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Dear Legislator:

I'm a fifth-generation Montanan. Men in my family have been involved in mining through the current generation. Needless to say, formal education was neither a necessity nor a priority. My mother was a non-traditional student who enrolled at U of M and became a teacher when I was eleven.

My elementary education greatly benefited from pilot programs in Montana schools. In early grade school at Whittier Elementary in Butte, my first and second grade teachers introduced us to Indian cultures (1976-1977/1977-1978). In fourth grade at Washington Elementary in Missoula, I was selected to participate in Project Excel, a pilot program for 'gifted' students. I remained in that program through sixth grade, when my mother graduated. I strongly believe every child in Montana should be exposed to the learning methods used in that program. Synthesis and analysis were heavily emphasized, and the mental exercises we practiced have helped me be an intelligent consumer of information ever since.

We moved to the Crow Reservation when my mother graduated, and immersion in that wholly non-western culture was an indescribable experience. My early exposure to some themes at a very early age in Butte helped me immeasurably. I was aware that many Indians spoke their own languages, and that they had different ways. These are simple concepts to be sure, but young children are aided in developing empathy and open-mindedness by the introduction to such basic concepts. In a state where 7% of the population is Indian, and prejudice and ignorance still thrive, teaching our young people as much as we can about the nations we live among is essential to a prosperous future for us all.

My early exposure to a non-western culture created a larger curiosity about other foreign cultures. I studied international relations in college, and participated in the international moot court competition in law school. I know that my Montana education helped prepare me by teaching me a more structured thought process in Project Excel, and by exposing me to the intrigues of differing cultures through the Indian education components. I hope you will give all Montana children these advantages and more by supporting directives and the funds to support them.

If I can be of any assistance to you, please contact me at [cnaber@mt.gov](mailto:cnaber@mt.gov) or 771-6504.

Sincerely,  
Chase Naber, Esq.

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