



State Tribal Economic Development (STED) Commission  
Salish Kootenai College  
Eneas Big Knife Conference Room  
58138 US HWY 93  
Pablo, Montana  
9:14 a.m. to 3:07 p.m.  
Wednesday, November 15, 2023  
(The official meeting minutes may be accessed on the recording)

**Commissioners Present:** Gerald Gray (Chair), Shawn Backbone, Bryce Kirk and Scott Osterman.

**Commissioners Virtual:** Jennifer Finley (Vice Chair), Delina Cuts The Rope and Misty Kuhl (partial attendance virtual & in-person).

**Department of Commerce Staff Present:** Rachelle Brown, Marilyn Willson, and T.J. Altekruise.

**Department of Commerce Staff Virtual:** Liane Taylor and Luke Robinson.

**Guests Present:** Terry Pitts - Tribal Council Representative from the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation; BJ Johnson – Fort Peck Executive Tribal Executive Board Member; Dr. Michael Munson, Dustin Hutchinson and Eva Oruste – Salish Kootenai College; Charmel Gillin – Eagles Wings, LLC.

**Guests Virtual:** Velda Shelby – Economic Development Director for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and Sarah Solomon.

**Call Meeting to Order**

0:01 Chair Gray called the meeting to order.

0:45 Ms. Willson called the roll for Commission members.

**Opening Prayer**

01:35 Commissioner Backbone

**Welcome**

02:15 Chair Gray welcomed and introduced Terry Pitts a Tribal Council Representative from the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation and T.J. Altekruise the newly hired Office of Indian Country Economic Development Program Manager.

Commissioner Kirk introduced BJ Johnson, newly elected to serve on the Fort Peck Tribal Executive Board.

**Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items**

05:56 No public comment.

### **Approval of Minutes**

07:12 Presenter: Chair Gray

Motion to approve: Commissioner Osterman

Second: Commissioner Backbone

07:52 Chair Gray called for a vote: All yes. Motion Passed.

### **Commissioner's Round Robin Discussion**

08:07 Commissioners provided Tribal community updates.

### **S & K Technologies**

38:33 Chad Cottet presented history and information regarding the S & K Technologies Inc. S & K Technologies Inc. currently has 12 LLC's and about 1000 employees. Mr. Cottet stated they have two business units with hub zone companies. He stated the first priority for S & K Technologies, Inc is return to the Tribes. Mr. Cottet further discussed S & K Technologies.

### **Salish Kootenai College's Internship Program**

01:07:16 Dustin Hutchins presented on the internship opportunities provided by the Salish Kootenai College. Dr. Michael Munson and Eva Oruste provided further information regarding internship opportunities and career readiness.

### **FY 2023 Indian Equity Fund (IEF) Recipient**

02:17:02 Charmel Gillin is a 2023 IEF recipient. Ms. Gillin thanked the Commission and Department for inviting her and awarding her the grant. Ms. Gillin provided details about her business and how the grant has assisted her and her business Eagles Wings, LLC.

### **Broadband**

02:51:31 Commissioner Kuhl presented on broadband. Commissioner Kuhl stated that we are in the final phase of our application planning process - meaning the State of Montana received \$500,000 to cover the state surveying people on their needs. She stated the goal of this money is to provide connectivity to unserved and underserved populations in Montana. The first draft of the application rollout is available online at [www.connectmt.mt.gov](http://www.connectmt.mt.gov).

If the application is approved, the State of Montana will receive approximately \$670 million dollars. Ms. Kuhl stated it would take a little over a billion dollars to ensure every person in Montana had access to internet. Commissioner Kuhl discussed the barriers of this. She stated that tribal consultation is a requirement of this process. In September 2023, Ms. Kuhl's office hosted a Tribal Broadband Consultation Forum. There was representation from every Tribe except for one but had specific consultation with that Tribe October of 2022. That feedback will be rolled into the proposal within the next two weeks. The application is due December 31, 2023. Commissioner Kuhl emphasized that it was important to visit the State of Montana's broadband website and look at our map as there will be a challenge period after the application invitation goes out.

Commissioner Kuhl and the Commission further discussed broadband.

### **Set 2024 STED Commission Meeting Schedule**

03:17:58 The Commission tentatively set the 2024 STED Commission Meeting Schedule as follows: February 21, 2024 in Helena; May 8, 2024 in Great Falls; August 7, 2024 in the Fort Peck area; and November 13, 2024 in Billings.

### **OICED Program Update**

03:27:11 TJ Altekruise introduced himself as the new Program Manager for the Office of Indian Country Economic Development. Mr. Altekruise explained he and Luke Robinson attended the American Indian Tourism Conference (AIANTA) in Durant, Oklahoma October 2 – 5, 2023.

Mr. Altekruise explained the FY 2024 Tribal Business Development Grant (TBDG) cycle was September 15, 2023 – October 25, 2023. However, only one application was received, and it was ineligible due to the guidelines. Therefore, the TBDG application process will be reopened from December 4, 2023, through March 30, 2024. The due date for awarding the grant will be May 15, 2024.

Commissioner Kuhl suggested that Mr. Altekruise visit and meet with all the Tribes. Commissioner Kirk suggested Mr. Altekruise attend the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders meeting on November 29 – 30, 2023 in Billings.

### **IEF and NABA Programs**

03:39:05 Luke Robinson stated OICED received 85 applications for the Indian Equity Fund (IEF) grant compared to 111 applications for FY 2023. The FY 2024 IEF grant guidelines were changed to a point system. More points are given for being located on or within 50 miles of the reservation. There is a total of \$320,000 available annually for the IEF grant. There can be a total of 24 awards, three per Tribe and up to \$14,000 per grant. Mr. Robinson stated the goals of the grant remain the same, which is to increase cash flow and commerce.

Mr. Robinson explained that the Native American Business Advisors (NABAs) assist applicants to complete the IEF grant applications. All the Tribes except Fort Belknap have a NABA.

Mr. Robinson then reported on the different meetings he has recently attended.

### **Tribal Tourism**

03:50:20 Rachele Brown provided status updates for Tribal Tourism. Ms. Brown provided progress reports for the Tribal Tourism Enhancement Grants (TTEG) awarded in FY 2022 and Tribal Tourism Grants (TTG) awarded in FY 2023. The FY 2024 Tribal Tourism Grant budget amount is \$120,000 with a maximum award amount of \$50,000 to Tribal governments of Montana for eligible tourism projects.

Ms. Brown provided updates regarding the Production Assistant Training Scholarships with Accelerate MT. There have been two rounds of applications so far, and this is an 18-month program. The next scholarship application will open December 1 through the middle of January. Ms. Brown stated so far, they have awarded 19 scholarships.

Ms. Brown provided a draft budget proposal for the Tribal Tourism program for FY 2024-2025.

Ms. Brown shared her visits to the Tribal Nations from June through October 2023. Ms. Brown provided further information regarding tribal tourism.

**Adjournment**

04:38:24

Presenter: Chair Gray

Motion: Commissioner Backbone

Second: Commissioner Osterman

Chair Gray called for a vote: All yes. Motion Passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:07 p.m.