



State-Tribal Relations Committee
63rd Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

JONATHAN WINDY BOY--Chair
SHANNON AUGARE
JIM PETERSON
BRUCE TUTVEDT

HOUSE MEMBERS

ALAN DOANE--Vice Chair
CLARENA BROCKIE
FORRESTINA (FROSTY) CALF BOSS RIBS
NICHOLAS SCHWADERER

COMMITTEE STAFF

CASEY BARRS, Lead Staff
LAURA SANKEY, Staff Attorney
DAWN FIELD, Secretary

MINUTES LOG

Aaniih Nakoda College/Fort Belknap College
Fort Belknap Agency
October 4, 2013 - Day 2

Please note: These minutes provide abbreviated information about committee discussion, public testimony, action taken, and other activities. To the left of each section in these minutes is a time designation indicating the approximate amount of time in hours, minutes, and seconds that has elapsed since the start of the meeting. This time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion on the audio or video recording of this meeting.

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Hard copies of the exhibits for this meeting are available upon request. Legislative Council policy requires a charge of 15 cents a page for copies of the document.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

SEN. JONATHAN SEN. WINDY BOY, Chair
REP. ALAN DOANE, Vice Chair

SEN. JIM PETERSON
SEN. BRUCE TUTVEDT

REP. CLARENA BROCKIE
REP. NICHOLAS SCHWADERER

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED/ABSENT

SEN. SHANNON AUGARE
REP. FORRESTINA (FROSTY) CALF BOSS RIBS

STAFF PRESENT

CASEY BARRS, Lead Staff
LAURA SANKEY, Staff Attorney
DAWN FIELD, Secretary

AGENDA & VISITORS' LIST

Agenda, [Attachment #1](#).
Visitors' list, Attachment #2.

COMMITTEE ACTION

The State-Tribal Relations Committee took no official action at this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

00:00:02 SEN. WINDY BOY called the State-Tribal Relations Committee back to order at 9:17 a.m. He thanked the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council and the Aaniiih Nakoda Tribal College for hosting the State-Tribal Relations Committee (STR) and said the meetings had enlightened the STR on many issues and provided a good opportunity for the members to listen and learn.

Blessings and Introductions

00:03:15 **Ms. Carol Falcon Chandler, President, Aaniiih Nakoda College**, welcomed STR to Fort Belknap reservation and to the Aaniiih Nakoda campus. She introduced officials from visiting tribal colleges: Dr. Richard Little Bear, Chief Dull Knife College; Mr. Larry Wetsit, Community Services, Vice President, Fort Peck Community College; Wayne Two Bulls, Academic Vice President, Fort Peck Community College; and Carmen Taylor, Dean of Academic Affairs, Aaniiih Nakoda College, Fort Belknap.

00:06:05 President Chandler said that Michelle Lewis would conduct the campus tour of the newer buildings, which would include the workforce training facility, the technology center, library, and cultural building.

00:07:29 The members and staff of the State-Tribal Relations Committee (STR) introduced themselves.

00:09:16 Meeting attendees introduced themselves: Douglas Stewart, community members, Brandi Foster, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Montana University System, and Dr. Lynnette Chandler, Director, White Clay Immersion School.

Campus Tour

The meeting was recessed while the STR toured the Aaniiih Nakoda campus and Ekib Tsah Ah Tsik Cultural Center.

01:34:34 SEN. WINDY BOY called the meeting back to order at 11:00 a.m.

White Clay Immersion Language School

01:35:28 **Dr. Lynette Chandler, Director, White Clay Immersion School**, explained her work in retaining the native language through establishing an immersion school on the Fort Belknap Reservation. She reviewed her research of immersion schools, the school's mission statement, the philosophy and educational structure of the immersion school, and listed a number of successes and accomplishments of the school, including the first graduating class of the immersion school. Dr. Chandler provided a summary of the history and development of the White Clay Immersion School ([EXHIBIT 1](#)).

Committee Questions

01:57:40 REP. SCHWADERER said it is clear that the faculty and students take great pride in the work done at the immersion school and that it was wonderful for the legislators to hear about the positive programs of the school. He asked about the "app" created

for the immersion school. Dr. Chandler said it was created by the teachers and could be downloaded from Apple.

01:59:35 REP. BROCKIE said that the White Clay Immersion School is a beacon in the Fort Belknap community and has given its students great confidence in themselves, as well as taught them a great deal about their language, culture, and history. She said she would like to see the concept evolve into a pilot project, complete with funding. She said the immersion school is a shining example of what can be done when thinking "outside the box".

02:01:52 SEN. PETERSON asked the two graduates of the White Clay Immersion School what was their motivation for wanting to attend. One replied that her parents encouraged her and that she wanted to be around her culture and to learn her native language.

02:03:39 SEN. PETERSON commended the graduates for their work and accomplishments. Dr. Chandler said that the two graduates now mentor the other students on a weekly basis, which provides a great model to the younger students.

02:05:49 SEN. WINDY BOY asked if the immersion school will receive funding from the MILP³. Dr. Chandler said that it did not appear that the immersion school would be receiving any of the MILP³ funding and discussed her surprise that the Council formed to guide the MILP³ at Fort Belknap had not discussed the possibility of collaboration with the immersion school.

02:07:44 **Mr. Casey Barrs, Research Analyst, Legislative Services Division (LSD)**, said the immersion program is more holistic than MILP³ will be. He asked Dr. Chandler if she had advice for those working on the pilot project. Dr. Chandler said that an important consideration would be to look at what is already going on on each reservation and/or tribal college, and start from there. She said that by building on what has already been successful, the money would be used wisely and as intended, thus ensuring good results and the possibility of sustaining the program.

02:09:55 SEN. PETERSON asked if SB 342's language requires governments to collaborate with the tribal colleges. SEN. WINDY BOY said no but that he hoped it would happen, particularly in order to increase the sustainability of the project.

02:11:36 REP. BROCKIE said the bill's language encourages collaboration with other entities but doesn't require it.

Transferability of Academic Credits from Tribal Colleges

02:13:16 President Chandler introduced Carmen Taylor, Dean of Academic Affairs, Aaniiih Nakoda College, and said that Dean Taylor would discuss to discuss transferability of credits and GEDs/Adult Education issues.

02:14:33 **Ms. Carmen Taylor, Dean of Academic Affairs, Aaniiih Nakoda College**, discussed her recent attendance at an Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education conference at which she inquired about including tribal colleges in discussions on general education, including decisions regarding common course numbering. She also discussed the Montana University System's (MUS) work on common course numbering and general education requirements. She said she is

interested in hearing from other tribal colleges regarding any concerns about the transferability of credits with the MUS.

- 02:17:35 **Dr. Richard Little Bear, President, Chief Dull Knife College, Lama Deer,** discussed the language preservation pilot project and said while he thought the funding should have included the tribal colleges, he predicted good things would come of the project. He noted that Montana requires Class 7 language teachers for teaching tribal languages.
- 02:20:20 Dr. Little Bear discussed the transferability of credits issue, saying that it hasn't posed too much of a problem. He said that claims that tribal colleges water down curricula or have substandard instruction are not true and that tribal colleges are strong institutions and offer a great education. He discussed funding concerns and said that tribal colleges are very good stewards of the funding they receive. Dr. Little Bear thanked the STR for its interest in tribal colleges and for the opportunity to share what is going on in tribal colleges.
- 02:24:27 **Mr. Wayne Two Bulls, Academic Vice President, Fort Peck Community College, Poplar,** discussed transferability of credit concerns, including transferring of dual credit classes taught in local high schools. He explained how a specific problem with transfer of a dual credit class was finally able to be resolved and said it would help a great deal if the MUS college websites were up-to-date and if tribal colleges were included more in the discussion and decisions.
- 02:26:54 **Mr. Larry Wetsit, Community Services, Fort Peck Community College, Poplar,** related his experience as a high school transfer student from Box Elder to Bozeman and the difficulty of transferring his high school class credits. He said that as a student at Montana State University (MSU) he noticed that the same issues were present in trying to transfer credits from a tribal college to MSU. He said that as a college student, he also became more aware that most faculty members were not aware of the needs of the Native students, which created a chasm and a lack of information between the student and the teacher. He discussed his efforts to work with university system registrars to correct what he said should have been a simple thing to fix.
- 02:31:37 Mr. Wetsit said that he was not pointing blame or criticizing, but wanted the STR to be aware of the issue, including efforts from tribal colleges to work with the university system to match up course requirements and numbering. He thought it was time the university system tried harder to work with the tribal colleges. He noted that not many tribal college students are transferring MUS schools and said that perhaps it is because of the difficulty in transferring their credits. He elaborated on his position, saying that it would be wise to look at the bigger picture here because opportunities for both tribal colleges and MUS schools could be had. He suggested a good place to begin work to improve the situation might be with articulation agreements, as well as getting registrars communicating amongst campuses. He said that other actions, such as faculty exchanges, would also be helpful in fostering a better understanding between tribal and MUS colleges.
- 02:37:10 Mr. Wetsit said that tribal and MUS colleges are doing the same things: providing and education and opportunities to learn and be successful. He said that tribal

colleges are a valuable state resource and urged the STR to remember that money follows native students.

- 02:38:41 **Brandi Foster, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE)**, said that the MUS appreciates the contributions and work of tribal colleges. She acknowledged that tribal colleges provide many opportunities for growth and development and agreed more work remains to be done in increase the number of native students attending MUS schools.
- 02:40:35 Ms. Foster agreed that not a lot of tribal college students transfer to MUS schools and that there needs to be a conversation on why that is. She said that much has been learned but that she has been working with campuses to evaluate and confirm information, not just on course numbering, but in making sure that students will be successful in subsequent courses.
- 02:42:52 Ms. Foster discussed the transfer of students from MUS schools back to tribal colleges and said it is important that MUS properly prepare its students also. She said work will continue and that she would be reaching out to tribal colleges on general education assessment, vocational skills needs, and engaging tribal colleges as educational partners. Ms. Foster emphasized that the teaching done at tribal colleges is valued by the MUS and pledged her assistance in getting courses populated.
- 02:45:37 SEN. WINDY BOY said that he has worked on the transfer of credits issue for at least the last ten years and that if a solution is not found, he would seek a legislative solution via a bill draft. He said he hears from students regularly and that it is time a permanent solution is found.
- 02:47:44 SEN. PETERSON agreed that the transferability of credits has been an ongoing issue for many years. He said it is a much bigger issue than with just tribal colleges and that there are transfer issues within MUS schools also. He agreed that it is time for a solution and said that between efforts from OCHE, the MUS, STR, and the Education and Local Government Interim Committee, a push will have to be made to resolve the issue.
- 02:49:51 SEN. TUTVEDT and SEN. PETERSON discussed anecdotal incidents in which students they know experienced difficulty in transferring of credits within MUS schools and from out-of-state schools to MUS schools.
- 02:52:41 Michelle Lewis discussed her past experience as a transfer student from a tribal college to an MUS school and her experience in training as a college registrar. She said she felt that tribal colleges have often felt unwelcome and that there are many communication issues. She stated that there is not a problem of transferring credits between tribal colleges, only between tribal and MUS colleges. She said that improving communication is the first step and must be addressed from the top down.
- 02:56:31 SEN. PETERSON asked for an explanation of the governance of tribal colleges in Montana, particularly regarding curriculum and budgets. President Chandler explained that a board of directors oversees the tribal college and that she, as college president, reports to the tribal council, the Bureau of Indian Education, and

the Northwest Commission on Colleges. SEN. PETERSON commented that being governed by so many entities and the lack of a standardized system could complicate things even more. President Chandler said that all tribal colleges have to follow Northwest Commission of Colleges, as does the Montana University System, which is why the tribal colleges are asking why the transfer of credits is so difficult.

03:00:21 **"Unidentified", Stone Child College, Box Elder**, discussed the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) that reviews and works with tribal colleges. He explained how tribal colleges came about and principals on which tribal colleges are founded: education, vocational and technical education, community service, and language and cultural education. He said that because each tribe's culture and history is different, each tribal college will be different and must be dealt with as such.

03:03:57 SEN. TUTVEDT asked what the remediation rate is for tribal colleges. Ms. Taylor said that about 72% of students coming into the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribal College take general education classes and estimated that it would be similar at other tribal colleges. Ms. Foster said it is about the same at 2-year MUS colleges.

General Equivalency Diplomas and Adult Basic Education

03:06:05 **Dean Carmen Taylor** reported that Montana will no longer use the GED as of December 31, 2013; and will instead use the HiSet exam. She said that she will be attending a class in Bozeman to learn about the transition from the GED to the HiSet. Dean Taylor also discussed a position paper she presented to the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) regarding the new funding formula for Montana Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) funding (EXHIBIT 2). Dean Taylor said that inconsistencies in the formula paint an inaccurate picture of poverty in the state and will divert funding away from populations in the state who are most in need of ABLE funding.

03:11:16 REP. BROCKIE commented about meetings coming up for financial aid officers from tribal colleges with the U.S. Department of Education. She then discussed the need for GED funding for tribal communities. She noted that tribal colleges are obligated to meet the same accreditation standards as every college in the State. REP. BROCKIE also commented on teacher training as an example where transfer of credits can be a problem.

03:15:07 SEN. WINDY BOY asked when the school funding formula changed. Dean Taylor said it changed in early 2012. She said that she contacted OPI in March of 2012 to discuss her concerns. SEN. WINDY BOY asked for clarification as to whether tribal colleges are listed on the website as having ABLE funding available. Dean Taylor said that is correct. She referred to the last bullet points listed in her position paper (EXHIBIT 2) and elaborated on her concerns.

03:17:50 Mr. Barrs asked for clarification on the decision-making process and if it was a state or federal decision. Dean Taylor said she wasn't certain. She also discussed concerns about the lack of public comment taken on the new formula.

03:19:36 Mr. Barrs asked if the HiSet exam will be less expensive and if so, will that help the tribal colleges. REP. BROCKIE thought it would but said it will still be expensive.

- 03:20:26 SEN. WINDY BOY asked what the cost is of a GED diploma at Aaniiih Nakoda College (ANC). President Chandler said that at one time, the State provided \$150,000 for the GED program, which a later Legislature cut to \$15,000. She explained the ANC's efforts to maintain the program, saying that when a person completes their GED, they often enroll in the tribal college to further their education. They then get a job, pay taxes, and contribute to the community, which is why the GED program is so important. She said that the ANC could continue to support the program for awhile but wasn't sure how long it would be able to do so.
- 03:23:28 REP. SCHWADERER said that the STR is interested in keeping tribal colleges free to be creative and innovative and that he has concerns about the apparently inflexible nature of current state and federal funding. He said he would like to follow up with a more specific discussion. Dean Taylor said that more specific information is on the OPI website and that she would provide additional information to him.
- 03:25:58 SEN. PETERSON asked President Chandler if she could discuss specific budget information for the tribal college, and if the funding could be broken down into percentages for tribal, state, and federal monies. **Debra Eve, Comptroller, ANC**, said the ANC receives no funding from the tribe, that it received \$39,782 from the State for nonbeneficiary students for 2012. She said that the bulk of funding comes from private foundations, federal funding, and student tuition. She said the total annual operating budget would be between \$5 and \$6 million.
- 03:27:57 REP. BROCKIE discussed vocational training funding and noted that a small amount is set aside for the tribes. She said that because the State counts the tribes as part of its funding numbers, it is difficult for the tribes to apply for much vocation education funding.
- 03:28:39 SEN. WINDY BOY asked about the coordination of efforts by the Montana Tribal College Presidents Association. President Chandler reviewed past meetings of the Association and noted that OCHE attended a recent meeting in Bozeman. She said the Association now plans to meet monthly to plan and collaborate more effectively. She noted that Governor Bullock has invited the Association to meet in Helena and said she is glad that the STR has seen what is going on with tribal colleges. She said that the national association for tribal colleges is planning its spring meeting in Billings in March and that she would keep the STR informed.
- 03:32:48 SEN. WINDY BOY said that Mr. Barrs, as STR Staff, would keep in contact with the tribal colleges. He said he would like OCHE maintain contact and be involved with tribal colleges also.
- 03:34:07 **Laura Johns, Montana Budget and Policy Center, State Tribal Relations Analyst**, said that she would get figures on nonbeneficiary students for the STR and on the value of tribal colleges to the State of Montana. She discussed the need for a study of the economic impacts of tribal colleges in the state, and said that the results of such a study would allow tribal colleges to tailor work force training programs and other classes to meet specific needs of the work force. She said that she would also research transferability of credits issues and noted that other states are facing similar struggles.

Work Force Training

- 03:43:27 **Deb Eve, Chief Fiscal Officer and DeMaND Director, Aaniiih Nakoda College,** said that she has been comptroller since 2000 and that her office works hard at being fiscally responsible. Ms. Eve discussed the impact of the federal government shutdown on the tribal college. She also discussed college capacity, Department of Labor funding for work force training programs, accreditation issues and concerns, enrollment numbers, and other issues of concerns and problems facing the ANC. She said that there are students who are eager to become working and productive members of the communities but need help with books and other school-related expenses that aren't covered by financial aid or other assistance programs. She said that is where the STR can come in and work with the tribal and community colleges on providing the resources needed to the students to enable them to complete their education and training programs.
- 03:52:37 Mr. Wetsit discussed the work force training programs at the Fort Peck Community College including a grant from Montana Tech. He said there is a great need for vocational training but that the inequity in funding for nonbeneficiary students versus native students makes it very difficult for the Fort Peck Community College to offer these courses. He asked the STR to look at how funding could be made more equitable for nonbeneficiary students.
- 03:57:39 Ms. Lewis thanked the STR for visiting the college. She said that as a 25-year employee, she has seen many positive things happen at the college and that the college sends out polished and prepared students. She said that anything the STR could do to assist tribal colleges would be greatly appreciated.
- 04:00:15 President Chandler thanked the STR for coming and listening, and said she would look forward to following up on the topics discussed. She invited the STR members and staff to stay for a luncheon in their honor.
- 04:01:16 SEN. WINDY BOY said that the STR would follow up on the issues discussed and that the STR is very interested on what is going on on tribal college campuses. He asked that in return, tribal colleges also follow up on their thoughts and questions. He encouraged coordination and communication between all tribal colleges and said that the legislators were now much more educated and informed about tribal colleges.
- 04:03:25 REP. BROCKIE asked Mr. Barrs to provide a list of topics discussed as agenda items for the January meeting at Crow Agency. Mr. Barrs said that he would email a list of topics soon.
- 04:04:19 SEN. PETERSON said he would like to see increased coordination and discussion between the tribal councils and tribal colleges in order to enhance and increase economic development opportunities for the tribes. Mr. Barrs said that tribal colleges would be invited to speak to that issue at the January meeting.
- 04:06:01 REP. SCHWADERER said he is interested in learning more about tribal colleges and Indian education issues in general, including ways state regulations can negatively impact them. He also thanked the entire Fort Belknap community for the hospitality shown to the STR members and staff.

04:07:43 REP. DOANE said that he is looking forward to hearing in January about the small business loan model the Crow people have created. He thanked the Fort Belknap Council and Aaniiih Nakoda College for the hospitality and informative presentations. SEN. PETERSON agreed that the meetings had been very informative and had given the STR members much to think about.

04:08:35 SEN. TUTVEDT applauded the proactive approach taken by the tribal college in addressing its challenges and concerns. He said the STR would look into how it could assist with some of the concerns discussed in order to help the college.

04:13:00 Mr. Barrs said he would like to visit more with Dean Taylor regarding the Adult Basic Education funding formula and invited Dean Taylor to attend the January meeting.

04:14:01 REP. SCHWADERER encouraged those concerned to reach out to the members of the STR and that the committee is willing to listen to the issues.

Wrap Up and Adjourn

04:15:57 With no further business before the State-Tribal Relations Committee, SEN. WINDY BOY adjourned the meeting at 1:30 p.m. The Committee is scheduled to meet next on January 13 and 14, 2014; in Crow Agency, Montana.

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