Indian training program to begin on University of Montana campus

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations
INDIAN TRAINING PROGRAM TO BEGIN ON UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA CAMPUS

MISSOULA--

A basic education and pre-vocational training program that has been described by University of Montana officials as the most extensive in the nation will bring 100 Indian trainees and their families to the Missoula campus for the next year.

Dr. James F. Hall, UM's Coordinator of Extension Services and Continuing Education, says his office's first major project will be inaugurated August 14, when the first of three contingents arrive from Montana's reservations.

Financed by $712,000 in grants from three federal and two state agencies, the program eventually will bring to the UM campus 60 families averaging four members each, and 40 single men and women. While at the University, the families will live in Elliot Village if housing is available, and single individuals will live in the dorms.

Dr. Hall explains that the program was initiated as the result of a survey by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Bureau found that there are many Indians in the region who lack vocational skills to compete satisfactorily in America's complex society, according to Dr. Hall.

Compounding the problem, he explains, is the fact that many lack the basic educational skills that are necessary prerequisites for successful participation in vocational training programs.

The decision to use whole families as training units, Dr. Hall explains, was based on findings by sociologists: With the creation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, many Indians figuratively retreated into their homes and stayed there, waiting for services from the government. Those retreatists must be brought out of the home for education to receive practical results, according to the researchers.

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Since Indians traditionally have strong ties to the home, Dr. Hall explains, any attempt to train individuals must include women members. He says that programs in the past have failed because men receiving training away from the reservation returned home to their wives and children prior to graduation. It would be unrealistic, according to Dr. Hall, to attempt to bring about fundamental changes in Indian society without including the whole family unit in the program.

Initially, the trainees' vocabulary levels and mathematical and communication skills will be determined by testing. Then adult students will begin their education in basic areas according to their demonstrated achievement levels. They will not be in fixed groups, Dr. Hall explains, therefore they will be able to progress at their own rates.

As skills develop, pre-vocational training will begin. All participants will have the opportunity to become familiar with several occupational fields but each will receive training in the skills which interest him. The pre-vocational training will be accomplished in formal classroom presentations, field trips to local industrial concerns, lectures from industry representatives and audio-visual presentations.

Possible areas of pre-vocational training for men students, Dr. Hall says, include other mechanics, construction, carpentry and/vocational areas. For the women students, training in cosmetology, practical nursing, dressmaking and general clerical work might be included in the program, according to Hall.

The trainess will participate in the program for a scheduled six hours daily. In addition, they will have the use of the University library for individual study and will be provided with counseling services.

While the head of the household receives training, Dr. Hall explains, his wife also will receive instruction. Wives will meet twice a week for classes in family life in a program that includes child care, nutrition, budgeting, orientation to family life...
and child psychology. In addition to the regular instructional meetings, a demonstration home visitor will provide assistance when needed. A child-care center will be established to accommodate pre-school children while both parents are in classes.

Dr. Hall explains that instruction in basic educational skills will be by teachers with elementary or junior high school experience and the ability to work with adults. Guidance services will be provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The supporting agencies include the BIA, Office of Economic Opportunity, Montana Employment Service and the Montana Department of Public Instruction.