

# GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS



The Office of Indian Affairs was established in 1951 by the Montana legislature to facilitate effective tribal-state communications with special attention to the discussion and resolution of issues and concerns that Indian tribes face in regard to their unique political status with the federal government, and as full citizens of the state of Montana. The Office of Indian Affairs serves the tribal-state relationship as a liaison in government-to-government relations with the purpose of promoting economic development, environmental protection, education, support for social services, and enduring good will.

The state of Montana created the Office of Indian Affairs to serve both tribal and state governments in their government-to-government relationships designed to recognize the rights, duties, and privileges of full citizenship that Indians are entitled to as citizens of this state.

The Coordinator of Indian Affairs is tasked with duties that reflect the state's recognition that a sizable portion of the citizens of Montana are American Indian and that great problems of economic and social significance have arisen and presently exist. The duties of the Coordinator address this purpose through service to Indian people on and off their reservations by:

- regularly visiting tribal governments and serving as their liaison or representative at their request for both public and private purposes;
- assessing tribal concerns and interests then reporting these concerns to the Governor's cabinet;
- meeting with executive branch directors on issues pertinent to Indian citizens, tribes, and on issues that arise between state agency personnel or programs and tribal interests;
- advising the legislative and executive branches of the state of Montana on problems faced by Montana's Indians and makes recommendations for the alleviation of those problems and issues;
- actively organizing collaborative efforts between tribal-state entities through compacts and other cooperative agreements; and
- seek consensus among tribes on shared goals and principles while also serving the Montana congressional delegation as an adviser and intermediary in the field of Indian Affairs.

## **Reno Charette** **Coordinator of Indian Affairs**

Reno is an enrolled member of the Crow tribe. She served as the Project Director for the Big Horn Teacher Projects at Montana State University-Billings, Program Assistant for Circles of Care at In-Care Network, Project Coordinator for Health Careers Opportunity Program and as a consultant for the University of Montana Graduate School.



Reno graduated from St. Labre Indian School in Ashland, Montana. She received her bachelor's degree in liberal arts and her master's degree in history from the University of Montana. She has 4 children, ages 10-29, and two grandsons, ages 4 and 6.

## **Billie Rusek** **Administrative Officer**

Billie is an enrolled member of the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation. Prior to joining the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs in March 2007, she was employed by the Montana University System, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education.



Billie earned her A.A.S. degree in Computer Technology from the University of Montana - Helena College of Technology. She has a son, age 13.

**OIA's Plan on Information Sharing:** The Governor's Office of Indian Affairs will be sharing information during this legislative session through several methods. To assist legislators, we will be tracking bills the tribes have instructed us to follow.

We will continue with our electronic mailings of the Daily Beat which contains state and national news relevant to Indian issues and announcements. The Daily Beat is archived on the STEDC website. Our **Sovereign Connections** newsletter to State, Tribal and Congressional Leaders will focus on bills the tribes have advised us to watch. Daily distribution of **Sovereign Connections** will keep pace with the activities of the legislative session.

# GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS



## Governor's Vision

Governor Schweitzer opened the front doors of the State Capitol to the first Montanans. Since then, much has been accomplished:

- Appointed more American Indians than all previous administrations combined to boards and commissions and hired several key policy staff and cabinet members who are American Indian
- Provided a comprehensive report, as required by law (Mca2-15-143), of all state activities with the tribal nations in a timely and efficient manner
- Supported the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa by formally declaring state recognition
- Funded at historic levels:
  - Indian Education for All as required by Montana's constitution
  - Closing the Indian children achievement gap
  - Tribal colleges
  - Tribal histories
  - Economic development to Montana's tribal nations
  - Tobacco Prevention contracts to the eight tribes in Montana
- Worked with Tribal governments to create understanding of the complexities of state government
- Formally negotiated all tribal/state agreements including revenue sharing, transportation, social services and others

## Governor Schweitzer's 2008-2009 Budget includes the following:

- Continued funding to promote economic development with the tribal nations
- Funding to close the achievement gap for Indian youth
- Funding for a pre-release center located in rural Montana on or near a reservation
- Continued funding to prevent Indian youth from using tobacco products
- Creation of substance abuse treatment centers on or near reservation communities

## 90-11-101. Legislative policy. The legislature finds and declares that:

1. A considerable portion of the citizens of the state of Montana are American Indians;
2. Since statehood, Indian citizens of the state of Montana have lived on reservations set apart for those purposes by the United States of America, and by virtue of their isolation and supervision by the federal government, great problems of economic and social significance have arisen and presently exist;
3. The best interests of Montana Indian tribes will be served by engaging in government-to-government relationships designed to recognize the rights, duties, and privileges of full citizenship that Indians are entitled to as citizens of this state;
4. Because the tribes are domestic dependent nations, agencies of the federal government retain jurisdiction and a fiduciary duty throughout the state of Montana for the administration of economic, social, health, education, and welfare programs for Indians;
5. Unique differences exist between the tribes, their reservations, customs, and treaties, and their respective relationships with the federal government, all of which influence the relationships among tribes and between the tribes and the state;
6. There are sizeable numbers of off-reservation enrolled and un-enrolled Indians residing in our state whose needs for social, environmental, educational, and economic assistance are borne in part by state and local agencies;
7. Programs of the state of Montana should not duplicate those supported by agencies of the federal government or tribal governments with regard to jurisdiction of Indian people, because state responsibility includes off-reservation Indians and because those Indians require assistance to coordinate their affairs with various tribal groups and federal agencies where they have no official recognition;
8. The state and the tribes working together in a government-to-government relationship and engaging in compacts and other cooperative agreements for the benefit of Indian and non-Indian residents will promote economic development, environmental protection, education, social services support, and enduring good will;
9. To facilitate the discussion and resolution of issues and government, and among themselves, the coordinator of Indian affairs shall:
  - a. maintain effective tribal-state communications;
  - b. assess tribal and individual Indian concerns and interests to seek ways and means of communicating these concerns and interests to relevant state agencies and to the legislature and actively assist in organizing these efforts; and
  - c. act as a liaison for tribes and Indian people, whether the Indian people reside on or off reservations, whenever assistance is required;
10. The coordinator of Indian affairs shall endeavor to assist tribes to seek agreements between the state and tribes and to work toward a consensus among the tribes and other parties on shared goals and principles.