Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson praised volunteer activity in behalf of Indian foster children April 2, as he bestowed the Indian Leadership Award of the Bureau of Indian Affairs upon an individual and a committee as part of National Action for Foster Children Week March 31 -April 6. The ceremony was held in the Department of the Interior Auditorium Washington, D.C.

"Indian Children --like all children --are the hope of their own communities," Thompson said. The Bureau of Indian Affairs provides for the care of many Indian children in foster homes, in specialized institutions, and in its own boarding schools. This gives us a special interest in enlightened work with the special problems of children who are away from their own families over long periods of time."

The awards went to the Cherokee Action for Foster Children Committee, of the Eastern Band of Cherokees of North Carolina, and to Mrs. James M. (Marie) Cox of the Comanche Tribe, Oklahoma.

The Cherokee Reservation in North Carolina is one of six demonstration sites in the Nation for volunteer effort concerning foster children. The committee financed, produced, wrote, and acted in the film "Foster Care Among the Cherokees."

Mrs. Cox is chairman of the National Action for Foster Children Committee which developed a bill of rights for foster children. She was also volunteer director of the first Bureau-wide study by Indian volunteers of the Bureau's programs for the care of children away from their parents that have resulted in recommendations for the improvement of these programs.