

My name is Denise Juneau. I am an attorney by trade, but I have spent most of my career in the education field – Indian education in particular. I attended public schools from elementary to graduate school. I taught in Montana’s public schools. I also served as the Indian Education Specialist at the Office of Public Instruction for a few years.

Most Montana students do not learn about Indians. I recently taught a short lesson at Capital High to about 50 students. Guess how many knew that there were 7 Indian reservations in Montana? - 3. None realized that treaties between tribes and the U.S. Government were still valid. Most thought that reservation land was given to tribes, rather than tribes reserving land for themselves in exchange for certain goods and services [hence the term “reservations”]. None knew that tribes have their own constitutions and governments. None knew that Indians became U.S. citizens in 1924. None of them had an inkling that there was a tribal government – to – federal government relationship that was based on the U.S. Constitution and treaties.

Those high school students, however, asked questions as to whether Indians could vote in state elections and if white people could live on the reservations -- I would venture a guess that this is much of the same knowledge that most Montana students have about their tribal neighbors.

As much as we would like to think that Montana is doing a good enough job, or that Montana has curriculum resources, or that Montana teachers can carry out Indian education in their classrooms - we have 33 years of neglect and omission we can point to that demonstrates implementation of Indian education has not happened. And I have my recent experience at Capital High to prove it has not happened.

There are a great number of dedicated, heroic people who have worked, for generations, on

implementing Indian Education for All Montanans. You may not realize how monumental it would be if the work of Indian education continued *with* the State's adequate support. Their work, although never funded by the State, has resulted in small, incremental successes. Although the State has ignored Article X, section 1, subsection 2, somehow, some things still got done; we have study after study, report after report, and action plan after action plan. Plenty of paper, but no implementation. As Mike Jetty would say: "Much thunder - Little Rain." Educators have limped along for 33 in their attempts to implement Indian Education for All – all with the assistance of zero dollars from the State.

Why hasn't the State implemented Indian Education for All? In 1972, Montana committed itself, through its educational goals, to the preservation of Indian's cultural integrity. In 1989, the Supreme Court held – in *Helena Elementary* – that the "provision establishes a special burden in Montana for the education of American Indians children which must be addressed as part of the school funding issues." Yesterday, the Supreme Court recognized that the State has shown no commitment to implementing the provision. In fact, the State did not challenge the lack of implementation – why? - Because it had no argument – the State basically *had* to plead "no contest." Again I ask, why hasn't the State implemented Indian Education for All?

It is difficult for the State to assert that it has even attempted to implement this provision when it has, for 33 years, provided zero dollars. While the current \$2 million you have provided to OPI is much appreciated, and is indeed an increase over the \$0 earmarked for this provision in previous years, it remains grossly inadequate.

The amount of necessary funding should be based upon this provision's 33 years of neglect

and omission and the fact that the State is “defenseless” in its lack of commitment to the Indian Education provision in Montana’s Constitution. Ten million dollars, as proposed by this bill, is a good start.

You have a chance to make good on that 33 year old promise. There has been a lot of talk lately about “handshakes being worth something,” the “opening of doors,” and “new days.” It is now time to stop ignoring and overlooking this constitutional obligation and put the money behind words and promises. \$10 million in support of Indian Education for All would definitely be a new day.

Fulfilling the promise is not overwhelming because its goal and purpose is noble and honorable. The provision simply promises that ALL Montana citizens will be provided the opportunity to learn about Indian people and Montana tribes. It really is that simple, and it is what Montanans deserve.

If the State provided adequate professional development to teachers, made accurate resources available to classrooms, and offered all students an opportunity to learn - truly learn - about Montana’s tribal nations, the success would be overwhelming. I do not want to walk into a school and hear questions about Indians that should have been resolved long ago. I do not want another lawsuit to come and go. I do not want more reports. I do not want the next generation up here, asking this body to please adequately fund Indian Education for All.

I urge you to begin the process of fulfilling this neglected Constitutional promise by increasing the State’s financial support of Indian Education for All Montanans. It is time.