LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP CENTERS
The American Indian Student Center

CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE AND TAKING BOLD STEPS FORWARD.

WHAT IT TAKES
The Campaign for MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
YOU CAN HELP US BRING THE AMERICAN INDIAN CENTER OUT OF THE BASEMENT AND BUILD A PLACE OF HONOR FOR OUR NATIVE SONS AND DAUGHTERS.

THE CHALLENGE: COMPLETING COLLEGE.

In a global world that places an increasing value on higher education, tomorrow’s Indian leaders must be today’s Indian college students.

For many American Indian students, being away from their families and tribal culture is challenging. Setbacks are difficult to overcome for students who already feel like they don’t fit in.

MSU is determined to help Indian students be resilient, stay on track, complete what they started and return home with college degrees.

MSU nursing students from the Caring for Our Own Program (CO-OP), which is devoted to increasing the number of American Indian nurses in the workforce.

A NATIVE HOUSE.

Bucking a national trend of enrollment decline, Montana State welcomed 650 students from 53 tribal nations in 2016. MSU’s American Indian students are working to earn degrees across all disciplines. A Native house on campus will help our sons and daughters feel supported in achieving their dreams of a college education and returning to their communities as leaders.
In a campus location authorized by the Montana Board of Regents, on ground that has been blessed by Montana tribal elders, the American Indian Student Center will grace the east end of MSU’s Malone Centennial Mall.

The center will serve as a gathering place for American Indian and Alaska Native students where languages, art and ceremony will have room to flourish. In addition to cultural areas, the center will also support student academic success with spaces for studying and tutoring, counseling and mentoring.

**BUILDING A BRIDGE.**

Montana State has gained national status as a leader in Native American education with over 30 programs that support American Indian students.

In contrast to this breadth of programming and resources is the 900-square-foot space that currently houses the American Indian Student Center and the cramped American Indian Council clubroom on the lower and basement floors of Wilson Hall, respectively.

The center will serve as a bridge between Indian and other cultures and bring a new focus on the Native American community on campus and around the state.

Philanthropic gifts will make this project a reality.

Montana State wants to help write a new chapter for the seven reservations that make up Montana’s Indian Country. One that is grounded in respect, mutual trust and with the understanding that our diversity makes us stronger.
ELVA DORSEY

Elva Faye Agnes Dorsey from Browning, Montana is a business management major, mother and member of the Blackfeet Nation. When Dorsey came to MSU, she considered a nursing career but was inspired to change to business management after taking a sociology class taught by Assistant Professor Matthew Filteau.

"Professor Filteau helped me see that there are so many [social] issues we need to address now," Dorsey said. Instead of going back to the reservation to help treat the medical symptoms of community members, Dorsey plans to use her education to help address some of the deeper social and economic issues.

Dorsey’s goals to address tribal challenges through business management practices include a feasibility study for opening a manufacturing center on the reservation and a business incubator to help community members start their own businesses.

Now a 2016 prestigious Udall Scholar, Dorsey is recognized for her “significant contributions to tribal communities in Montana,” said Ilse-Mari Lee, dean of MSU’s Honors College. Dorsey joins a cohort of Udall Scholars focused on themes related to tribal public policy.

MONTANA WILSON

Montana Wilson started his college education at Dartmouth College, where he was studying government and exploring a career with the Central Intelligence Agency. Life-changing encounters Wilson experienced in a study abroad program, though, made him reconsider his path.

Wilson took a year off from school and returned home to Poplar, Montana, where he interned in the Tribal Council’s public defender’s office. Wilson is an enrolled Gros Ventre of the Fort Belknap Indian Community and a member of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation.

After passing the Tribal Bar exam, Wilson became a lay advocate and was then promoted as a deputy chief prosecutor. Reconnecting and taking on responsibilities within tribal culture prompted Wilson to return to college, but this time closer to home where he enrolled at MSU.

Wilson sees the new American Indian Student Center as a gathering place for Indian students in the same way that cultural centers are a hub of activities on their reservations. He also believes the center will help to dispel biases and promote inter-tribal relations.

Currently an Honors College student with a dual major in economics and political science, Wilson was recently awarded a prestigious Udall Scholarship. Ultimately, he wants to focus on economic development for Native nations to improve life on the reservation.

“It comes down to people wanting a place where they feel welcomed and respected.”

“Why it matters. STORIES OF STUDENT SUCCESS”

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