



**“Working for, and with, Montana’s Tribes”  
Policy Whitepaper  
September 2018**

Tribal Nations in Montana are rich in culture and history. The proud Native people who live in reservation and urban communities share a strong sense of family and being there for one another. To preserve these values and history we must respect tribal sovereignty and ensure federal policy incorporates tribal interests. Too often, our government makes misguided policy on behalf of our Native communities without meaningful consultation.

Kathleen will work with Tribal representatives to address the intertwined issues of poverty, jobs, wages, and education on our reservations. She also understands that we must confront addiction, suicide, and domestic violence head on. While economic opportunity must be the starting point, these issues demand their own solutions.

Kathleen has a record of rolling up her sleeves and finding solutions for her constituents, especially when the issues are challenging. As a state legislator Kathleen:

- Led the charge in supporting the CSKT Water Compact, carrying the bill in 2013 and passing it in 2015<sup>1</sup>;
- Supported efforts to preserve Montana Indian languages<sup>2</sup>;
- Supported legislation to combat the youth suicide epidemic<sup>3</sup>;
- Supported Medicaid expansion<sup>4</sup> which now covers 14,000 American Indians<sup>5</sup>;
- Supported a resolution to recognize the Little Shell Band of Chippewas<sup>6</sup>.

In Congress, she will work to uphold the unique sovereign-to-sovereign relationship between Federal and Tribal governments.

**Ratification and full funding of Montana Tribal Water Compacts**

As a member of the Reserved Water Compact Commission, Kathleen was a key negotiator of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai (CSKT) Water Compact. The process balanced senior water rights and tribal sovereignty to settle disputes by negotiation and thereby avoid decades of costly litigation across Western Montana. She will see the Compact through to completion in Congress, but much more remains to be done.

In addition to ratifying and funding the CSKT Compact, a compact with the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes of the Fort Belknap Reservation has been pending action since 2001. The recently ratified Blackfeet Water Compact has yet to be fully funded. Kathleen’s personal and legislative career focused on solving water issues. She worked on the Ft. Belknap and the Rocky Boy’s Water Compacts while working at Fish, Wildlife & Parks. She will be a strong and informed voice in giving certainty to these Tribes as well as Montanans across the state.

<sup>1</sup> 2013 Montana Legislature, [HB629](#), Rep. Kathleen Williams; 2015 Montana Legislature, [SB262](#), Senator Chas Vincent

<sup>2</sup> 2013 Montana Legislature, [SB342](#), Senator Jonathan Windy Boy; 2015 Montana Legislature, [HB559](#), Rep. George Kipp III

<sup>3</sup> 2015 Montana Legislature, [HB409](#), Rep. Casey Schreiner

<sup>4</sup> 2015 Montana Legislature, [SB405](#), Senator Ed Buttrey

<sup>5</sup> Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services, [“Medicaid Expansion Member Profile,”](#) January 15, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> 2015 Montana Legislature, [HJ15](#), Rep. Mitch Tropila



### **Accountability and resources for health services**

There are areas in which Indian Health Services (IHS) is providing effective services, but there are too many stories of people seeking treatment being turned away, treated inhumanely, misdiagnosed, or dying before getting the help they need. At a minimum, IHS needs to be held accountable to ensure treaty obligations to provide health care are met in a timely and compassionate manner.

Kathleen's priorities in Congress include:

- Healthcare delivery cannot function without good people. Whether it's a nurse, doctor, counselor, or the IHS director, these people need to be retained and trained to provide quality services.
- As many as 71 percent<sup>7</sup> of Indians in Montana do not live on their home reservation. Addressing the needs of Urban Indians including urban health centers is a critical need.
- Addressing high mortality rates and lower life expectancies<sup>8</sup>.
- Finding ways to lower suicide rates through trauma informed care and ways to improve quality of life. Depression, lack of education and job opportunities, substandard housing conditions, and drug and alcohol abuse are only some of the problems that have led to the suicide epidemic. To address this crisis, it is critical to provide necessary tools and support to Tribal programs and ensure the BIA is being held accountable in providing services and funding to Tribal programs to end this epidemic.
- Protect the ability to bill, identify flexible ways for patients to receive treatment and coverage, and give Tribes the ability to focus on the most urgent drug problems whether opioids, meth, or others.

### **Encouraging Stronger Communities through Education and Economic Development**

Housing, clean water, drivable roads, job training, and job availability are vital to health, keeping families together, and improving communities. Ensuring these opportunities are available and effective must be a priority.

Kathleen's priorities in Congress include:

- Work with Tribal leaders and businesses for ways to boost economic opportunities to create jobs with increased access to job training opportunities at Tribal colleges and training centers.
- Increase education opportunities such as TRIO and Senator Tester's Native Educator Support and Training Act.
- Support programs critical to infrastructure development such as the Native American Housing and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA), Indian Community Development Block Grants (ICDBG), and Indian Reservation Roads (IRR) program.

### **Safe and Secure Communities**

While efforts such as the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 and the Violence Against Women Act of 2013 authorized more financial assistance, jurisdiction, and authority within Indian Country to combat domestic and sexual violence, there is still much to do<sup>9</sup>. Whether it's alcohol, drugs, sex trafficking, domestic or sexual abuse<sup>10</sup>, or murder, Kathleen will consult with Tribes and hold the Department of Justice and BIA accountable to ensure everything is done to improve quality of life.

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<sup>7</sup> Char-Koosta News, "[Sen. Tester holds listening session with Missoula urban Indians](#)," August 16, 2018

<sup>8</sup> Indian Health Service, "[Disparities](#)," April, 2018

<sup>9</sup> Indianz.com, "[Report confirms Native women suffer from high rates of homicide in United States](#)," July 24, 2017

<sup>10</sup> MTPR, "[Native Women, Girls are Murdered, Go Missing at Disproportionate Rate](#)," March 30, 2018



Kathleen's priorities in Congress include:

- Hold the U.S. Department of Justice accountable for prosecuting crimes, working with Tribal, state, and local law enforcement, and enforcing the law to reduce crimes against women.
- Ensure Montana's U.S. Attorney prosecutes crimes and works with Tribal courts and law enforcement. Increased funding for Tribal law enforcement, whether through the Bureau of Indian Affairs or directly to Tribal agencies, is also necessary in order to utilize the new authorities and jurisdiction of recent laws. Without Tribal officers and the equipment to support them, criminals and abusive partners will never be brought to justice.
- Ensure adequate resources regardless of who provides law enforcement services - Tribal law enforcement needs to receive the same resources as if the BIA were providing those services.
- Support reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, which gave Tribes more tools to address these issues, while finding ways to improve and ensure accountability in the Department of Justice that the tools are effective and being used.