



BLACKFEET NATION

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EXHIBIT 23
DATE 2-16-05
HB 643

BLACKFEET TRIBAL BUSINESS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Patrick "Pal" Thomas, Vice-Chairman
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Jay St. Goddard
James St. Goddard
Patrick "Pal" Thomas

February 16, 2005

Health and Human Services Committee
59th Legislative Session
Helena, MT 59620

Background

The Blackfeet live on a reservation land base 50 by 75 miles square located along the rocky mountain front and U.S./Canadian border. There are 15,670 enrolled Blackfeet members. The Montana Tobacco Use Prevention program provides \$80,000.00 per year to the Blackfeet Tobacco Program for fiscal years 2004 and 2005. The Blackfeet Tobacco Prevention program since July 2000 has provided culturally based tobacco prevention services to support tobacco policy development, and activities to prevent youth initiation to the use of tobacco products, and promotes cessation services. The Blackfeet TUPP services integrate Blackfeet sacred Pitsistiman/Pistakaan (tobacco) teachings and ceremonial governance of Blackfeet values combined with health education commercial tobacco prevention curriculums to formulate a culturally base prevention strategy. The principles of Akak'stiman (the traditional law-making process) govern the composition of all policy, ordinances and activities of the Blackfeet Tobacco Prevention Program that operates under the authority of the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council.

Community capacity building activities are designed to expand the opportunities for members of the Blackfeet Reservation community to receive traditional teachings of Pitsistiman/Pista'xkaan protocol as a method of developing culturally based refusal skills to commercial tobacco products use and addiction. The culturally based policy efforts are organized to reflect the governing principles of Akak'stiman, the traditional ceremonial based law-making practice of the Blackfeet. Akak'stiman can be characterized in the context of tobacco responsibility as the original Blackfeet tobacco control mechanism. Adherence to Akak'stiman principles is necessary when addressing the health morbidity and mortality factors, which have arisen among the Blackfeet since the introduction of tobacco for profit products. During fiscal years 2004 and 2005 all activities reflect the program goal of fostering a greater understanding of the principles of designing culturally based commercial tobacco control policies and fortifying the sacred use of Pista'xkan/Pitsistiman protocol as prevention strategy.

The Blackfeet Tobacco Program activities are designed to support the return to wellness for all families. The health education tobacco initiatives of the Blackfeet Program address the disparities in tobacco related morbidity and mortality among Blackfeet families by pursuing the development of Clean Indoor Air policies, development of cessation services, and conducting youth prevention activities.

Concerning HB 643 "An Act Prohibiting Smoking in all public schools and in all places where the public is free to enter." The following feedback is provided to the committee:

1. Current language:

Section 4 (4) the prohibition in subsection (1) does not apply to the following Places, whether or not the public is allowed access to those places:

(f): a room or other space used for bona fide, traditional, American Indian Ceremonial purposes in connection with the practice of a traditional Indian religion.

Opinion: Implies religious freedom restriction on American Indians religious rights, and practice be defined to a spatial area.

Example of language to acknowledge the unique relationship of the ceremonial use of tobacco by American Indians:

NTF American Indians religious practices in accordance with the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Public Law 95-341 (1978), Public Law 103-344 (1994).

Submitted By: _____

Lori New Breast 2.16.05

Lori New Breast

Date 16, 2005

Contact:

Lori New Breast, Director Blackfeet Tribe Tobacco Prevention,
338-2413/450-3093.

**Information of Guiding Principles of the Blackfeet Tribe Tobacco
Prevention Program**

Two tobacco ways:

Blackfeet ceremonial tobacco use honors the Creator and helps our families. The gift of sacred tobacco was given to the Blackfeet as the chief head offering to the Creator and is central to the Blackfeet way of life. Ceremonial use is our original relationship to sacred tobacco.

Commercial tobacco use means chewing or smoking cigarettes that are manufactured to cause addiction and sold for profit. ***Commercial tobacco*** products contain poisonous chemicals, carcinogens (cancer causing agents), sugars, salts, nuclear waste and pesticides that cause illnesses, tooth and gum diseases, cancers and deaths in our families.