

Role of Tribal Collaboration

The Montana Indian Tribes have a long history of collaboration with each other that dates back to the early 1930's with the formation of one of the first national organizations called the National Congress of American Indians.

Tribal governments have had to organize at the local, state, and national level mostly out of necessity to protect their collective and individual interests as quasi-sovereign governments. As a result, tribes have organized inter-tribally at the national, state, and local levels to protect their interests and insure that they have input into policies, rules, regulations, and laws that may impact their governments.

The Blackfeet, Ft. Belknap, and Rocky Boy tribes are all participants in this process and in particular, they have formed an organization called the Montana/Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council, which is a consortium of all the tribes in Montana and Wyoming to address relevant issues that impact them as tribes.

Also within tribal governments there are organizational collaborations of tribal programs, departments, and tribally chartered organizations that meet on an annual basis to address issues related to education, economic development, health, and transportation. These organizations usually report back to tribal leadership, as well as to keep them informed on the business they conduct on behalf of the tribes.

Listed below are some examples of tribal collaboration through organizations that have been formed over the past years in Montana:

State Level:

- American Indian Business leaders
- Montana Indian Education Association
- Montana/Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council
- Montana United Indian Association
- Montana Tribal Tourism Alliance
- Montana Tribal Health Board
- Montana Intertribal Bison Cooperative
- Native American Development Corporation

National Level:

- National Congress of American Indians
- National Indian Education Association
- Great Plains Intertribal Association
- National Tribal Development Association
- National Intertribal Ag Association
- National Indian Health Board

Each of the tribes, including the Little Shell, is currently represented on the Northcentral Montana Community Ventures Coalition Steering Committee and members of each of the tribes have been involved on the Coalition and with the strategy teams. As the organization evolves into a 'Council', representation on the Regional Board, Advisory Committee and broad Coalition will continue as an expectation. Tribal representatives on the Regional Board and Advisory Committee will be expected to report no less than quarterly to their Tribal Council. In addition, the Council will make formal presentations, at least annually, about the progress of the plan to reduce poverty. In addition, the Council will initiate contact with the individual Tribal Councils regarding strategies and actions of particular importance to the individual tribes. This

practice has already begun related to the health disparity issue.

In addition to more formal processes of communication and collaboration, relationships will be built through learning and working together, as leaders and community members, to make the strategies and actions come alive. New paths will be

designed to address poverty reduction issues that affect both tribal and non-tribal communities. The ten-year plan will offer a myriad of opportunities for real collaboration to prosper across a variety of geographic and cultural boundaries in an effort to change the face of poverty in Northcentral Montana for Indians and non-Indians.