Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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A coordinated effort to develop more effective leadership for Indian community development has been launched by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Commissioner Robert Lo Bennett said today.

"We hope th4t the group spirit and cultural strengths which have enabled many Indian groups to survive and maintain their identity against tremendous odds may be translated into new community actions which can generate the social and economic progress necessary to bring Indians into their rightful place in American society." Bennett said.

To begin this concerted effort he said, two seminars on extensive community development have been conducted for the BIA at the Southwest Center for Human relations and Studies at the University of Oklahoma at Norman.

The two seminars one in September and the other this month, were designed to give BIA officials and representatives of cooperating agencies a broad perspective on both the problems of Indian community development and new approaches to finding their solutions.

"It is obvious that many of our programs have been and are community development programs. II Bennett said. "But we hope that by a careful analysis effectiveness and goals we can make all these programs work together for the development of the total community."

Great progress has been made in recent years in the development of local leadership," he said. "This growing resource must operate in the most efficient manner possible - thus our concern that all who would assist India-risen see' the forest as well as the trees."

The seminars. Directed by Dr. Edward Ho Spicer of the University of Arizona, are the Bureaus first effort to bring its leadership together for intensive study and discussion of the community development problems and procedure so Participants included officials from the BIA Central Office in Washington and from Area offices throughout Indian' country including Alaska.

Follow-up meetings will be held in the near future in various areas and will involve tribal leadership as well as the participation of other Federal agencies and groups interested in Indian affairs.