Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Bureau of Indian Affairs has signed a $12,000 contract with Oklahomans for Indian Opportunity, a non-profit organization with headquarters in Norman, Okla., to finance the recruiting of Indians for Peace Corps work in South America.

In announcing the contract today, Robert L. Bennett. Indian Affairs Commissioner, said: "We are. pleased to cooperate in a joint venture by the Peace Corps and the Oklahomans for Indian Opportunity that will open the doors to many American Indians for Peace Corps service."

Bennett continued: "Our employment assistance centers, located strategically throughout the country in regions where Indians are concentrated, will work closely with OIO in finding Indian men and women whose abilities would make them of special value to the Peace Corps.

"With so many Indians in South America, the concept of peop1e-topeople will take on the added dimension of Indian-to-Indian. American Indians are products of a dual culture, and therefore possess a built-in understanding of the needs of rural peoples of other countries who are facing the encroachments of modernity upon their traditional life patterns. I also feel that the opportunity to live and work with our neighbors 'south of the border' will add breadth and depth to the role of Indians on the American scene," Bennett said.

The Peace Corps-OIO-BIA program, known as Project Peace Pipe, was launched recently with the signing of a contract between OIO and the Peace Corps. The BIA contract with OIO completes the cooperative package.

Project Peace Pipe provides for selection of about 30 Indians with agricultural, technical and related skills to receive five weeks of preliminary training at the University of Oklahoma before entering upon three months of Peace Corps training this summer. Those successfully completing both training programs will be assigned to Latin American nations.

Recruitment will be nationwide. Schools and youth centers will be among the places that the recruiting teams of Oklahomans for Indian Opportunity focus their attention.