. The loan program for small business is administered by the Small Business Administration, and requires the creation of a Small Business Development Committee as the channeling agency. Thus far, nine loans have been made to Indian groups -- two in Alaska, and seven in Minnesota.

New Activities Under EOA

Indian communities are responding to the Medicare Alert project, fundable under the Economic Opportunity Program, to alert every senior Indian citizen to the importance of registering for medical assistance under the new Medicare legislation.

For the young age group, plans for the Upward Bound program are under way. This program is aimed at disadvantaged high school youth with academic promise. It would provide special college orientation experiences, remedial or enrichment courses designed to give them a start toward higher education. At least 15 tribes have thus far submitted "letters of intent" to the Economic Opportunity Office indicating their desire to participate.