

SKC President Joseph F. McDonald
Notes in Support of HB 283
January 22, 2007

HB 283 would provide funding at the annual authorized level of \$3,024 for each non-beneficiary (NB) Montana resident student attending the 7 tribal colleges.

Last year, there were **308 non-beneficiary FTE** students in the 7 Montana tribal colleges--**197 FTE (64%)** were at SKC.

SKC is an **open door college**. We provide **access** to postsecondary educational opportunities to Indians and non-Indians. We support HB 283 because it would **increase funding** for non-beneficiary students from last year's amount of \$1,452 per FTE to the authorized amount of **\$3,024** per FTE.

Our non-beneficiary **headcount** averages almost **300 students** per year. We help them with college financial aid. Last year, we awarded a total of **140 fee waivers** to non-beneficiary students **worth \$118,129**. This is **41% of the \$287,946** the College received from the Legislature for non-beneficiary students. This large return to non-beneficiary students **helps make college more affordable** for them.

With the rising costs of education, **we need the increase** in non-beneficiary funds **to continue to provide an affordable education and so we don't have to raise tuition.**

The tribal colleges provide a **quality education**. Each tribal college is **accredited** by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)—the same regional accrediting body that accredits the units of the Montana University System and the state's three community colleges.

Tribal colleges provide help prepare **a better-trained workforce and greater income** for Montanans.

Higher education and jobs produce self-sufficiency and reduce dependency on government programs, and thus reduce the social ills accompanying low education levels, unemployment, or minimum wage jobs.

Tribal college non-beneficiary students and graduates are Montana citizens and **taxpayers**. NB graduates make **significant contributions to the economy, health and welfare of all Montanans**. For example:

- During the **8-year period 1999-2006**, SKC placed **345 NB graduates** in Montana jobs, with beginning wages totaling nearly **\$10 million dollars**. Considering that a dollar turns over 4-7 times before it leaves the local area, the **turnover dollars generated** by these NB graduates **ranged between \$38-\$67 million** over the 8-year period. This **significant economic impact** provides needed dollars to **local, state and federal tax coffers**.
- In 2006, Salish Kootenai College (SKC) placed 67 NB graduates in Montana jobs, with an **average beginning wage of \$27,082** per year, **totaling \$1,814,467** calculated annually. The **turnover dollars** ranged between **\$7.3 and \$12.7 million** dollars.
- SKC trains and places NB students in **high wage, high demand, high skill** jobs. For example, during the 3-year period 2004-06, SKC placed **77 NB nurses** in Montana hospitals with **beginning annual salaries** ranging between **\$39,455 and \$59,211**. Calculated on an annual basis, the **beginning wages totaled \$3.3 million**; the economic turnover during the 3-year period ranged between \$13-\$23 million.

Tribal colleges employ hundreds of people and thus contribute tens of millions of dollars annually to Montana's seven depressed reservation economies.

Unquestionably, tribal colleges provide a **sound return on investment (ROI)**.

This is legislation a fiscally prudent legislator should support.

- 1. It opens seven outstanding Tribal Colleges to non-Indian enrollment for a very small cost.**
- 2. It increases the opportunity for all people in Montana to improve themselves by attending college.**
- 3. It will help reduce the number of people on welfare.**
- 4. It will help Montana to continue to be the “Last Best Place”.**