Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Louis R. Bruce, Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior, today lauded the Salt River Indian Community of Arizona for receiving the Meritorious Program Award of the American

Institute of Planners. The award was presented at the Institute's 52nd annual convention in Boston.

In a letter addressed to the President of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Council, Commissioner Bruce said this was the first time that the Nation's leading professional planning organization has honored an Indian community.

Salt River was the first tribe to negotiate with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to be included in the Reservation Acceleration Program (RAP). RAP has moved from a pilot status involving 11 selected tribes to one of nearly 40 participating tribes during 1972.

"Please accept my congratulations for the professional recognition that you have just received," the Commissioner wrote “I know you will go on from here and continue to explore. And to conquer new ground, serving as a model for other small communities, Indian and non-Indian) throughout the Nation."

Two thousand Pima and Maricopa Indians comprise the Salt River Indian Community near Scottsdale, Ariz. The Citizens adopted a new constitution and produced a planning program which resulted in major decrease in unemployment; created new educational programs; Construction of an industrial park; adoption of zoning regulations; and improvement of its housing stock to the point where housing is now adequate for 30 percent of its families.

It is the first time that a plan has been created for an Indian community by the Indian citizens themselves. "I know that my planning staff can learn much. From your pioneering efforts not only in developing your own, unique planning process, but in supporting it through the development of a community land board which involves allottees in managing their land, and in setting up a computerized land management system," Bruce said.