

Apparel Industries begins production

Thirty employees will eventually be working to fill contract orders already lined up for the next six months at Warm Springs Apparel Industries.

The \$300,000 sewing plant referendum, passed by tribal voters July 30, 1986, allowed the development and equipping of the tribal garment manufacturing facility which began operating October 20.

Trainees have been producing practice sweatshirts since operations began to upgrade their sewing skills before beginning work on their first contract product. Employees are added to the Apparel Industries staff in small numbers to allow thorough training. There are currently 10 trainees working at the plant. According to the plant's project consultant, Russ Winslow, training time is 12 weeks. After six months' work, an employee should be a qualified operator.

The Apparel Industries has contracted to produce car covers on a long term basis with Car King of California. Approximately 100 dozen sportswear tops and 60,000 foot straps for surfboards have been ordered by DaKine of Hawaii. Other are also being considered.

Contractors supply the materials, says Winslow. "We're selling labor." With this system there is no investment in raw materials and a tight budget can be maintained.

Equipment for the plant has been both purchased and borrowed. The first 12 machines at the plant were purchased new, says Winslow. On loan are machines from Nordic,

Jantzen and Pendleton. Many used machines in the plant are old but "you can't buy a new one that does any better," he adds.

Wages for Apparel Industries employees are based on skill levels, explains Winslow. Each job is evaluated according to difficulty, responsibility, working conditions and length of time it takes to learn the job. An operator may also earn additional income beyond base wages as he or she become more proficient on the machine and is able to produce faster.

At first trainees work meticulously and slowly. "Most operators don't have confidence in their own abilities," Winslow notes. "They have to build confidence and stamina." And, he emphasizes, "It takes a special kind of person to sew and be happy with it."



First item completed by WSAI workers is sweatshirt.



Pat Brown attaches hood to practice sweatshirt.



Assistant manager Bernyce Courtney works on payroll for Apparel Industries.



Cutting layers of cloth Joseph Tukta maintains concentration.

Spilyay Tymoo photos by Marsha Shewczyk



Melanie Colwash marks fabric for eyelet placement.



Apparel Industries manager Dorothy Pedersen instructs Roxanne Spino on use of machine to make felled seams.