

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

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Governor Bullock Announces Grant Funding for Native American Small Business Owners

HELENA – Governor Steve Bullock and Montana Department of Commerce Director Meg O'Leary announced a total of \$84,000 in grant funding to nine Native American business owners to help grow and expand their business operations. The funds are being made available through the Montana Indian Equity Fund Program (IEF).

"Native-owned businesses and our tribal communities play a crucial role in the strength and vitality of Main Streets throughout Montana," said Governor Bullock. "These grants help support the entrepreneurial activities taking place at Native-owned businesses across Montana."

Equity Funds are grants designed to assist current or new Native American business owners start or expand their businesses. The funds are available only to enrolled members of Montana's federally recognized Tribes and to enrolled members of the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe. Because of the fund's ability to offer these grants to be used by the recipient for building business assets, the fund is able to play a unique role in assisting in the growth of Native American small business.

"The Indian Equity Fund has proven to be an excellent resource for tribal members with entrepreneurial goals," said Director Meg O'Leary. "We've seen some true success stories of these funds helping new businesses start out on the right foot and helping established businesses really take off running."

Edward DesRosier, owner of Sun Tours, received a grant to add another coach to his existing fleet and help him with marketing and advertising efforts.

"I am very grateful to receive this grant from the State of Montana and appreciate their support," said DesRosier. "This grant allows me to invest in my company, which is at the same time invested in our community."

Indian Equity Fund Recipients Include:

- Robert Bell, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, owner of Kick Start Compost received
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\$14,000 to purchase dirt screening and bagging machinery to allow his business to sell to local distributors

- Roxanne Braine-Howe, Northern Cheyenne, owner of Roxy's Rockin' Coffee Shop received \$2,500 to purchase an espresso machine for her coffee shop
- Dennis Dahle, Northern Cheyenne, owner of Cowboy Transport received \$7,000 to purchase a livestock trailer for transporting horses and cattle
- Edward DesRosier, Blackfeet Tribe, owner of Sun Tours received \$14,000 to add a coach to his existing fleet and for marketing and advertising
- Jennifer Perez Cole, Fort Belknap Indian Community, owner of Buckskin Transport, LLC received \$14,000 to acquire a 40-foot gooseneck flatbed trailer and accessories to increase transport capacity for clients
- Leander Scott Simpson, Crow Tribe, owner of Simpson's Mobile Wild Game Processing received \$13,500 to purchase a refrigerated trailer, cutting saws and the equipment and tools necessary to process and package meat
- Colton Small, Northern Cheyenne, owner of Good Warrior Engineering, LLC received \$7,000 to purchase an AUTO CAD Total Station with data storage and transfer capabilities
- Jason D. Small, Northern Cheyenne, owner of Fire & Rock Construction, Inc. received \$7,000 to expand his road building and grading services by purchasing a John Deere 550 Dozier
- Valerie A. Veis, Little Shell, owner of Montana Baskets received \$5,000 for website redesign, a cargo trailer, and panels for trade shows

The Montana Indian Equity Fund began in 2007 and has awarded a total of \$973,000 to 132 business owners since its inception. There were a total of 45 applicants for fiscal year 2015 grants.

The Montana Indian Equity Fund is a state-funded program administered by the Montana Department of Commerce. Funding is utilized from the Indian Country Economic Development program (ICED) via the recommendation of the State Tribal Economic Development Commission (STED) and the approval of the Director of the Department of Commerce.

For more information about Montana Indian Equity Fund Grant, please contact Philip Belangie, Indian Entrepreneur Development Program Manager, at (406) 721-3663 or visit <http://entrepreneur.mt.gov/indianequityfund.mcp>

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