Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson will present the Indian Leadership Award of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to Mrs. James M. (Marie) Cox, Comanche Indian of Oklahoma, and to the Cherokee Action Committee for Foster Children of North Carolina April 2 at 2 p.m. in the Department of the Interior Auditorium in Washington, D.C.

"These awards represent unique contributions in the realm of foster care by American Indians and are a part of National Action for Foster Children Week," Thompson said. National Action for Foster Children Week is March 31-Apri1 6, 1974.

Mrs. Cox has been chairman of the National Action for Foster Children Committee Which developed' a bill of rights for foster children. She has also been 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.

The Cherokee Action for Foster Children Committee --a part of the Eastern Band of Cherokees of North Carolina --has a record of accomplishments in terms of volunteer efforts in behalf of Indian children who are in need of foster care. It is one of the first six demonstration sites in the Nation for this kind of volunteer effort. The committee has produced the film "Foster Care Among the Cherokees."

The program will include American Indian dancing by the Youth Club -dance troop of the American Indian Society of Washington, D.C., and appreciations by two foster children: Ruth Sequoyah, 11, a Cherokee Indian and a direct descendant of Sequoyah, the Cherokee Indian who made the language a written one; and Ethel Wermy, 17, a Comanche Indian who is in her last year at Fort Sill Indian School, Lawton, Okla. She maintains a straight "A" scholastic average in her studies.

"The purpose of the Indian Leadership Award is to give official recognition to Indian leaders who, by their examples, have provided outstanding leadership in pioneering or initiating new approaches to Indian development and have distinguished themselves in their community or state in an outstanding manner," Thompson said.