Media Contact: Wilson -- 343-9431
For Immediate Release: June 24, 1969
Print PDF

A Family Employment Training Center, the first established and directed by an all-Indian corporation, will open this fall at Bismarck, N.D.

Contracts for the project are being signed at the site of the Center today.

The United Tribes of North Dakota Development Corporation, whose membership includes all the tribes of North Dakota, announced that it will award the contract for the operation of the Center to Bendix Field Engineering, Corporation, Owings Mills, Md., a subsidiary of The Bendix Corporation.

The Indian tribes of North Dakota initiated the proposal for the training center when the Lewis and Clark Job Corps Training Center at Bismarck was closed.

The Development Corporation represents the Standing Rock and Fort Totten Sioux, the Turtle Mountain Chippewa and the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold Gros Ventre (Hidatsa), Arikara, and Mandan. Their enterprise represents one of the largest contracts with an Indian group ever negotiated by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs. The contract provides for Federal funding totaling $1,080,000 for the first year of operations.

Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel termed the new contract a "breakthrough in the exciting task of bringing Indian and Alaska Native leadership to the fore in creating programs that are not simply designed for Indians, but programs designed EY Indians."

"President Nixon stated last fall that in this Administration Indians' 'participation in planning their own destiny will actively be encouraged.' We have now begun a major venture in Indian direction of Indian programs. The businesslike manner in which the United Tribes have approached this undertaking gives me great confidence that they will carry it forward for the benefit of the Indian people in the eight states it will serve," he said.

Under the Family Training Center concept an entire family receives an education -- the basic three R's related to the vocation the trainee picks, vocational training, and a grounding in living in urban areas -- the places where most of the jobs are.

Both mother and father receive job training. The Center provides child care for young children while older brothers and sisters are enrolled in local schools. All members of the family receive counseling and guidance on an individual basis as needed during the transition from one way of life to another.

Initial enrollment at the Center will be 25 families, 10 solo parents, 50 single men and 50 single women. The Center will serve 36 reservations in eight states -- North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Wyoming, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

While similar centers are being operated under contract for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Madera, Calif., and Roswell, N.M., this is the first center directed by those it serves.

Funds for the Center, to be called the United Tribes Employment Training Center, will come from the Department of Labor and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. A special $700,000 appropriation approved by the last Congress provided for the conversion of the Job Corps Center into a family training center. The Office of Economic Opportunity 'donated much of the Center's equipment to the new facility.

The Indian leaders on the corporation board of directors deliberated carefully before choosing a subcontractor to run the Center to make sure that the program will meet the needs of Indian trainee families, and that there will be continuing close coordination between the corporation and the subcontractor.

In May Center site operation discussions the corporation and 16 potential subcontractors visited the to discuss and refine proposals and concepts for the Center's Subcontractors' plans and concepts were explored in detailed before the subcontract was awarded.