Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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A group of 120 Papago Indian children will join spring visitors to Washington on May 15 as the result of a lot of hard work and a determination to learn a little more about life beyond the reservation.

The children, junior high students from Oasis School in Sells, Ariz., on the Papago Reservation, will spend four days sightseeing, performing Indian dances and explaining Papago history, religion and culture to school and YMCA "Indian Guide" groups in the Capital area.

The children raised much of the money to make the trip by selling lunches, sponsoring car-washes, movies, community clean-ups and other projects. Additional help came from the Pima County school system, private donations and the Interior Department's Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"These kids need to know more about other Americans," Hercel W. Merchant, superintendent of the school, said. "They need to see for themselves how other people live and make a living, and at the same time they should see and touch the things that they have read about in books, back on the isolation of the reservation.

"They must participate in order to understand," he said, "but up until recently, many Indians never left the reservation."

The Papagos' three-bus convoy, which will carry a doctor and a nurse as well as a chaperon for every five children, will stop to present performances in New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and South Carolina enroute to Washington. On the return trip stops will be made in Ohio, Illinois, Oklahoma, and New Mexico.

While in Washington the youthful Papagos will meet with Robert L. Bennett, Commissioner of Indian Affairs; visit the White House and the Capitol; make radio and television appearances, meet their Congressmen, and attend a major league baseball game.