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Mobile art vans, bringing professional fine arts instruction to Indian children in country schools are the latest innovation in the Bureau of Indian Affairs' revamped curricula for reservation children.

Five travelling vans, in the tradition of the bookmobile that some educators have called the single greatest boom to teachers in the 20th Century, are being equipped to tour the American West where most American Indians make their homes. The vans are scheduled to visit every Federal elementary and secondary school for Indians that does not have its own arts teacher in residence. Most of the schools are small and rural, and the luxury of "enrichment" instruction is rare.

The vans -- basically camper home units -- are at present undergoing the last phases of renovation as art facilities. They are being fitted with special lighting, drawing boards, modeling wheels, silver-working equipment, textbooks and, for still greater inspiration collection of paintings, sculpture, drawings and jewelry representative of the best productions by Indian students at the famed Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, N.M. Indian music and dance instruction will be provided through tape recordings and films.

Trained art instructors will be a key part of the traveling arts program. The vans will contain living and cooking quarters for the itinerant teachers.

One unit is now on the road in Arizona. The other four will fan out December 1 on a six-month tour. Each is based at *a* regional office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs serving Indian communities in Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma and the Dakotas. One van will be assigned exclusively to the 24,000 square mile Navajo reservation, which has 58 Indian schools.

Funds for the project derive from *a* provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Title I) that calls for special aid to schools serving low-income families. Public school districts with sizeable Indian student enrollments are also eligible for visitations from the BIA's mobile art studios.

Each van will spend at least one week – some times as long as three -- at each school visited. The schedules will be pre-arranged. Teacher workshops during the past summer have helped ready the school staff for the visits. The teachers are also supplied in advance with guidelines and materials for introductory lessons to prepare the students for formal instruction.

An ample supply of standard art supplies will be available on each van with enough to allow for a supply to be left behind at each school when the van departs,

In addition, students will be taught methods for using the materials indigenous to their local environments in the creation of their art forms, Pigments ground from stone, water colors blended from berries, brushes shaped by hand from twigs, and natural fibers such as leaf and bark used for collages will be prepared by· the students, in the Indian tradition.

The facilities of the mobile studios will be available to adults in the local communities after regular

school hours.

The concept for the mobile art vans was developed by David C. Young, a specialist in cultural arts with the BIA.

It was created in response to criticism from some Indian parents that cultural aspects of the American Indian heritage are often neglected in the curriculum, The "holding power" of art education has been demonstrated successfully in the unique high school and postsecondary programs offered by the BIA at its Santa Fe institute of arts, a school exclusively for Indians and oriented largely to a fine arts curriculum, Many of its graduates have been recipients of scholarships to colleges of art and architecture and to museum schools in this country and abroad, A growing number are becoming established as professional artists, sculptors, designers and writers.

One of the Institute's graduates, Frances Makil, served as an instructor on an experimental run of a mobile art van last Spring. A student in art education at Arizona State University in Tempe, she was "loaned" by the college to the original mobile studio which visited her native Hopi reservation, and other Federal schools in the vicinity. Enthusiastic response to that venture from students, parents and teachers led to this year's expansion of the program,