



## REACHING FOR THE STARS STORY ROBE 50 YEARS OF BFCC WINTER COUNT

- 1.) Blackfeet Community College was born out of a national Tribal College Movement. Blackfeet Tribal Business Council chartered the college 1974. BFCC gained candidacy status to receive TCCC funds to start college operations. Institutional structure established with a Board of Trustees and President, Vice President of Academics, and Student Support Director. The college required analysis to decide on what programs had to be offered, this has been implemented throughout the college's history as Business, Education and Human Services. No campus at this time.
- 2.) First five BFCC graduates as a part of a satellite of Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC), Mary Belcourt, Judy LaPlante, Julene Kennerly, Ladean Rutherford, and Leonda Lahr
- 3.) CCD Center loaned BFCC rooms for classes. High Winds building (old skating rink) was the only building on campus. BFCC purchased Archambault property, including a quonset hut, white house and faculty trailer. Only Blackfeet Faculty member was Patty LaPlante at BFCC, beginning a trend to hire our own people.
- 4.) Accreditation through the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities was the driving force to validate BFCC as a tribal college, key drivers were Carol Juneau, Don Pepion and Gordon Belcourt. Was crucial to offer degrees and valid credentials to residents of the Blackfeet Nation. The Indian Action Team established a training entity for building trades.
- 5.) Student demographics were predominantly females, from 32 to early 90s. James Watts ran for and became the first BFCC Student Senate President. A coup to have a Student Senate President to advocate for students as the college.
- 6.) Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA, 1990) passed in conjunction with the creation of the Blackfeet Studies Program to become more in depth in developing Blackfeet language, culture and ways of knowing.
- 7.) Board of Trustees members appointed in 1990. All Funds were to be funneled through Blackfeet tribal accounts. BFCC administration, Gordan Belcourt worked to build a separate financial system from the tribe to let the college administer its own funding and apply for grants to grow programs and services. Absolved tribe of financial responsibility for the college. From 1991-2000, the emphasis of the college's mission included, "finally and most importantly," the Blackfeet language, culture and ways of knowing to be culturally appropriate providing students with a Blackfeet brand of higher education by evolving from language and to an array of Blackfeet Studies courses that were congruent with Native American Studies courses in the Montana University System and included knowledge about other tribes.
- 8.) American Indian College Fund (AICF) was established for the purpose of assisting Tribal Colleges with providing post-secondary programs and the building of facilities for TCU's, there were no appropriations for TCU campuses. The Medicine Spring Library was built in 1993.
- 9.) In 2000-2004, the college established donor relationships by sharing student stories of challenges and perseverance for overcoming poverty and enhancing economics through providing higher education opportunities. Federal funds were prioritized for certain programs based on the amount of money available to Tribal Colleges. Other programs and training required other funding support.
- 10.) Campus land and property purchase of a small piece of land, bought land east of High Winds, Ashes Chief, Stuck Behind buildings as well as the land where the Beaver Painted Lodge Administration addition now sits. The college negotiated with Bill Aubrey to purchase 680 acres east of the main campus, as a means of buying back the land for the Blackfeet People to earn a higher education. The Nevins and Aubrey families owned from High Winds building to east campus.
- 11.) 2000 accreditation review, at this time over 2200 people attended BFCC and all division chair faculty obtained graduate credentials. LEAP programs were established and 17 students graduated with doctoral and 16 masters degrees.
- 12.) In 2000, Beaver Painted Lodge was built, this effort was led by Carol Murray and Terry Tatsey.
- 13.) In 2010, work began on the South Wind Lodge, the first LEED Platinum building on tribal lands and in Montana. This effort was led by Terry Tatsey and Ron Blomquist.
- 14.) In 2018, the Nursing Division developed the first bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSN) program and the Yellow Bird Woman building was built in honor of Elouise Pepion-Cobell.
- 16.) The college moved to remote instruction and work during the COVID-19 pandemic, the college preserved and continues to be resilient. The college's survival prompted the formation of a \$5 million Endowment.
- 17.) The future. Education and culture. The Blackfeet strive to be strong in our language and looking forward to our buffalo and way of life returning to face modern challenges.