



Beaver  
Painted Lodge

*Blackfeet  
Community College  
Arbor Day  
June 15, 2016*

In 2015, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) received funds from the USDA Forest Service and Arbor Day Foundation to work with interested tribal colleges and communities on urban forestry projects, such as tree plantings, education and tree care. The goal is to create sustainable urban forestry programs in colleges and communities across Montana's seven reservations.



Blackfeet Community College (BFCC) was eager to step into the role of being the first tribal college to participate in the project. They held their first Arbor Day celebration on September 23, 2015 and planted a mountain ash tree. In January 2016, BFCC successfully applied for Tree Campus USA status, becoming the first tribal college in the nation to earn this recognition.





## Blackfeet Nation Information:

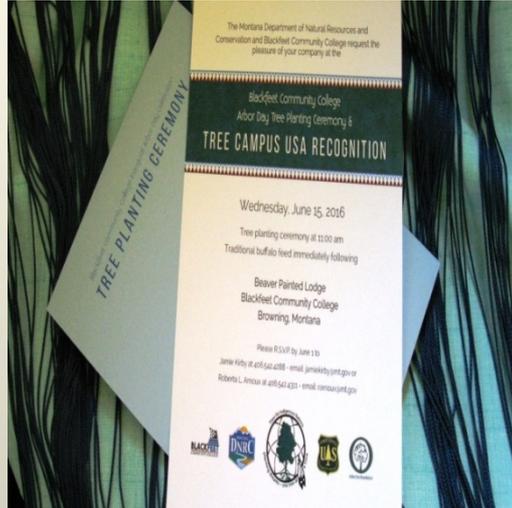
- ~ Headquartered in Browning, Montana
- ~ Home to 17,321 members, one of the 10 largest tribes in the US.
- ~ Encompasses approximately 1.5 million acres
  - ~ The tribes call themselves “*Niitsitapi*” (nee-itsee-TAH-peh) meaning “the real people”
  - ~ Established by the treaty in 1855
  - ~ This reservation borders the Canadian province of Alberta and Glacier National Park

Blackfeet Community College’s mission is to provide the Blackfeet Nation and the “universal community” access to quality educational programs that prepare students for achievement in higher education, meaningful employment, basic skills instruction, and community education while integrating the Blackfeet culture and language.



Substantial research and collaboration took place between DNRC foresters, Blackfeet Community College faculty, and tribal elders to determine planting sites, selection of tree species, and their cultural significance.





Preparations for the June 15, 2016 ceremony



The ceremony opened with the traditional prayer by Chief Earl Old Person (bottom right). Brad Hall (top left) of BFCC emceed as guests were addressed at the Beaver Painted Lodge on campus.





Honorary speakers included BFCC President Dr. Billie Jo Kipp (opposite page – bottom left); USFS Rep John Shannon (bottom center); Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs Director Jason Smith (top left); and DNRC Director John Tubbs (bottom right, presenting recognition to Roberta L. Arnoux).





Blackfeet Community College President Dr. Billie Jo Kipp presented with the Tree Campus USA award by Arbor Day Foundation representative Michelle Scribner.



Performance by the  
Blackfeet Drummers,  
Singers and Dancers





## The Five Standards for Being a Tree Campus USA:

- 1.) Have a campus tree advisory committee
- 2.) Create a campus tree care plan
- 3.) Establish a tree program with dedicated annual expenditure.
- 4.) Celebrate Arbor Day
- 5.) Hold an annual service learning project

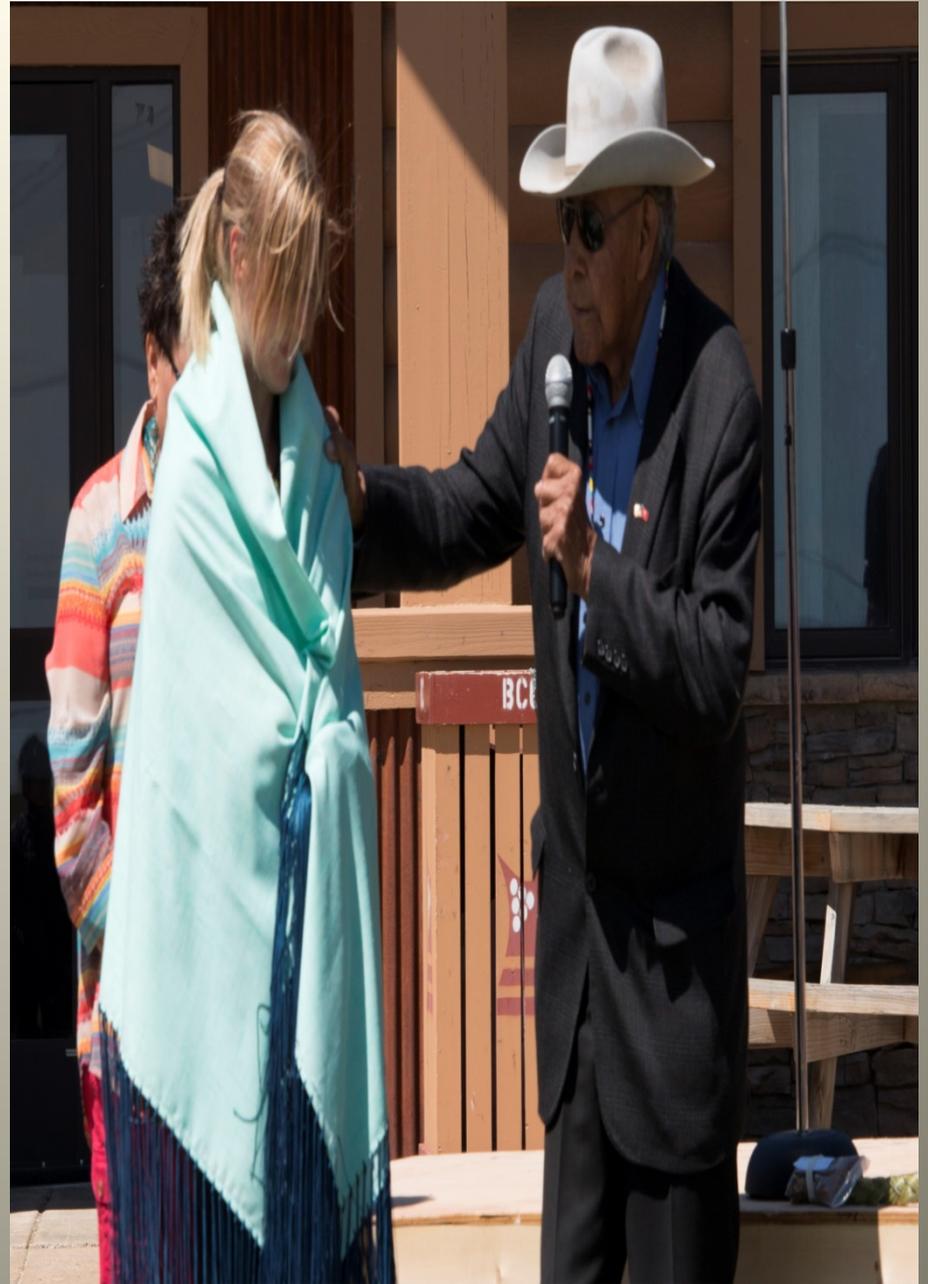


“It was a perfect day for planting trees on the Blackfeet Community College campus.”  
- John McGill, Glacier Reporter





Chief Earl Old Person presented an Indian name to DNRC Urban Forester Jamie Kirby. Roberta Arnoux draped a blanket over Kirby while Chief Old Person named her “Pine Woman.”



BFCC Provost Carol Murray gave a blessing for the newly planted trees.



A ponderosa pine, Montana's state tree, was gifted to BFCC from Montana Governor Steve Bullock. A special marker was given to them to place with the tree.





Dignitaries, project partners, volunteers, and community members that witnessed this momentous event participated in the ceremonial planting of the gift tree.







Over 400 seedlings, along with Tree Campus USA ball caps and specially designed Arbor Day t-shirts, were distributed during the event.





Guests and helpers were treated to a traditional buffalo feed. This included a bison donated by the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council, along with traditional dishes of berry soup, stew, boiled meat, potato, fry bread, corn on the cob and boiled eggs.



Ponderosa pine (*pinus ponderosa*) - Dedicated as gift trees from Montana Governor Steve Bullock. A native species that grows tall, adapted to fire and tolerant of variable climates.

Cultural significance: the bark was once harvested for edible nourishment



Box elder (*acer negundo*) – A native species in the maple family, this tree is very tolerant of temperature extremes and harsh climate conditions. In fall the leaves turn a showy red and orange color.

Cultural significance: Sap was used for making syrup and was a preferred wood for cooking and burning.



Serviceberry (*amelachier alnifolia*) – Also known as sarviceberry, this small tree is native to Montana, grows to twenty feet and has showy white flowers in the spring.

Cultural significance: One of the most important berry crops, used in pemmican (mixed with buffalo meat and fat), soups and stews.



Chokecherry (*prunus virginiana*) – Similar to serviceberry, this small native tree has showy white flowers that turn to a purplish red fruit.

Cultural significance: The fruits were dried and/or ground and stored for winter. Used as an ingredient in pemmican, soups and stews.



Subalpine fir (*abies lasiocarpa*) – Also known as sweet pine, this native evergreen grows tall and narrow; often found in high elevations.

Cultural significance: Used in medicines, burned as incense and for spiritual blessings.



“It was a moving ceremony and one that promises to increase the size of the infant forest now begun at Blackfeet Community College.”  
~ Glacier Reporter, John McGill





Seven large trees were planted on campus and over 150 people attended the event, consisting of Blackfeet leaders, DNRC and BFCC staff, students, partnering agencies, and members of the Browning community.

Most importantly were the relationships established and the sense of community that was shared.





“We are not the owners, only the keepers.”

~ Chief Earl Old Person