

**Report of the Working Group on Indian Education for "All Montanans,"  
For Grades K-12 to the Education Appropriation Subcommittee**

February 9, 2005

A Working Group on Indian Education for "All Montanans" was appointed by Representative Eve Franklin, Chair of the Joint Education Subcommittee of Appropriations. Working Group members appointed were Senator Carol Williams, Chair, Representative Carol Juneau, and Representative Verdell Jackson. The Working Group held five meetings between January 24<sup>th</sup> and February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The task of the Working Group was to gather information about the status of implementation of Montana's Constitutional mandate, Indian Education for All Montanans, to review available resources in Montana's educational institutions, and to propose funding adequate to meet needs for implementation throughout Montana's educational system during the biennium.

To meet this task the Working Group heard information from representatives of the education community, representing the K-12 system, the Montana University System, and the tribal college system. Other interested parties, including legislators, tribal council members, unions, and parents shared their concerns and insights. Testimony was solicited about the current efforts and resources in all institutions to address Indian Education for All Montanans and their needs for funding during the biennium. A list of parties that appeared before the committee is included in the binder.

The Working Group reviewed numerous legal, policy and historical documents to provide members with a context for making budget recommendations. Documents included the Montana Constitutional Convention transcripts, the Supreme Court Amicus Brief on Indian Education for All, Indian student achievement data, current accreditation guidelines for Indian Education for All, recommendations from the Indian Education Summit, and many Office of Public Instruction resources, including the Essential Understandings about Montana Tribes. Materials considered by the Working Group are included in the binder.

The Working Group heard presentations from the Office of Public Instruction and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education regarding their budget requests for the biennium to implement Indian Education for All Montanans. The Office of Public Instruction presented a budget of \$2,000,000, which is included in Governor Schweitzer's budget. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education presented a budget of \$250,000 to begin planning for implementation. Representative Norma Bixby recommended a budget of \$23,000,000 over the biennium, primarily for direct distribution to schools for implementation efforts. These budgets already have been presented to the full Joint Education Subcommittee and copies are included in the binder.

The Working Group expresses its' gratitude to Governor Schweitzer for including two million dollars in his budget for the Office of Public Instruction's implementation of

Indian Education for All Montanans. This is the first time in the thirty plus years since the adoption of the Montana Constitution that any funding for this educational mandate has been included in the Governors' budget. While we recognize the Governor's leadership in beginning to address this issue, it is the concern of the majority of the Working Group that two million dollars for the Office of Public Instruction is not adequate to begin to fulfill the long overdue requirements of this constitutional mandate.

After much deliberation, it is the recommendation of the majority of the Working Group that the budget of the Office of Public Instruction be enhanced by a total of \$7,750,000 over the biennium. These additional funds primarily will address three under-funded or unaddressed needs:

- We recommend additional funds for development of model curriculum materials.
- We are concerned that there is very little funding for the critical work of providing quality professional development to prepare teachers to infuse appropriate materials and "Best Practices" throughout Montana classrooms. We recommend significant grant funds for professional development, a "Best Practices" conference, and for grants to 50 "Ready to Go" school districts to implement showcase quality programs.
- We strongly recommend the Office of Public Instruction develop a public education campaign to create awareness and support for Indian Education for All Montanans.

**In summary, the recommendation of \$7,750,000 is necessary to meet our Constitutional promise to implement Indian Education for All Montanans and we expect that additional funds will be necessary in upcoming years.**

**Budget Summary:**

- \$2,000,000 Governor's Budget for Office of Public Instruction
- \$250,000 Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education Budget
- \$7,750,000 Additional recommendation for Office of Public Instruction

**"Let us put our minds together to see what we can build for our children." Tatanka Iyotaka (Sitting Bull)**