

EXHIBIT 8  
DATE 1-17-05  
HB 137

**Testimony**

By

**William A. Talks About, Chairman, Blackfeet Nation**

For

HB 137

**Implementing A Dropout Prevention Program At OPI**

And

HB258

**Authorizing a School District to provide Indian Preference in Employment**

Before

The

**Montana State Legislature on January 17, 2005.**



# BLACKFEET NATION

P.O. BOX 850, BROWNING, MONTANA 59417  
(406) 338-7521 FAX (406) 338-7530

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**O'kee, (Welcome)**

To you, members of the House of Representatives, and all in attendance, for allowing me the time to speak to you on behalf of all Indian People, regarding two bills HB 137, being introduced, addressing the Indian Dropout dilemma and setting forth an Indian Drop Out Prevention Program within the Office Of Public Instruction and HB 258, authorizing the Board of Trustee of a school district to adopt a policy establishing an Indian employment preference.

I would like to begin with a positive message to all here today. I, as leader of the Blackfeet Nation, want to reach out to all of Montana expressing the Blackfeet's desire to promote good communication, while advancing towards a good working relationship and to forgo the negatives that are in existence today, from both the Tribe and the Citizens of the state of Montana, and to work the positives that will catapult us into a prosperous, sound, and cooperative state of happiness.

It is very important to the native people of this great State that our children should not be forgotten and left out of the opportunities for education. If we are to remain under the Public School structure, funding for all that is essential is of great importance.

With the necessary capital injected toward prevention, we can begin to properly address the dropout rate amongst native students.

With adequate funding the spiritual, education and mentoring aspects of the Indian need will enhance a unified approach from the Tribes and the State.

The Indian people as well as the State and Local school districts will lose without the support of HB 137. In one-way Impact Aid (federal funding) will be limited if the dropout rate is not curtailed.

In reference to HB 258, I applaud the introduction of this Bill and ask for it's immediate passage. It is the kind of bill that can only serve to put things in perspective and to promote the advantages for Native people to overcome the disadvantages that have been put in place for years.

To not pass the bill will continue the view that Native people have towards their upward struggle to reach equality. Equality can only be achieved through recognition. It is not too much to ask for recognition and I am sure that you understand that preference has no bearing, unless it is matched with proper qualifications and capability.

The State of Montana, it's counties and its subordinates, like it's school districts are put at odds against the Tribes and are kept there by the status quo. The Tribes, the native people, the Indian people are indigenous to this territory and are always the first to reach out and extend a hand.

The trust of the Native population is unique and distinct, and remains as a standard of forbearance, either recognized or understood by those of the same existence. Tell us how we may help you and in this way the two aforementioned bills need to be passed.

Thank you in advance for the passage of these two Bills.

Respectfully,

  
**William A. TalksAbout, Chairman**  
**Blackfeet Nation**