

# Congratulations to the Montana Indian Education Association (MIEA) Indian Education Award Winners 2006

The Montana Indian Education Association recently completed its 25<sup>th</sup> annual convention in Billings, March 30 – April 2, 2006. A special part of the conference is the recognition and awards to outstanding Indian educators, parents, elders, and students who have contributed to the success of Indian Education in our schools and communities. Following are MIEA's 2006 Award winners:

## 2006 Award Winners

<b>Indian Educator of the Year:</b>	<b><u>Sandra Murie</u>, Supt. of Schools, Rocky Boy School District</b>
<b>High School Teacher of the Year:</b>	<b><u>Theodora Weatherwax</u>, Browning School District</b>
<b>Elementary Teacher of the Year:</b>	<b><u>Nicole Cummins</u>, Crow Agency Public School</b>
<b>School Support Staff of the Year:</b>	<b><u>Sharon Bearcomesout</u>, Lame Deer Schools Counselor</b>
<b>Special Recognition:</b>	<b><u>DeeAnna Brady Leader</u>, Great Falls Schools Title VII Director</b>
<b>Parents of the Year:</b>	<b><u>William and Diane Burd</u>, Browning</b>
<b>Elder of the Year (co-elder):</b>	<b><u>Minerva Allen</u>, Lodge Pole Senior Citizen Center</b>
<b>Elder of the Year (co-elder):</b>	<b><u>Mabel Killsnight</u>, Bilingual Instructor, Northern Cheyenne Tribe</b>
<b>College students of the Year:</b>	<b><u>Joe Cave</u>, University of Montana</b>
<b>High School Student of the Year:</b>	<b><u>Adam Baker</u>, Poplar High School</b>

*Following excerpts on winners are taken from the nominations and letters of recommendations for these individuals:*

### **Sandra Murie, Superintendent of Schools, Rocky Boy School District is Indian Educator of the Year.**

Sandra Murie is one of the longest tenured Indian Superintendents in Montana history. Sandra concentrated on building support for Rocky Boy's School system by developing and expanding positive relationships within the community. She placed strong emphasis on collaborating with tribal government, elders, parents and teachers. One of Sandra's many strengths is working with people. She values the contributions of all employees and students. Sandra comes from a traditional background that is immersed in the Chippewa-Cree Culture, and she continues to practice its traditions, religion and contemporary celebrations. Her family is recognized as cultural leaders that often are called upon for praying at opening ceremonies and religious ceremonies among their tribal members. Rocky Boy Schools has increased their enrollment, provided many opportunities for students to be successful in academics, athletics, extra-curricula organizations, and increased their involvement in state activities. She is a leader on many local, state and national education organization boards of directors.

### **Theodora Weatherwax, Browning School District is High School Teacher of the Year.**

Theodora is one of those few, courageous people that follow their heart regardless of obstacles or how she may be viewed by those who don't understand or just don't have her level of passion and energy. She is the kind of person that shakes up systems that don't support our kids and causes the changes so badly needed in education. She continues to serve as a solid and courageous role model for fellow teachers, as well as students. Somehow, she weaves a magical blanket of safety and honesty around each child, giving him or her total freedom to explore and learn. At the same time, she integrates each lesson into Blackfeet culture in a way that looks effortless. Theodora is one of those rare humans who has combined her passion, her talent and her intelligent into one unwavering force for positive change.

Montana Indian Education Association (MIEA) Indian Education Award Winners 2006, continued...

**Nicole Cummins, Crow Agency Public School is Elementary Teacher of the Year.**

Nicole Real Bird Cummins recently completed her Master of Education Degree through the Reading First Program. She is a strong advocate of the Crow Language and is very involved with Crow cultural activities. She is a Crow speaking teacher willing to make adjustments in her teaching curricula to include the translation of the Crow language into the English language for her students that speak two languages. She utilizes her knowledge of the Crow belief system in her daily teachings to the Crow children to empower their learning. Nicole is involved with the Johnson O'Malley and Impact Aid Parent Advisory Committees.

**Sharon Bearcomesout, Lame Deer Schools is the Support Staff Person of the Year.**

Sharon is an adjunct Instructor at Chief Dull Knife College in Mediation and Peace Making. She has more than 30 years working with students as a teacher, mediator and Guidance Counselor. Recently she started an Elder/Mentor Council for elementary students to gain support on a monthly basis. It doesn't matter if it is a day or night, weekend or holiday, Sharon makes herself available to kids in crisis. She is working with her fourth generation of community people. Sharon is highly respected in the Northern Cheyenne community and has dedicated and sacrificed her personal life for the good of the students she has served.

**DeeAnna Brady Leader, Great Falls Schools is the Special Recognition Person of the Year.**

DeeAnna Brady Leader was honored for her longevity of advocacy for Native American Education, her deep commitment to Native Youth and Native educators, her constant and tireless efforts, and her leadership in reviving the traditional Native American Games that has infused the culture with new life. Her work in Indian education is tireless, constant, and ongoing. Not only is she an expert on these issues, but her quiet, dedicated manner of providing support, and materials is reflective of many Native American cultural mores. In addition, she tries to educate the mainstream white populations about Indian Education and the need for teachers to challenge stereotypes and develop culturally relevant Indigenous curriculum.

**William and Diane Burd, Browning are Parents of the Year.**

Bill and Diane have lived in Browning and on the Blackfeet Reservation the majority of their lives and their children also continue to live on the reservation. Although they have opportunities to leave they chose to live among their tribe. Both are strong advocates of the culture and are seen at many Indian celebrations throughout the year. Bill and Diane have been involved with youth running programs for many years and have coached and traveled to many running meets throughout Montana and the United States so their runners can compete. Both are strong advocates for youth programs and willingly give their personal time to assure activities and programs are successful and youth oriented. They are role models for many people of all ages.

**Minerva Allen, Lodge Pole Senior Citizen Center is the Co-Elder of the Year.**

Minerva was the first college graduate of her family, first Headstart Teacher on the Ft. Belknap Reservation, first Headstart Director, among the first paralegals, first federal programs/Bilingual Director for Hays/Lodge School. She is the author of two published textbooks as well as a published poet. As a young child she was raised by her grandparents who instilled with her native traditions and languages. She continues to teach the culture, traditions and language of the Nakoda People. Minerva's educational belief is "We must instill language and culture into our young, so when they go into the world to become educated they will always have a sense of knowing where they come from, which will make them more confident to be successful."

**Mabel Killsnight, Bilingual Instructor for Northern Cheyenne Tribe is the Co-Elder of the Year.**

Mabel continues to work with Native Children for more than thirty years as a Teacher Aide in Busby and Lame Deer Schools. Mabel shares her knowledge of living the Cheyenne way to people of all ages and helped organize a young people group from the high school named the "Cheyenne Vision Keepers." Mabel never gives up on anyone. When the youth have given up on themselves, Mabel has a way to dust them off and gently urge them to the good road of life. Mabel continues to follow the traditional way of Cheyenne life. When entering her home, any visitor is sure to be fed and hear a humorous story or words of wisdom from her grandparents. Mabel spends many hours a day volunteering to work with all ages of young people in order to preserve the Cheyenne culture and language.

**Joe Caye, Kootenai Tribal member at the University of Montana is the College Student of the Year.**

Joe is a student at the University of Montana in Missoula, is majoring in Computer Science, and has a GPA of 3.34. Joe continues to be involved in the Kootenai culture and is very grounded in his cultural perspectives where “respect” is the mainstay. In the western-European culture he excels at academic understanding, at social norms and behaviors, and the ideals for the individual. He truly understands the dual role and uses his connection to health and happiness as an ideal. Other students see Joe as a student they aspire to be and always compliment him on his academic achievement while at the same time remaining humble. Joe chose Computer Science after doing some research and finding that he would have plenty of job opportunities with this degree and also make a comfortable living.

**Adam Baker, Ft. Peck Sioux Tribal member, High School Student of the Year.**

Adam is currently a junior at Poplar high school, maintains an academic 4.00 gpa, and is involved with the Sioux traditional lifestyle and culture. Adam strives to walk the Red Road of his culture and is proud to be alcohol and drug free. He dances in the Teen Boys traditional category and his humbleness and respect for his culture is apparent in his dance. Adam’s goal is to be class Valedictorian and because he wants to be an optometrist, he has completed advanced science and math classes to better prepare him for college. He has scored in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile on national mathematic tests. He takes pride in himself, his heritage and in all that is requested of him, usually going beyond what is asked.