



State Tribal Economic Development (STED) Commission  
Great Northern Development Corporation  
233 Cascade St.  
Wolf Point, MT 59201  
9:10 a.m. to 3:53 p.m.  
Wednesday, Aug. 28, 2024  
(The official meeting minutes may be accessed on the recording)

**Commissioners Present:** Gerald Gray (Chair), Jennifer Finley (Vice-Chair), Shawn Backbone, Melissa Lonebear, Bryce Kirk, Richard Sangrey and Delina Cuts The Rope

**Commissioners Virtual:** Mark Blasdel

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

**Department of Commerce Staff Virtual:** Mandy Rambo, Olivia Kettenring, Angie DeYoung, Beth Storey and Luke Robinson

**Guests Present:** Stephanie Iron Shooter – Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services, Marcelo Araujo & Justin Tarbell – Ohserase Manufacturing, Kathy Deserly & Matt Deserly – Wolf Point General Mercantile, Scott Smoker – Smoker Signal Studio, Donnie Wetzel – Montana Department of Labor & Industry

**Guests Virtual:** Sean Tippin – Windfall, Lam Nguyen, Patricia Brewer, Heather LaTray, Sarah S., Dena Blade and Imani Kindness-Coleman

#### **Call Meeting to Order**

00:21 Chair Gray called the meeting to order.

00:59 Ms. Willson called the roll for Commission members.

#### **Opening Prayer**

01:41 Commissioner Kirk

#### **Welcome**

02:28 Chair Gray welcomed everyone to the meeting.

02:37 Commissioner Kirk welcomed everyone to the Fort Peck Reservation and to the meeting.

#### **Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items**

03:00 Chair Gray requested public comment on non-agenda items.

03:10 Mackenzie Espeland, Business MT Division Administrator introduced herself. Ms. Espeland explained there will be a formal vote on items related to the bed tax fund for Indian Country Tourism.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

04:30 Presenter: Chair Gray

Motion to approve: Commissioner Kirk

Second: Commissioner Backbone  
Chair Gray called for a vote.  
Vice-Chair Finley abstained.  
All other commissioners present voted yes. Motion Passed.

### **SSBCI**

06:44 Olivia Kettenring the Business Development Manager from the Department of Commerce, Business MT provided an update on the State Small Business Credit Initiative. Ms. Kettenring reported they hosted a collaborative Zoom call, training and provided an opportunity for feedback with the NABA network. The Zoom recording is posted on Commerce's website. Ms. Kettenring explained the third tranche of the SSBCI application is open until Sept. 16, 2024.

15:47 Ms. Kettenring updated the Commission that there was a small adjustment to the recycled SSBCI policy adding additional language for clarification regarding the private capital at risk. They added say a person could apply at the maximum rate of 50.

17:54 Ms. Brown asked for clarification on the 50 percent match.

### **DPHHS Programs & Funding Opportunities**

19:49 Stephanie Iron Shooter from DPHHS Office of American Indian Health presented. Ms. Iron Shooter provided information on the history, function, and the future of the office. Ms. Iron Shooter explained DPHHS is working not only with tribes, but also with urban Indian organizations. Ms. Iron Shooter stated key activities for her office are Caring for Indigenous Montanans, HB872 Behavior Health System for Future Generations and developing internal policies, processes and protocols for efficient meaningful Tribal engagement.

Ms. Iron Shooter stated there were already projects completed involving three reservations that were filmed. Ms. Iron Shooter explained the Tribes will get a letter from DPHHS that the project including filming was completed without prior consent. Ms. Iron Shooter explained the reservations included CSKT, Northern Cheyenne and Fort Belknap. Ms. Iron Shooter explained the letter should be coming by Monday. She believed the film was about maternal health. She stated the contractor DPHHS contracted with didn't know they needed to ask permission to go onto the reservation and film.

Ms. Iron Shooter provided the Commission with the DPHHS Organizational Chart. Ms. Iron Shooter explained the key activities for their office currently is caring for Indigenous Montanans and provided a video which can be found at <https://healthinfo.montana.edu/cfim/index.html>; HB872 on Behavioral Health System for Future Generations; and developing internal policies, processes and protocols for efficient meaningful Tribal engagement.

### **Commissioner Round Robin Discussion**

01:18:38 Commissioner Sangrey discussed the Treasury Market Dollars which he said Treasury has another name for that. Commissioner Sangrey asked if other tribes were having issues getting the funds spent by the end of December. Commissioner Sangrey stated his tribe was requesting assistance to get an extension for one more year so they can finish their projects. Mr. Sangrey provided a copy of a letter being sent by his tribe entitled, "State & Local Fiscal Recovery Funds – Tribal Set-Aside" and will be sending to the Treasury to request an extension on the deadline.

01:20:53 Commissioner Sangrey moved to have the STED Commission write a letter in support regarding the extension of the deadline of ARPA funds.

Second: Commissioner Backbone

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

01:22:59 Vice Chair Finley shared that her tribe has established Friends of the Flathead, a nonprofit organization to make it easier for others to donate to the Tribe.

01:28:05 Commissioner Blasdel followed up from the last meeting regarding the IJJA/BEAD. Montana was the first state in the nation to open the portal for the application. There is a 60-day window based on the NTIA guidelines for the companies to apply which will be October 15, 2024. Commissioner Blasdel reiterated that all companies and anyone working on tribal country must work in coordination with each respective tribe.

### **Community MT – Department of Commerce**

01:30:22 Ann Schwend with the Montana Department of Commerce, Community MT Division presented on the Community Technical Assistance Program. Ms. Schwend explained the program has \$350,000 per year. The projects they fund are typically \$20,000 to \$30,000.

### **Ohserase Manufacturing**

01:47:54 Justin Tarbell and Marcelo Araujo from Ohserase Manufacturing presented regarding their economic development within their family and tribe with the company. Ohserase Manufacturing is a tobacco products manufacturer located on the Akwesasne Mohawk reservation.

### **Export Montana**

02:19:56 Angie DeYoung with the Montana Department of Commerce, Export Montana presented on Export Montana's programs. The program is to help Montana companies sell outside the United States. They provide grant funds for things such as going to trade shows, creating websites and language translation. They also take Montana companies to foreign trade shows and trade missions.

Ms. DeYoung stated she spoke with Tally from TRIIA as Tally requested some assistance with getting a group of Montana native artists to France for some buyer meetings. Ms. DeYoung offered to Tally that the State of Montana would get grant funds and host a Native American artist trade mission to Paris. Ms. DeYoung stated this would be a pilot project and Montana would be the first state to offer this opportunity. Ms. DeYoung discussed the details of this project and requested consultation, feedback and suggestions from the Commission.

### **FY 2023 Indian Equity Fund Recipient**

02:26:01 Kathy Deserly and Matt Deserly owners of the Wolf Point General Mercantile discussed their business and how the Indian Equity Fund Grant program has assisted in their business.

### **FY 2023 Indian Equity Fund Recipient**

02:51:57 Scott Smoker owner of Smoke Signal Studio discussed his business and how the Indian Equity Fund Grant program has assisted in his business.

**Update on DLI Tribal Initiatives**

03:14:01 Donnie Wetzels the Tribal Liaison from the Department of Labor & Industries provided an update on DLI Tribal initiatives.

**Election of Officers**

04:15:24 Commissioner Sangrey moved to elect Jennifer Finley as Vice Chair of the STED Commission.  
Second: Commissioner Backbone  
Chair Gray called for a vote: All yes. Motion passed.

04:15:39 Commissioner Sangrey moved to elected Gerald Gray as Chair of the STED Commission.  
Second: Commissioner Kirk.  
Chair Gray called for a vote: All yes. Motion passed.

**OICED Program Update**

04:17:27 T.J. Altekruze provided an update on the Office of Indian Country Economic Development.

**HB 19**

04:23:00 T.J. Altekruze provided an update on the progress of HB 19.

**Tribal Tourism**

04:34:28 Rachele Brown provided an update on the Tribal Tourism Program.

04:37:02 Sean Tippin from Windfall, Inc., the Agency of Record explained he is working with Ms. Brown to get consultation and recommendations from the STED Commission and others for productions within Indian Country. This includes creating video content for eight short films to replace the existing videos on VisitMt.com and the photography content for the new Indian Country Guidebook.

04:57:37 Commissioner Lonebear moved to support the production discussion and the establishment of eight working groups along with looking to secure indigenous producers for the videography and photography.  
Second: Commissioner Backbone.  
Chair Gray called for a vote: All yes. Motion passed.

04:58:19 International Indigenous Tourism Conference  
Ms. Brown suggested each STED Commissioner or designee from their tribe to attend the International Indigenous Tourism Conference being held in Montreal, Quebec from February 25 to 27, 2025. The funding comes from the half percent bed tax from tribal tourism.

05:03:37 Tribal Tourism Grant (TTG 2025)

Ms. Brown explained the TTG is open from October 1 – November 30, 2024. There is \$50,000 toward shovel-ready tourism project with a 50 percent match requirement, half of that must be cash.

05:04:31 Event Sponsorships Summer 2024

Ms. Brown explained that \$8,000 was given to each tribe who chose to accept those sponsorships, which included Fort Peck, Fort Belknap, Crow, Chippewa Cree, Northern Cheyenne, and Little Shell. Ms. Brown asked the Commission if this worked and was this useful for their communities that they would like it repeated next

year. She also asked the Commission if the Department should offer a similar opportunity to tribal non-profits for community tourism.

05:07:34 Commissioner Lonebear moved that the STED Commission support sponsorship grants from the Department to Tribal Governments for community tourism.

Second: Commissioner Sangrey.

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

#### 05:10:07 **Indian Equity Fund Tribal Tourism Small Business Grant**

Ms. Brown explained that the IEF TT 2025 grant will run from October 15 through December 15, 2024. There is \$240,000 available. There will be approximately 24 awards, three per tribe at \$10,000 each, and a 10 percent match requirement.

#### **International Indigenous Tourism Conference**

05:16:34 Commissioner Finley moved to support \$40,000 to pay for all commissioners or their designees to attend the International Indigenous Tourism Conference being held in Montreal, Quebec from February 25 to 27, 2025.

Second: Commissioner Lonebear

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

#### **International Indigenous Tourism Conference**

05:18:50 Commissioner Lonebear moved to divide up the rest of the funds in the remaining balance of the half million in the reserve funds, which would be \$62,500 per tribe, to be distributed to each tribe to the appropriate tribal departments identified by Ms. Brown.

Second: Commissioner Finley

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

#### **IEF and NABA Programs**

05:20:36 Luke Robinson provided an update on the Indian Equity Fund grant and NABA programs.

#### **STED Commission**

05:24:05 Marilyn Willson recommended the STED Commissioners check out the [boards.mt.gov](https://boards.mt.gov) site for board trainings. Ms. Willson reminded the STED Commission the next meeting will be held in Billings on November 13, 2024.

#### **Adjournment**

05:24:54 Presenter: Chair Gray

Motion: Commissioner Backbone

Second: Commissioner Lonebear

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

The meeting was adjourned at 3:53 p.m.