

**State Tribal Relations Committee Meeting (STRC)
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT)**

April 28, 2014

Discussion Document

Challenge:

The State of Montana has two (2) Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) funded Tribal schools that are in desperate need of additional funding to stabilize and enhance the quality of education programs that can be provided. In the past, the State of Montana has taken the position that BIE funding is “private” and therefore, this determination prevents the State from providing any state funding to the Indian students who attend these schools.

One BIE funded school is the Two Eagle River School in Pablo, Montana and the other BIE funded school is located on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. All students are citizens of the State of Montana and yet, the State of Montana does not provide any funding to meet the educational needs of these students.

It is our initial determination that the receipt of BIE funding *does not preclude eligibility for other State or Federal assistance to improve student educational outcomes.*

Two Eagle River School receives an ISEP weighted student fund average of \$8,925 per student. In Montana, with equalization payments, the basic average daily membership (ADM), teacher qualify payments, and impact aid produce over \$14,600 per student in attendance. TERS receives **\$5,773 less per student in comparison to the public schools on the reservation.**

In September 2013, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report entitled “Better Management and Accountability Needed to Improve Indian Education”. The CSKT believe having access to State & Federal funding, beyond the limited BIE funding, would help to guarantee stable programs that would result in improved educational outcomes for our children who attend these schools.

In addition, students at Two Eagle River School, transition back and forth, to the public schools on the Flathead Indian Reservation. Therefore any funding improvement (and improved educational outcomes) at Two Eagle River School will assist the public reservation schools who also serve this unique group of students.

There is a State Statute that prohibits the creation of new school districts. This statutory restriction plays into the situation MCA 20-6-104.

Proposed Solution/Action Items:

1. The CSKT are requesting that the State Tribal Relations Committee request and facilitate the appointment of a State-Tribal-OPI work group to identify options for the two BIE funded schools to enable them to receive state and federal funding. The obligation to provide a quality education to all citizens of the State of Montana cannot be forgotten.

With STRC leadership and involvement and follow up, we believe the issue may receive proper attention.

2. If State legislation is necessary, the CSKT request the continued involvement and advocacy of the committee in requesting the drafting of legislation that may resolve this funding disparity so TERS can qualify for State funding.

The CSKT request a solution that benefits both schools – Two Eagle River and the Northern Cheyenne School.

3. In addition to the State solution, a federal legislative fix may be needed. We request the involvement of the work group (*identified in #1*) in recommending proposed solutions that may be handed off to the Montana Congressional Delegates with the full support of the State Tribal Relations Committee and various Tribal governments.

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Issue Follow up: