



The Montana Indian Language Program Update

July 2023

The Montana Indian Language Program (MILP) grant is celebrating its 10th anniversary. The program, formerly administered through the Department of Commerce, was previously transferred to flow through the Office of Public Instruction. The novel Covid-19 virus played a particularly devastating role in Indian Country, especially in communities with few native speakers and resources. Since the beginning of the pandemic, OPI has taken opportunities to visit with the tribal communities being served, virtually and in person, to take steps forward that align with the well-being of all youth and learners in Montana using the vehicle of heritage language learning.

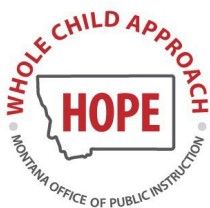
Each tribal community is distinct. Tribes have a variety of systems and people in place to handle the complexity of education work, both for and in conjunction with the tribes. Some tribes have resolutions in place with their tribal colleges, education, or culture committees, and individuals to oversee and produce culturally appropriate work on their behalf. OPI has worked to establish relationships with these cultural leaders to close out the grants that were once overseen by the Department of Commerce.

The Office of Public Instruction included the MILP grant in the Egrants system and our offices have worked hard to get our grantees enrolled and trained in the basics of the system. The process also includes the coordinated efforts from our accounting, finance, and Egrants teams. The benefits of using Egrants include ease of access to accounting records and access to additional grants housed by the OPI.

Our offices have connected with individuals from each tribal community to initiate the enrollment process into Egrants. We are proud to say every tribe is now approved and most have received their initial cash request. The tedious work is done, and the system is now built to benefit this important work going forward. The tribes' allocations totaled \$168,750 for the biennium.

The tribes of **Fort Peck** are working in collaboration with their community college language and culture program. Dr. Ramey Growing Thunder is the authorized representative. They have drawn down \$84,375

- The **Northern Cheyenne** tribe is also working with their community college. Mina Seminole is the authorized representative. They have drawn down \$2,316
- The Chippewa and Cree tribes of **Rocky Boy** are also working in collaboration with their community college. President Sangrey is the authorized representative. They are in the process of initiating their first cash request
- **Confederated Salish and Kootenai** are working with their respective culture committees. The authorized representative is Sadie Peone. They have initiated their first cash request.



- The **Blackfeet** tribe is working in collaboration with their Early Childhood Center and others. Minnetta Armstrong is the authorized representative. They have initiated their first cash request.
- The **Fort Belknap** tribes have uploaded their plan and have initiated their first cash request. The authorized representative is Ray Cichosz.
- The **Little Shell band of Chippewa** are in the process of initiating their first cash request. The authorized representative is Gerald Gray, Sr.
- The **Crow** are working in collaboration with their community college and The Crow Language Conservancy. They have initiated their first cash request.

We are excited to be working with the Tribal Nations in developing the guidelines required by HB 287. We are collaborating with tribal governments to develop and adopt program guidelines for the next round of applications by October 1, 2023. Those funds will be distributed in fiscal year 2024 no later than February 1, 2024.

As the guidelines do impact the distribution of funds, they must be adopted as rules under the Montana Administrative Procedures Act (MAPA). To comply with the requirements of MAPA, as well as the publication schedule of the Secretary of State's office for rulemaking and the deadlines of HB 287, the rulemaking schedule is as follows:

July 11.....Filing date for publication
 July 21..... Publication date for proposing rules
 August 10-18 Public hearing on proposed rules (pick one day)
 September 12.....Filing date for publication
 September 22..... Final publication day for adopting rules before the guidelines must be in place
 September 29 (Friday)..... Last business day before the guidelines must be in place
 October 1 (Sunday) Guidelines for applications must be in place