



***REPORT ON  
MONTANA INDIAN EDUCATION  
LISTENING SESSION***

***“Indian Student Success – What is Working?”***

***MONTANA INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION AND  
MONTANA ADVISORY COUNCIL ON INDIAN EDUCATION***

***April 10, 2010, Billings, Montana***

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Listening Session was recorded by:

Nell Eby

# Purpose of Listening Session

The Montana Indian Education Association and the Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education collaborated on a "Listening Session" on Indian Education during the Montana Indian Education Conference in Billings, Montana, April 10, 2010.

The purpose was to allow conference participants and others a time to provide their input into what is making Indian Education successful in Montana and what their recommendations are for strengthening Indian education.

Following is the information and some questions that was included on the flyer advertising the Listening Session:

*We are all concerned with the high dropout rates and achievement gap for American Indian students. We need to identify successful strategies that increase graduation rates for American Indian students in Montana. MIEA and MACIE want to hear from you on what is working or what you would recommend.*

*Some questions that might help you organize your testimony:*

- *What is keeping Indian students in school and graduating?*
- *What makes a quality teacher?*
- *How are parents making a positive difference?*
- *What defines effective school leadership by our school boards and administrators?*
- *How is instruction that includes American Indian content helping American Indian students succeed in school?*

## Introduction of Panel Members – MIEA and MACIE

Carol Juneau, Chairperson, Montana Indian Education Association, welcomed participants and opened Listening Session at 1:39 pm.

Norma Bixby, Chair, Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education (MACIE) explained that MACIE is an advisory board to the State Board of Public Education. The Board meets four (4) times/year regarding issues that impact Indian education. The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and the Board of Public Education make policy statements; it is important to have input to the decisions the board makes for the State of Montana. MACIE membership is made up of the 7 Indian Reservations and the Little Shell Tribe in Montana. MACIE partners are: Montana Association for Bilingual Education (MABE); School Administrators of Montana (SAM); Montana Indian Education Association (MIEA); Montana Education Association/Montana Federal of Teachers (MEA/MFT); and the Montana School Boards Association (MSBA) Indian School Board Caucus Representative.

The MIEA and MACIE asked for audience guidance on what is working for Indian students and other issues; e.g., reauthorization or other areas audience members wish to present. Board members want to hear the negative and the positive. There are some general questions listed on page 14 of the conference packet that you might want to respond to. This report will be on the MIEA and the MACIE websites.

### ***MIEA/MACIE Board Member Introductions:***

**Norma Bixby**, Chairperson, MACIE (Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education and MIEA Board member  
Director, Northern Cheyenne Tribal Education

**Carol Juneau**, Chairperson, MIEA (Montana Indian Education Association)

**Thomas Brown**, Vice Chairperson, MIEA

**Mariah Maxwell**, MACIE  
Special Education Teacher, Northern Cheyenne

**Nicole Big Leggings-Fetter**, MACIE  
Program Coordinator (Talent Search), Fort Belknap Tribes

**Joe Arrow Top**, Treasurer, MIEA  
Heart Butte, former Director of Title VII in Heart Butte Schools

**Robyn Baker**, MIEA  
Assistant Elementary Principal/Indian Education for All Coordinator, Poplar Public School District, Fort Peck Tribes

**Corri Smith**, MACIE for MEA/MFT  
Great Falls Public Schools

**Sandra Boham**, MIEA and MACIE  
Director of Indian Education for All, Great Falls School District

**Russell Boham**, MACIE  
Little Shell Tribe, Great Falls

**Tawnee Boham**, MIEA High School Student Representative  
Great Falls

**Luanne Kicking Woman**, Secretary, MIEA Urban Representative  
Missoula, Fort Peck Tribes

**Jennifer Flatlip**, MIEA  
Crow Agency

**Arlene Augare**, MIEA  
Heart Butte

# TESTIMONY – SUMMARY

## (Full Testimony of each follows the summary)

### Ron Juneau

- ✚ Charter School System: Ron is asking for support for a charter school system and GED.
- ✚ MT-WY Indian Education: Ron would like to see the MT Tribes to reach out to WY Tribes. They have a small voice when they go for funding. Include WY and perhaps hold the MIEA conference in WY.
- ✚ Upward Bound Program: One of the qualifications for this program is you cannot have parents who have a college degree. Students should not be penalized for having smart parents with an education. Upward Bound is a good program. Ron requests the board to talk to Upward Bound about how hard it is for parents who are educated and whose children need their assistance in college.
- ✚ MIEA Conference - workshop on training parents. When parents are called in for disciplinary reasons for teacher education, parents should realize they have a voice and they should know what their rights are.

### Newton Old Crow, Jr.

- ✚ Keeping students in school: Use assessment tools to determine students' strengths and interests by 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Do career awareness and orientation.

### Lance Four Star

- ✚ Safe On All Roads Program: Lance offered to respond to questions regarding the Safe On All Roads Program, Montana Department of Transportation.
- ✚ Nakona Assiniboine Language: Fort Peck is making strides on preserving the language.

### Tim Cody

- ✚ Reduce Expulsion of kids: Decision has been made to invest in a Compass Learning Program called Odyssey which is curriculum for K-12 and is online. It is in the best interest of the kids to no longer expel them if it can be helped. The kids, parents, and the Tribal Council all share the responsibility for success.
- ✚ Native Teachers: It is harder to find Native teachers in at the secondary level. Encourage children to go into education.

### Marcy Cobell-Gilbert

- ✚ Indian Fee Waiver: It is harder for children to get the Indian Fee Waiver. Look closer at the financial aid process to facilitate kids with the Indian Fee Waiver.
- ✚ Indian Education for All & Border Towns: Enhance communication with border towns. Teachers do not want to do Indian Education for All in the classrooms. Look at ways to include them and give them more education.
- ✚ Cultural Proficiency: Include all cultures, not just Indian Education for All. We are a global society and need to take advantage of all aspects of technology.
- ✚ Resiliency Training: Make sure they are prepared.

### Dottie Susag

- ✚ Indian Education Money: Support OPI in holding school districts accountable for what they get for Indian Education so that it really does serve the kids. Teachers should know how much money is available so they can have a budget.

### Tonia Ackerman

- ✚ Cultural Consultants: State of Montana develop a list of cultural consultants for non-native teachers who want to make use of funds allocated to them.

### Calvin Weatherwax

- ✚ Charter schools: Browning wants to start working on a place-based organization, utilizing their natural resources. Browning is trying to find financial services for charter school. Look at it with Indian Education for All money.

### Lynn Hinch

- ✚ Bilingual Education: There is not enough money to support a comprehensive bilingual education program due to cuts made. Lynn would like to see a change in the federal programs that would provide total native language.

### Tammy Running Crane

- ✚ American Indian Business Leaders (AIBL) Conference in MN: (son is attending this conference)

### Brad Hall

- ✚ Tribal Civics: Students need to know the issues of Tribal civics without bias. Concentration should be in junior high school setting. Tribal civics needs to be a corner stone in Indian Education for All. Brad made the recommendation that MIEA put materials in place and give positive feedback.
- ✚ Youth Cultural Exchange: Brad requests feedback on a cross-cultural curriculum that will be compatible with all Montana Tribes.

### Kathryn Ferris Lone Fight

Indian Teachers, Wyoming Indian Education Association: People in Wyoming need a stronger voice and need more Indian teachers, Indian leaders and Indian Superintendents.

### John Cummins

- ✚ MIEA – Go to Reservations: John requests that an effort is made for MIEA to go to the reservations. Drugs, alcohol and teenage pregnancy all are stumbling blocks for education. There is a need for qualified and effective school board members

#### Marvin Weatherwax:

- ✚ Native Language: Language needs to have a larger emphasis. Language classes should be structured the way other classes are and should begin at the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade levels.

#### Elsie Standing Elk

- ✚ Technology and Language: Students should learn Cheyenne through technology.
- ✚ Indian Teachers: Elsie encourages Indians to get teaching degrees.

#### Dulce Whitford

- ✚ Urban Indian Cultural Sensitivity Training: Training should happen with administration with focus on difference between urban and reservation Indians.

#### Joyce Silverthorne

- ✚ Legislation Changes: Elementary Education Assistance Act - they need advice about urban and rural American Indians. There is a lot of educating to do for legislation in Washington. The NIEA is sponsoring a number of amendments to the Elementary Secondary Education Act. There will be a request by tribal leaders to support authorization of funds in Indian Education and Tribal Education Departments. This is closer than we have ever gotten.

#### Leo Conner

- ✚ Trade Schools: We need welders, plumbers and electricians. Trade schools are available; we need more information and to get this information out there.

#### Anna DeCrane

- ✚ Cultural Consultants: Is there a way to pay for consultants to come to the schools? Not many teachers attended programs offered to them through Indian Education for All. Teachers are not leaving the schools to attend Indian education and cultural. In addition, students (club members) have asked to bring people in; e.g., a panel to share information. There is no money to bring people in from reservations to the city.

#### Bertha Limberhand

- ✚ Tenure teachers – Find solutions to problems with tenure teachers.
- ✚ Plan of improvement – School superintendent has asked that Cheyenne is spoken outside. It is a struggle being a school board member when trying to help students, teachers and the community.

#### Clarice Denny

- ✚ Tenure Law: There needs to be something done about the tenure law and holding teachers accountable.
- ✚ Teacher Evaluations: Evaluations are too lenient.
- ✚ Indian Teachers: More are needed at the secondary level.

#### **Brenda St. Pierre**

- ✚ Language Funding: Brenda would like to see some money go to language and bringing in elders with expertise for consultation at head start, elementary and junior high levels.
- ✚ MIEA Conference: Take conference to reservations. It would be beneficial for kids and it would be an opportunity to showcase schools, tribes, and community. It would also be good to visit other places and schools to see what they are doing that is working.

#### **Todd A. Hanson (written testimony)**

- Keeping kids in school – daily, weekly meaningful contact.
- Quality Teacher – believe in students.
- Parents making a positive difference – positive example and role model and tough love when necessary.
- Effective School Leadership: Embrace alternative cultural perspectives.
- Instruction with American Indian Content: Creates sense of being and relevance builds connections and fosters sense of positive self worth, self esteem necessary for self efficacy.



## FULL TESTIMONY

Ron Juneau: Grandparent and parent of a Billings Public School student, one at Lincoln Center GED Program and another student struggling in Wyoming.

The Wind River Reservation in Wyoming has a charter school system. It is a good program for kids who do not succeed in the regular school system as they can do online classes at their pace. My daughter had the chance to do 2 years of school in one year; it is self-disciplined. I don't know if there has been a big support for charter high school here in Montana. There are students who need that. I would like to see more about the charter school and GED. Kids that come there want to be there and they are going to be successful. Kids need to know there is support out there for them. I'm asking for your support. I am willing to do testimony. Thank you.

Newton Old Crow, Jr.: Adult Vocational Training Coordinator, Crow Tribal Education and Advisory Board Chair, St. Labre School. Oldest daughter is a teacher on the Hopi Reservation.

How do we keep students in school? I was in education in AZ for 15 years. In AZ we worked on knowing the child's strengths and interests and putting those two together in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade or earlier. Use good assessment tools. Find out what their interests and strengths are. Do career awareness/career orientation – everyone needs to contribute to this. Billy Mills said "choose our mentors wisely." We all want the next generation to be better. Not all kids are college bound. The ultimate goal is self-reliance and tax-paying citizens. We can reach that by knowing their strengths and interests.

Lance Four Star: Walking Buffalo; JOM Parent; Fort Peck Assiniboiné Tribe; Wolf Point; Chairman of the Assiniboiné Council; former member Board of Directors of Fort Peck Community College; Safe On All Roads Coordinator, Fort Peck Reservation

I have a 3-year old granddaughter, she'll be 4 next month, who will be attending kindergarten; my oldest son is in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Wolf Point Jr. High, a nephew at Wolf Point High School who is living with me, and a stepson who is a junior at Wolf Point High School. Thank you for allowing me to be here on behalf of the JOM Committee, Wolf Point. I am also Coordinator for the Safe On All Roads Program. This last fall we concentrated on education and survival; you might see some of the billboards around the state. I invite you to contact me with any questions you have and if there is any way I can cooperate on behalf of the Montana Department of Transportation and any other programs I work on in Wolf Point. On the Wolf Point Community Organization we are in the process of restructuring. One of those committees is education, so I am looking forward to selecting a chairperson that can represent Wolf Point parents. I have one more year left as chairman of the Assiniboiné Council. One thing I would like to concentrate on is – one of our responsibilities of the Assiniboiné Council is preservation of the Nakona Assiniboiné Language. The Fort Peck Council is making great strides towards preserving the language. They had a language summit; it's online at the Fort Peck Journal website. Thanks for your time.

Tim Cody: Superintendent of Wolf Point Schools

One of our big concerns is the expulsion of kids through either behavior or truancy because we've got policies that deal with truancy issues, where if a kid is truant more than 5-6 times throughout the year, they have to come before the board for expulsion. I don't know about school board members that are in the audience, but the ones at home really don't appreciate that task. It's not one of the more popular things to do and it's tough on them. So what we've decided to do – it kinda goes back to what Ron was talking about with the charter school. Maybe the state doesn't

have to take that on but we can locally . We've decided that we're going to invest in a program called Compass Learning. It's kind of like an alternative program for home schooling. Compass puts out a program called Odyssey. It has a curriculum, I believe it's K-12, and it's all online. We're going to offer that as an alternative to our students. We go through a lot of issues that deal with behavior, but we don't want to get to that point where we expel them anymore. We just don't believe that that's in the best interest of the kids. It does affect us personally too. People look at you and say well you expel all these children. Well, we're not going to do that anymore, if I can help it. We're going to offer that program to them. And again, some of that responsibility has to fall on them, parents and the tribal council; they have to buy into what we're trying to do. So that's kind of where we're heading with things that we want to do.

In another session, we talked about improving efforts in the classroom by the teachers and getting them to understand native children. If I could, I would hire all native teachers, but it's just not possible for us because there's not that many out there. If you have a native child at home, encourage them to go into education. I can find native teachers that are elementary level, but it's awfully hard to find them in the secondary. If we can do that, that's where we want to encourage them, because there will be jobs for them. They're just aren't that many Native American secondary education teachers. I would encourage them to go that route.

I just wanted to share with you some of the things we're thinking about. I am going to try to get this to happen. It's going to be tough. I am in a community divided with cultures and it will be hard but I don't quit, I'm going to do the best I can and so be it.

#### Marcy Cobell-Gilbert: Blackfeet Tribe, Indian Education for All, K-6

One thing is as Ron was saying about his daughters and their struggles. On the way over here we were discussing:

- 1) Financial aid and how hard it is for our kids to get the Indian Fee Waiver and as we discussed that, these things that happened with the board of regents a few years ago where they made it harder for our children to get Indian Fee Waiver. Now as we have native children that want to go to college; they have to jump through so many hoops to try to get either the Indian Fee Waiver, the tuition waivers, things of that matter. One of the things we talked about on the way over was that they did have an opening for a Native American person on their board but it was not a voting right. You could speak your mind but you don't have a vote on what is passed. I think we really need to look closely at the financial aid process. I know it's improving. I know there are a lot of people working really hard to get these kids into colleges but I think we need to look at how many hoops they have to jump through and how hard it is for us to get them there.
- 2) Another thing we're doing at our district and I had nothing to do with this because I just came to Great Falls District after living in New Mexico for a few years and I am the Indian Ed. For All Instruction Coach K-6. I took Cory Smith's old position there. One thing that they were doing with the community was a Community Listening Session just like this, which I think is just really powerful. A lot of people still talk about it. I think that's something we can do to help w/border town communication. We're still dealing with the fact that teachers do not want to do Indian Education for All in the classrooms. They do not want add-ons. They do not want another book to read, another lesson to teach on top of what they are already doing. I truly think that we need to look at ways to include them and to try to give them a little more education.
- 3) We are doing a study on cultural proficiency. I think eventually if we open this up a little bit wider where it can become not just Indian Education for All, but include all cultures. We need to include all cultures not just Indian Education for All. I think that's the way our society is moving. We are a global society. We need to teach our

children how to become global citizens and be able to use all of those aspects of technology to create more educational opportunities. I was in a session where somebody made a comment about texting. Yes, our children text to the point of we cannot understand it; they're still doing it late at night. They sit right next to each other and that's how they communicate. We need to take advantage of that and as Indian educators; we need to look at that and see ways that we can jump on that bandwagon before that ship sails.

- 4) I want to comment on the resiliency training. I think our kids are very resilient but we need to make sure they are prepared. Thank you for all that you do. There's so many of you up there that I respect so much and have watched you grow into leaders. I just want to thank you for what you're doing for our children.

Dottie Susag: OPI Professional Development, former High School teacher, Simms, MT.

I have traveled in the last 4 years to many schools. What I would like to ask is, how you can support OPI's holding school districts accountable for what they get for Indian Education so that it really does serve the kids? And maybe because I'm not Indian, they may be more apt to say, "well this is what happened to our money," "this is where it went." Is it only OPI's responsibility? Is there something that you can do to ask the questions? I run into teacher after teacher in districts who have no clue to how much money is available so they do not even know they have a budget. Even in Indian schools; that's one of the things that happened. What you've done is fabulous, thank you.

Tonia Ackerman: Indian Education for All, Browning, help with native studies and teach finance.

I think that we should have for the State of Montana something similar to the Blackfeet cultural consultant list for non-native teachers who want to take part and use the monies that are allocated to them as far as Indian students are concerned. For example last year I had the opportunity to go to Noxin, MT. First time I was ever up there. I didn't even know where it was. There were a group of us, we took some high school students and we showed them how to do traditional games. I did storytelling. We did simply arts and crafts. I gave them the story about how when we give something – something that keeps them safe. Lately I've been asked by Valier to do stuff like that. That's my suggestion – maybe we could have a cross-consultant for those teachers in non-native schools who want to use that money. I try not to get too much into the past because a lot of our students consider themselves modern. When I teach non-native students I do modern but incorporate tradition.

Calvin Weatherwax, Medicine Wolf, Blackfeet

Comment on charter schools. We have been talking about them too – like grassroots organization on ways we could start looking at how to start working on a place-based education – how we can start utilizing our main resource which is us, you guys, everybody in the room and also our natural resources. Up north in Blackfeet country where we have a lot of resources. We would love to share them. Not only with our brother and sisters in the state but I'm fortunate enough to be able to share them with this village up in Alaska. My kids got to see the famous dog race and talk with some of the students up there. They got to view our kids and it was fun to watch them as they were communicating. In another 2 weeks, we're going to do a round dance for them and they're going to do a dance for us too. We will be sharing each other's heritage. If we are trying to find financial services for this charter school – look at it with Indian Education for All money. In Montana, we could break the ice. Maybe that would give a chance for more of the tribal nations to get involved with education.

### Lynn Hinch

I was hoping to catch Ryan Wilson before he left today to talk to him a little bit about the reauthorization efforts, particularly regarding Title III, which is now called English language acquisition. In the past there was much more support from the ESEA from the federal level for bi-lingual education, but when it changed under No Child Left Behind it became Title III English language acquisition that changed very much in terms of support for bi-lingual education in our state. We used to have about \$2 million that was devoted to bilingual education, comprehensive bi-lingual education programs in the state. Now we have \$500,000 that is divided among all school districts in the state that have limited English proficient children. So the amount of money that goes to individual districts is not enough to support a comprehensive bi-lingual program. So I would like to voice my support in looking at changes to ESEA are changes that would provide more support for native language teaching as opposed to solely support to English language acquisition.

### Tammy Running Crane – Heart Butte School Board member and Head Start Program.

I have a child in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and they went to the American Indian Business Leaders (AIBL) Conference in Carson City, MN. My son calls me every few minutes and tells me what's going on. Sounds like they're doing a good job.

### Brad Hall – Teacher, Heart Butte

We have two board members here today. We have several teachers here today. I teach high school social studies – U.S. history, government, world history, geography, and tribal government (that was never taught to me in school). I was told by my principal that I had to teach it, but there's no money for books. We read out of one text book and write on the board because there was no money for books. I'm not going to continue working at Heart Butte. This next year, I'm going to go back to school and there I hope to work on some tribal civics. Feedback is important; I want it from all tribal affiliations. I think it is important because we stress state and national civics but tribal civics is our local community. This is politics. We need informed citizens and they need to know the issues and w/o bias. There are several factions within our tribe that have so many polarized ideas. When the students think about them, read about them, they can see right through it, it's petty and it's not helping our students. I think in order to have a population of people within Indian country, we need to have tribal civics as a semester or at least a concentration in our senior or maybe junior high school setting.

As far as the Indian Education for All, I find a lot of the resources become mine after awhile because I think there is a level of understanding that is sometimes missing. Everything is based off literature because it is easy to read, but we need to look more out of the box not only in MT but on a national level. The other day a student wrote on my facebook page, "did you hear Wilma Man Killer died?" She knew who Wilma Man Killer was. In order for us to be tribal citizens, I think it's a national thing we have to do. When Denise Juneau came to my classroom, I had an oral quiz for tribal government; when she came in, they locked up. She was quite a presence and they were a little overwhelmed. They know why Indian Law and tribal sovereignty exists in tribes. They know that they can attain one of the highest offices in our state government. We need to raise responsible students. Tribal civics needs to be a corner stone in Indian Education for All. As far as materials go, I'm not familiar with the advisory board of Indian educators around the state that the MIEA can put in place to analyze materials and give positive feedback. Some of the interpretations are different and they tend to be different if I was to read that book or if an Indian student was to

read that book. I make that a recommendation for the board. On a positive note, Heart Butte is a beautiful place to live. The kids are the best kids that I have ever taught. We are going on a cultural trip to New Mexico in 2 weeks. We're going on a culture exchange with Laguna Pueblo in which we will share each other's cultures. We will visit Choco Canyon. We will go camping. A lot of our kids have not camped and we live right next to Glacier National Park. It would not be possible in these tough times if it wasn't for the Blackfeet Tribe and the other programs that really felt that this was a good program for youth and we're call it the Pikuni Youth Culture Exchange. Hopefully when I return back to my community, I'll reinstate that. I think that we as tribal nations need to actually – we don't really know each other – we need to experience each other's cultures. We do have a lot of support from our tribal government. If anyone wants to contribute to my work and what I want to do as far as making the curriculum that's compatible with all tribes in Montana, please give me your feedback and your contact information. Thank you.

Ron Juneau:

- 1) I know that this used to be MT-WY Indian Education and WY pulled out of the charter several years ago. But, I would really like to see an effort by the MT tribes to reach out to WY. WY has only one reservation. They have a large group but a small voice when they go for funding. I know they have been a part of this and pulled out; I don't know how many years ago that was. Maybe we can include them as best we can; maybe even hold this down there rather than up here. I know there's a lot of logistics; everybody's looking for travel money to come to these events, it's pretty hard. There are some really good people there that are for their kids and do not have that voice. They need assistance; talk to them again and bring them on board.
- 2) Upward Bound Program – I would like you to take a look at that. One of the qualifications is you cannot have parents who have a college degree. Both of my girls who would have graduated this year could never attend that and I think it's a really good program. We should not penalize kids for having smart parents, for going to school and for having an education. I'm self-employed and I can't afford to send my kids to all of these college places and look at them. I'm going to struggle when they do graduate or get their general education degree to get them to college. I'm pushing Haskell – what I afford. I can't even afford health care for them. I would really like you to take a look at that and talk to them about how hard it is for us as parents who are educated and get them into college.
- 3) At the MIEA conference, we should do a workshop on training parents. When we get called in for disciplinary or for parent/teacher conferences, individual education programs, 504's - a lot of parents do not know what those are. When my kids were smaller and I would go to disciplinary meetings or go to parent/teacher conference, I was here and all the non-Indian teachers were on the opposite side of the table. Luckily I can speak my mind. There a lot of parents who sit there and say sounds good and I'll sign it. There's really not a voice, because we don't know what our rights are. A lot of parents don't know about 504's and that we can demand that to be done, that we can demand an individual education program for our kids, we can request that they get the resource help that they need. I think that we need to look at providing training for our parents on how to talk to educators, what all those acronyms mean, and why things are important. I know it's federal funding but why our kids have to take tests three months out of the year. That cuts down on training but I know it all cuts back federal funding and you have to get funding.

Kathryn Ferris Lone Fight: Wyoming, Teacher for 30 years and past Principal.

I am honored to be here. Thank you for this conference - good information. I wish I had some of this information when I was teaching. I was one of the original founders of the Wyoming Indian Education Association. People in Wyoming need a stronger voice. We need more Indian teachers. We have to go out and recruit our own people so they'll come back to our reservations and teach. A lot of times what they face after they do go out and get their education, their B.A.'s and Masters and come back that a lot of their own people are so afraid of them that they won't hire them. We have a lot of our own people who have had to go out to different areas and teach. We do need Indian educators, leaders, superintendents and administrators – not only in MT, we need them in WY, SD, ND, wherever there is Indian people. Thank you. Keep up the good work.

John Cummins, Crow Tribe

I lived on the reservation. All my life I was raised by Indians. I came to this conference a couple of years ago when my wife was Teacher of the Year and I participated in a lot of the activities they had. This week when I told one of friends back home that I was going to the MIEA, he didn't know what it was. Billings and Missoula and the bigger towns that host MIEA is good. We come and enjoy ourselves but there are a lot of people who don't have the opportunity of the reservation to be a part of this organization. It's because there is no effort to go to the reservations.

As an executive working for administration, Cedric Black Eagle said, we have over 12,000 Crows on the reservation. You are the forefathers of this organization; you shed blood and tears and did a lot. Today there is a new epidemic on the reservation that we really haven't talked about – drugs, alcohol and teenage pregnancy – all are stumbling blocks for education. Half of the school board members I know are felons, are drug addicts. In order to become an effective school board member you have to be elected in that position and you have to have votes - sometimes we do not get the most qualified. It's because they do not have votes. On the reservation we talk about equality. Sometimes the smallest people don't get that equality. We have bigger families on the reservation who get more votes. For a long time in the '90's and '80's on the reservation we had an education board that selected who went to college. That changed since 2002 when they started abolishing all the boards on the reservation. We had a selection process that whoever was qualified can go to college. Carl Venne put a lot of money into education. He gave all the cigarette and gas taxes to education. Ten years ago we didn't have that many graduates. Today we have over 72 graduates at Little Big Horn College – one of the largest. It's because we gave those kids a chance.

I was disheartened to see the situation in Hardin with the Superintendent we have being involved in a lot of other things beside education. I was disheartened about Lodge Grass. We found out it might shut down in a couple of years. Twenty eight years ago I was one of the basketball players that won 24-0, Lodge Grass. This last February Rocky Boy beat our record. People don't realize how important sports is. I felt how Rocky Boy felt. The stars are stars, Rocky Boy's a school. Twenty eight years ago Lodge Grass used to be like that; today it's not and it's because of the board. Parents are afraid to speak up because everything is so political on the reservation, no matter how you look at it. If you're on the wrong side of the tracks they'll let you know. We're only hurting ourselves by doing this. I am an advocate for education. I want to see my children achieve their dreams like your kids. Carol I am proud of you as a parent; I want to be like you too.

Marvin Weatherwax: Blackfeet.

You have all done a very good job. There are some things I want to address. I have been teaching our native language for about 18 years. Many of the teachers today that are in the school system were my students. I can't help but believe that maybe I didn't do as good a job as I thought I had done because they're not teaching the Blackfeet language. One of the things that I have really thought a lot about is something that my grandfather told me a long time ago. He told me he said that when all the words that you hear are not words that you heard from your grandparents you're going to wonder if they were ever heard. That's kind of the way I felt about teaching all these students the Blackfeet language and having them go on and get an education, come back and teach and not be able to teach the Blackfeet language. I've found several things about that that I've done lots of research on the language – how to teach it better and along that course I started to look at some of the ways that we were teaching the language in the school systems.

One of my dreams is in the fall the students who are signing up for my beginning language class to come into class, walk up to me and say, " (spoke Blackfeet) ." This to me is where they should be when they come to the college. And this is one of the reasons I'm addressing you today. The language really needs to have a larger emphasis beginning with the head start program. The language needs to be structured in such a way that they do other classes, our math, our English, our science, so that by the time they get to college, they can come to college at least conversation level in the Blackfeet language. Believe me, I have taken people that are not even from here. As a matter of fact, some of the students I had were from China, one from Taiwan, a couple from New York, which is a foreign land too, and in five weeks, taught them the language well enough to be able to have conversation. So it can be done. One of the things our elders always told us was that the language is learned in the home only and you can't teach the language. It is not one of the things I am very proud of – making the elders wrong. In this case, they were wrong. It can be taught in the school. I've proved it. The school system is doing a wonderful job. Don't get me wrong. I've worked many many years with the State of Montana and the people with OPI and MIEA in trying to get some things to make it better, such as the Class VII license which is absolutely wonderful. We need more emphasis on the language, and it needs to be something that is looked at from the beginning of the school from the 1<sup>st</sup> grade on to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I think that the days of trying to teach the language to the students by teaching them the numbers, colors, days of the week and greetings is probably gone, if we want to save the language. Unless we do something that is a little bit more drastic, we can say goodbye to the language. As it is today, about 26 languages are disappearing every year. We don't want ours to be one of them. My dream is that someday I'm going to be able to walk into the post office and the first person I run into they're going to tell me " (spoke Blackfeet)." Thank you for allowing me to speak to you.

Elsie Standing Elk: Mussell Shell Roads Woman, Cheyenne.

I had the opportunity to teach 1<sup>st</sup> grade 2 years in a row. What he was saying is true. You can teach it. I did it on a daily basis in the classroom. I'm here to encourage the Class VII teachers to go on and get their teaching degrees because they speak Cheyenne and if they're going to save the language they have to be in that classroom on a daily basis talking to those kids. The one group I had 1<sup>st</sup> grade, when they became 4<sup>th</sup> graders, they asked me to come sit with them and when I sat with them they started talking about how I taught them Cheyenne. I was amazed that they retained the words I had taught them in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, but I did it every day. That's what it takes to save our language. I guess what I'm saying is all the Class VII people become teachers, be the master of the room. That way you can teach and talk every day. I'm really proud of our program on the reservation. The teachers try really hard. I was

Coordinator/Liaison from Chief Dull Knife College, working with people that are here today and helped program the computers to speak Cheyenne. We need to have technology working for us but it cost money and we need that to have our kids learn Cheyenne the modern way. I saw a program where they would just touch like a sofa and it would say in their language. Thank you.

Dulce Whitford: Billings Public School, new Director for Indian Education Title VII

Urban Indian Cultural Sensitivity training should happen with our administration. I was just at the powwow and we honored our urban Indian seniors. They were scared standing out in the middle and were kind of shaking almost - they just didn't know the culture. So there's just a big difference between urban Indians and reservation Indians that I wanted to bring to your attention.

Joyce Silverthorne: Federal Program Liaison, OPI

There are a number of things that are taking place over the course of the change in administration in Washington and the change of legislation that is going forward. The Elementary Secondary Education Act, we know as No Child Left Behind today but it has been around since the '60's and that established what we know as Title VII in our schools and now incorporates our Impact Aid that is funding for Indian lands on the reservation. The years that my children were in the Title I programs, they tended to go into a Title I Remedial and they stayed there for years. It was a long time before we were able to change the law and make it work more with the whole school where students were actually able to exit those programs and make progress.

It looks a lot different today than it did before. The new reauthorization of the Elementary Education Assistance Act has been due for two years now. We are past due in making this reauthorization; that's probably a blessing that we have an opportunity to have a more friendly administration in doing so. However, they need advice from the world at large. They are not very knowledgeable about rural America. They are certainly not knowledgeable about frontier America. They know very little about Native American languages, our status, our progress, our problems, whether it's urban or reservation and there are some proposals that are moving forward.

The NIEA, National Indian Education Association, is sponsoring a number of amendments to the Elementary Secondary Education Act and you can get a copy of what they are recommending from their website NIEA.org. In that, they are beginning to look at how Indians are impacted not only in Title VII Impact Aid, but also under Title I. Under the other programs the other titles that they administer and how they communicate with the Bureau of Indian Education. It's alarming, if you have opportunity to testify at a federal level, to find that people still believe that all Indians are educated in the Bureau of Indian school system and not in private education, are in public school not in Bureau of Education schools. In Montana we only have a couple of Bureau of Education schools. There's a lot of educating to do of legislators in Washington and what the issues are for our children. In the recommendations that are moving forward out of the blueprint that has been published by the Obama Administration, for the first time there is reference to Tribal Education Departments on page 22 under Title VII, but they're also having other conversations looking within it, looking at how the different titles affect Indian education. Tribal Education departments are closer to having funding coming into the recommendation for 2012 budgets and it is existing in both the Department of Interior and the Department of Education. That's the first time we've seen the numbers going in. That is being supported by NIEA, NCAI, as well as the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) organization. One of the opportunities that's coming out that you will see are some requests from tribal leaders to support the authorization of those funds. The TEDNA organization is meeting with the legislators this next week and there were emails sent out



of NARF as late as Thursday asking for letters of support from tribal governments. I am not able to give you a copy of the letter but I will certainly be sending it to the board members and to the people who are representing tribal education departments out on the reservations as well. First time ever, it's closer that we've ever gotten. TEDNA is sponsoring a grant proposal for an I-3 grant and we're hoping to find schools that are interested in working with TEDNA on implementation both support for the tribal ed. Departments and for implementation of read/write programs so if you would like more information, please let me know. Thank you.

Leo Conner: Northern Cheyenne

I would like to see more information on trade schools because I went to a trade school. We need welders, plumbers and electricians. I was a dysfunctional student because I didn't want to go to school. They said if I got an education you can be anything that you wanted to be; we have to let our students know that they can because the education you learn on this earth goes with you to the grave and nobody can take that away from you. We need to get information out there that trade schools are available and this is what the United States was built on. Our infrastructure is failing. Thank you very much.

Anna DeCrane: Indian Education, Senior High School, Billings Public Schools

There have been a lot of opportunities for teachers to learn about our culture. Unfortunately, not enough went to the programs that were offered to them through Indian Education for all. I know because I went to the first ones that were set up and I wouldn't see a lot of our teachers from our schools in Billings attend those. The information that was given to them was outstanding and would have given them a lot of information to help their kids. Is there a way to pay for Native American people/consultants to come and talk to our schools? There's a lot of people that I know of, even people sitting up there, that could come and talk to them because they're not leaving their schools to come to programs set up to learn some of this stuff. I guess Native American people special educators are the experts about their culture and are actually involved in it. I think that's another way that would help. I have students I have tried to get involved in Indian Education about their culture. Our club members ask why they cannot bring people in; e.g., a panel every week and give us some information. What I run into is the funding problem. We have no money to bring people in from the reservation to the city. I see it as a big concern. I think we need to hear from Native American people and their perspectives. Thanks.

Bertha Limberhand: Northern Cheyenne

I've been a Class VII teacher for 27 years, recently retired due to medical problems. I have been on the school board not even two years. When I first became a school board member, it was like me living in two worlds; being a teacher and being a school board member. There's so many things I heard here that sound really good. Sometimes when you are having problems in a school it seems you are the only one that knows the situation and you need help. When there are conferences like this concerning Native American Indians in education it makes you feel good. You find yourself you're not alone. There are people out there having same situations. When I first got on as a board member, I needed help. When am I going to have training? I did not know the policies. We can't seem to teach what we want because we have to go by policies. When it comes to the board you can't do that Bertha, go by policies. That's what makes it so difficult. There are so many things yet, even when we become elders, things constantly keep changing. At some point, you do want to make change but things are so set the way they way they've been the last 10 years, 5 years. It really gave me a good feeling when Denise came to Lame Deer. When we heard she was going to come to Lame Deer, teachers started asking me, "when is she coming? where is she

going to be at? Can we talk to her?" And I didn't know the day she was going to come, otherwise I would have had a big long list ready. We need representatives like that to come often to our reservations; just to visit schools and teachers. The language teachers in our school are struggling. They want to teach the language, but when it came to integrating that wasn't so good - to me - I am only speaking for myself. It was just like the English teacher would read something, and then we would interpret what the English teacher was teaching. I told her, I can't do that. Right now I am busy trying to teach them the language. First they need to know the language; they need to recognize their own language, and then to go and try and interpret something. This one teacher even asked me, could you interpret this? It was one of these rhymes, these little child's rhymes. I said I can't, we don't have this word in Cheyenne. There are a lot of issues on the reservation concerning.

There are two I am really stuck with. I would like to see some solutions.

- 1) Tenure teachers - Seems they are constantly bragging that they cannot get rid of me. There has to be a solution.
- 2) Plan of improvement.

When a superintendent comes to a Cheyenne woman who is a receptionist and says I do not want anymore Cheyenne speaking in here. If you need to talk it go outside and speak it out there. That hurt a whole tribe. To me, that was wrong. So what are our Cheyenne language teachers doing in a classroom then? That was a heart breaker, to me. And we say we want to keep our kids in school. We're asking how do we do it? It's going to come all together, the teachers, the staff, administration. If you see one person cussing right back at the student, how does the student feel? I don't like the way some of the teachers talk to the students. They're kids; let them be kids. Right now, it's a struggle being a school board member. You want to help the teacher, you want to help the student, and you want to help the community. So I just wanted to bring these up and I am really glad because when I lay down I'm going to be thinking, I should have just got up there and said this, but now I can sleep good because I did get up there. Thank you.

#### Clarice Denny: School board member K-12, Hardin Public Schools

We have over 1600 students enrolled in the Hardin Public School System. Out of that, 76% are American Indian. There are only two (2) Native Americans that serve on the Hardin School Board, I am one and I have another one for a 6-member board.

When I started to serve on the school board, we did not have that percentage of native students. The population grew to 76% natives, which includes Northern Cheyenne. The majority is Crow. In all my years on the school board, over 20 years, they have always wanted the parents to be accountable, to send their child to school, but I have never seen the teachers being held accountable until No Child Left Behind became law. I've always pressured the teachers, the administrators. You know it would be so easy for us how easy it was to remove a principal; the same should be applied to a teacher. There needs to be something done about that tenure law. We have teachers in the system teaching 30 years that are text book teachers - we need to stop that. We need to hold them accountable. I heard a suggestion here; I heard it at a workshop that the teachers should be awarded if there's some improvement on the test results for their students. I think that's a good idea; I think that should be reinforced somewhere along these associations. Another thing I've always been concerned about - sometimes I cannot pass something that I believe would work for our students - but sometimes I pass them too, with my arguments. I don't quit, I don't back off.

I think that teacher evaluations are not strict enough; they are too lenient. I do not think we even have evaluations. The only time I remember having an evaluation, okay, for the Hardin Public Schools, we do not have any native teachers. We only have maybe one at the high school level, there's a lot in elementary at the Crow School. Hardin, I don't think any at the middle school. The Crow School we have to adopt the school improvement program to improve our scores. I wish they did; it still wasn't passing. They improved enough, up to 70%, but it wasn't passing, but it was acceptable.

We need more Indian teachers maybe at the middle school and the secondary level. We do not see them in the work force but if they're out they're not applying, especially in the public school system. Maybe they're working at the private schools or tribal schools, but we don't see them at the public schools. I wanted to say that the tenure law, we're having a tough time with that. We have bad teachers and they're still teaching – 30 years – and they're still there. Thank you.

Brenda St. Pierre: English Language Teacher K-6, Rocky Boy Schools

I was listening to the general speaker this morning and she said she had a lot of money she said was coming out. I would like to see some of that going to language. We have 2 language teachers at Rocky Boy and we're serving the whole school. I teach K-6 and the other teacher teaches junior high and high school, but there are only two of us and we need help. I would like to see elders brought in at the head start level, the elementary level and junior high so they are there for consultation. When I don't know something I have to call my mom. I'm going to call 1-800-Cree. ☺ They are asking questions and some things that I don't know about, I need to call her up, but I would like to have her there. When I'm busy with some kids, they can be with different elders with different expertise. There's not too many from Rocky Boy here right now. I was chosen to come and when I go home I'm expected to make a report to the whole staff, elementary, junior high and high school on what's working here, on what different schools are doing. Another thing, I came a couple of times when I was in high school and I heard some inspirational teachers and I was wishing that the kids back home in my class could have heard them. Maybe they could have got something out of it and graduated. We could take this program/conference to the reservations. It might touch more people/kids/students. We would like to showcase our schools, our tribes, our places at home. Go into the schools. I would like to go other places and see what is working. Thank you.

*This concludes the listening session for MIEA and MACIE. We will conclude listening session as far as recording it; however, will allow 10 minutes for questions and answers.*

## Written Testimony submitted:

Todd A. Hanson, Managing Partner, Norsman Group, LLC  
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I respectfully submit these observations and testimony to the MIEA Listening Session, as Chairman and on behalf of my colleagues who make up the Northern Montana Indian Education Advisory Council. I apologize for being unable to attend this session in person, but one of our elders, Emory Champange, who was able to attend, requested that I provide the following:

Q. What is keeping Indian students in school and graduating?

A. Personal - daily, weekly meaningful - contact with an American Indian Teacher, Advisor, Counselor or Mentor

Q. What makes a quality teacher?

A. A person who believes in their students even when the students' are unable or unwilling to believe in themselves ...

Q. How are parents making a positive difference?

A. Looking within for answers to difficult questions as opposed to looking outside - presenting a positive example and role model for behavior - willing to commit to a program of tough love when necessary

Q. What defines effective school leadership by our school boards and administrators?

A. Embracing alternative cultural perspectives and valuing that which they may not completely understand - walking with humility in one hand and passion in the other

Q. How is instruction that includes American Indian content helping American Indian students succeed in school?

A. Accurate representations of American Indian culture, language, traditions, customs, beliefs and historical, as well as contemporary life ways, place the lives of American Indian students firmly in the fabric of American and World history. This sense of being and relevance builds connections to the here-and-now as well as fostering a sense of positive self worth, self esteem, self confidence and self awareness - all of the traits necessary for self efficacy which has long been linked to individual academic success.

Recorded by: Nell Eby

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