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Eilis O’Herlihy, Editor

Spring 2010 MSW Alumni Newsletter

Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.
– Paulo Freire

Mark Your Calendars
Alumni Friday 2010
September 24th
Celebrate UM’s New Native American Center

* News from the University of Montana Website *

The University of Montana will hold several events Thursday, May 13, to celebrate the completion and opening of The Payne Family Native American Center – the first of its kind at any American university.

The public is invited to join tribal leaders and community, state and campus representatives for the day’s events, which will include many Native American traditions to honor and dedicate the new center.

From the beginning American Indian people have led the effort to establish the Native American center at UM. A historic sunrise ceremony was held in 2006 to bless the building site – the first time in more than 100 years that all the state’s tribal leaders gathered for a single, unified purpose. Leaders from all Montana tribes also were present at the April 2008 groundbreaking ceremony at UM, and they will return to see the culmination of a project that began with discussions in 2004.

The formal dedication ceremony will take place from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on the UM Oval directly in front of the center. Seating will be provided. The ceremony will begin with an opening convocation by author and historian Joe Medicine Crow. Speakers will include Native American activist Elouise Cobell, UM Native American studies alumnus Jon Swan and Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer.

Student-led tours of the center will be available from 1 to 4 p.m. and from 6:30 to 8 p.m. The new center will house UM’s Department of Native American Studies, American Indian Student Services and related campus programming. Information about American Indian Student Services and various campus Native American student organizations will be available in the center’s Kyi-Yo Room.

The University also will host a reception for tribal dignitaries, campus partners and donors. Terry Payne, a UM alumnus and Missoula businessman, is the center’s lead donor. Other key donors include First Interstate Bank and the Indian Land Tenure Foundation, a nationally recognized organization headquartered outside Minneapolis. The Native American center also was a top campus priority in UM’s successful “Invest in Discovery” campaign that ended in December 2007.

*Images and text taken from www.umt.edu*
In addition to the formal dedication ceremony, the following events are free and open to the public May 13:

• 8:30 a.m.: “Coming Home” walk from the Adams Center to the center of the Oval. The public is invited to participate in or enjoy the symbolic walk, led by children from Arlee’s Salish language revitalization institute. Representatives from all Montana tribes will participate. A flag song and flag raising ceremony will be held on the Oval.

• 10 a.m.: Dedication of the center’s Bonnie HeavyRunner Memorial Gathering Space. HeavyRunner (Blackfeet) received a juris doctor degree from UM in 1988. She served as director of the Native American Studies Program and was instrumental in the creation of the University’s Department of Native American Studies. HeavyRunner lost a long battle with cancer in 1997.

• 11 a.m.: An event on the UM Oval to honor the artisans, craftspeople, visionaries, designers and implementers of the fine details of the center.

• 11:45 a.m.: Lunch on the Oval, sponsored by UM and the Crow Nation. Prepared by UM Catering Services, the menu will include buffalo soup, vegetarian soup, fry bread, and huckleberry and cherry cobbler. The Crow Nation donated the buffalo.

• 1 p.m.: Henry Real Bird, storyteller and Montana poet laureate, will give a presentation on the first floor of the center.

• 1-3 p.m.: Students will give academic presentations on the first floor of the center. A documentary by UM’s Indigenous Filmmakers Club will be shown on the center’s second floor.

*Images and text taken from www.umt.edu

Sandy Leotti

I’m getting ready to start a PhD program in the fall...that’s about as exciting as it gets for me right now!
Updates from Alumni

Kara Mileski

I am working as a compliance coach with Evolution Services in Missoula. I work with 6 other people in a small office. I love the people I work with and learn new things every day. I work with children and families involved with the Department of Child and Family Services, working one-on-one with parents and children and I also facilitate a support group called Celebrating Families that works to end the cycle of addiction in families dealing with substance abuse. For self-care, I'm training for the Missoula marathon with some of my co-alumnae, Erica Sandiland and Liz Stoeckel. We are doing a fundraiser to raise tents for the UN High Commission of Refugees doing work in Somalia. That's right...tents! We are raising money to raise tents to provide refugees with the basic human right of shelter. I'm planning on traveling there soon so I'll have more stories to share and experience to build on.

Beth Gibbs Brewer is now working as a clinician at Full Circle and as the early childhood program supervisor. She's liking it and things are going well. She and her husband Ben just bought a house in Missoula, which feels both exciting and wacky to them.

Teresa Geelan

Just finishing my 3000 plus clinical hours (2 years) as a mental health therapist for Altacare at Troy High School with kiddos that have severe emotional disorders (SED) and currently preparing to pass the licensing exam (licensed clinical social worker, LCSW) this summer. Having worked with a variety of populations prior to this, I am open to all possibilities in the future. In the meantime, my teenage son Ashton is the pride and joy of this single mom along with 7 grandbabies from his siblings to keep me smiling. We love family and I thrive on social work. I am excited to visit UM soon as one of my daughters will be graduating in May. Go Griz. Of course, I am encouraging all of my high school clients to consider UM as their choice for higher education.
School Of Social Work DUI Study

A preliminary report on a University of Montana study assessing what multiple DUI offenders say would have kept them from drunken driving is now available online at http://www.cor.mt.gov/content/news/MultipleDUIStudy.pdf.

Faculty and students in UM’s School of Social Work, led by Associate Professor Timothy Conley, conducted the pro-bono research effort by surveying currently incarcerated felony DUI offenders to determine what they think would deter Montanans from drinking and driving.

“In my experience, those convicted of multiple DUIs have always wanted to tell others how to keep from winding up like them,” Conley said. “We are fortunate to have a longstanding cooperative relationship with the Department of Corrections, and we couldn’t have done this study if they hadn’t worked so well with us.”

Among other findings, the study concludes that repeat DUI offenders usually start drinking and driving at an early age (under 20) and that they state treatment is more effective than incarceration in preventing future offenses.

Conley presented the study’s findings to the state Legislature’s Law and Justice Interim Committee in February. The committee is charged with analyzing the effectiveness of Montana’s current DUI laws and their enforcement so lawmakers can address the issue during the 2011 session.

“This study should offer a fresh perspective to the lawmakers” Conley said. “This gives them the collective voice of 201 people that have been convicted of felony DUI.”

For more information on the study, call Conley at 406-243-5557 or e-mail timothy.conley@mso.umt.edu.
I graduated in 2004 and am currently working as a Mental Health Therapist for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. I also work with the local Domestic Violence agency called Doves. I and one other therapist, Kim Campbell, facilitate their groups for women who have experienced or are experiencing abuse. BUT the best thing is that my husband, Nathan, and I are expecting our first child in July.

I am still working at Intermountain Childrens Home. I work with children and their families in the community. They are wonderful people, rich in their own right. I am honored to be among the people they trust. I work intensively with helping parents be able to "listen" and attune to their children to be able to hear and meet the need under the behavior. I also just took the Circle of Security training and can't wait to implement it here in our community.

Abigail Eyre

I am still working at homeWORD, where we will be breaking ground on a new sustainable housing development named Solstice on June 21 (timely eh?). It will provide 34 units of affordable rental housing to households earning 40%-60% of area median income (AMI) and should be completed and ready for lease by fall 2011. It will be located adjacent to the Equinox on the corner of Broadway and Russell where the old Liberty Lanes bowling alley used to be. I'm working on the 1-164 ballot initiative "400% interest is too high" campaign to cap the interest rate on payday and car title loans. We're starting signature gathering efforts this week - yay! In my non-work time, I'm involved with the Watershed Education Network, NCBI development committee and Fair Trade City Missoula campaign. Keeps me busy! I'm looking forward to a one-year reunion with my MSW classmates sometime in May... :)

Steffani (Briggs) Turner

Liz Stoekel
Hello everyone!
I moved back to Montana last December and accepted a position with Altacare doing school based mental health at the Harrison School. I am living and commuting from Three Forks, MT. What a culture change moving from Seattle! I am happy about my decision to move back, am enjoying the peace and quiet of Three Forks, and am more content in this new job compared to my prior work in Seattle. Hope everyone is doing well out there. Best wishes to all.

Patsy Clark
I have relocated to Seattle and currently work for a large school district coordinating certificated recruitment, hiring, contracts and leaves for a 32 school district (read: I hire teachers). While not a social work job, I use every bit of my MSW training just about every day of my working life. My inner-reformist is alive and well outside of work, however. My history of social policy paper was published last month as a chapter in Extraordinary Women of the Rocky Mountain West and in conjunction with this, I was hired as a humanities advisor on a suffrage film project.

Mollie Cudmore is living in Gunnison, CO with her busy family (4 year old daughter and 2 year old son) and fantastic husband Tim. She is volunteering in the community with the Early Childhood Education Council and working part time as a research marketer and hopes to head back to working with and counseling children in the near future. Anyone have a job for me? Miss you Class of ’04.