

LITTLE SHELL VOICES

Official Little Shell Tribal Newsletter - April 2025

Aanii (Hello) to my fellow Little Shell tribal members!

Ziigwan (Spring) is in the air! I hope you are enjoying these much warmer days and preparing for growth. This season I know many are planning gardens, travel, and graduation season is right around the corner.

The Tribal Council has exciting news to share this month – the construction will begin on the new Ceremonial Center below Mount Royal off of Stuckey Road in Great Falls, Montana. The Tribal Council will be hosting a ground breaking ceremony to bless the grounds. With the warming weather, it is the perfect time to start the construction phase. Construction should be finished by early next year and we are planning for the Ceremonial Center to be open early next spring.

The Ceremonial Center will provide a beautiful and large space for ceremonial events including weddings, funerals, wakes and other family gatherings. The Ceremonial Center may also be used for other tribal events and meetings. The Ceremonial Center will also include a large kitchen for events. The Ceremonial Center will also proudly feature and highlight the history of our great tribal nation and our ancestors.

The Tribal Council is very excited to see the progress of this important project being built from the ground up. This space will meet the needs of our tribal community for many decades to come. I hope everyone has a great month and I look forward to working with you all to continue building a strong, open, and inclusive community.

Miigwech (Thank you), Chairman Gerald Gray



APRIL

EVENTS

MEAT AND GREET



Meat and Greet with Food Distribution at Food Distribution Building – April 12th 10am-12pm.

NATIVE WOMEN'S GROUP



Virtual – Monday the 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th
6:00 PM to 7:00 PM virtually

In collaboration with Kim Doney McKeehan, LCSW, this group offers a supportive and empowering space where Native women can connect, reflect, and cultivate emotional well-being. Each session honors personal strengths while integrating cultural traditions and deep emotional exploration, guiding participants on a powerful path of healing, growth, and self-discovery.

This virtual group is open to Native women everywhere, offering the flexibility to join from any location.

To learn more, please contact Kasey at (406)315-2400 extension 132 or by email at K.Schindele@lstribe.org

EXERCISE CLASS



ELDERS EXERCISE CLASS:
Every Wednesday 10am – 11am

We continue to hold elder's exercise classes on Wednesdays at 10:00am at the Elder's Center prior to elder's lunch. These chair exercises are geared toward strengthening, balance control, and gentle stretches.

EVERYONE EXERCISE CLASS:
Every Tuesday 5:30 – 7:15pm

Our Tuesday exercise groups will be at the elder's center at 1529 Stuckey Road.



We will do exercise stations from 5:30-6:30pm, and yoga will be from 6:30-7:15pm. This is open to anyone who wishes to attend. Diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and obesity are more prevalent amongst Native Americans. Exercise is a great way to help prevent or manage these, thus helping us live longer and healthier lives! Exercise is also very helpful for mental health so please come out and enjoy some time together and improve your overall health.

SACRED CIRCLE OF TOBACCO



Sarah and Noel will hold our next **Sacred Circle for youth group on Monday April 14th from 4:00-6:30pm** for youth ages 11-18. We will focus on healthy habits and incorporate fun activities. Healthy habits must start young to benefit both physical and mental wellbeing.

Please reach out to Sarah at 406-315-2400 ext 133, or Noel at 406-315-2400 ext 110 for more information.

FRY BREAD CHRONICLES



With Jessica Gerlett

Come learn some of the complex history of the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana. Where did we start? How did we get to where we are now? Jessica has a lot of knowledge of our history and is anxious to share!

THURSDAY APRIL 10, 2025
5:30-7:00PM
LITTLE SHELL ELDER'S CENTER
1529 STUCKEY ROAD
GREAT FALLS, MT 59404

Dinner at 5:30pm
Jessica will speak at 6:00pm

April 10th from 5:30pm -7:30pm - Elder's Center

We are coordinating with Jessica Gerlett to initiate a series where she will discuss Little Shell history. We will call this the Fry Bread Chronicles and will hold a monthly meeting where we will serve food, and Jessica will share stories of Little Shell history. This will start on Thursday April 10th from 5:30-7:00pm and will be on the second Thursday of the month at the same time until Jessica completes the series. This will be held at the Elder's center.

OTHER

BLACK BALLOON DAY



We had 14 people show up to Black Balloon Day where I did a training on the signs to look for in a suspected opioid overdose and the steps to follow if you do encounter someone in an overdose, including how to properly use and store naloxone.

I offered black balloons to anyone who wanted one and could write the name of someone they lost to overdose.

This day was founded by a family who had lost a loved one to overdose and has been becoming more popular nationally as a day to raise awareness of overdose. I distributed 24 boxes of naloxone as well.

HEALTHY COOKING CLASS



We did a healthy cooking class where Noel taught how to make a healthy meal with bison meat that was donated from our food distribution program. This is part of trying to teach healthy lifestyles, such as eating healthy and exercising regularly.

EVENTS

DENTAL HEALTH

We had the dental unit in Harlem on March 11th, and in Havre on March 12th and March 13th. We coordinated with Smiles Across Montana, and they were able to help several citizens from ages 1-74 with dental cleanings, fillings, extractions, and checkups. People with diabetes are more likely to develop gum disease, which can lead to tooth loss and jawbone damage. Gum disease can also affect insulin sensitivity. We were pleased to be able to help people from these communities as many had stated that they were having a difficult time traveling to the dentist, wait times, being able to afford an appointment, or just anxious about scheduling an appointment and going into the office setting.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

YOUR BODY. YOUR SOVEREIGNTY. YOUR DECISION.

Sexual violence is a far too common thing throughout Native communities.

According to the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, Native Americans are 2.5 times more likely to experience sexual violence in their lifetime. As we know, this may be even higher due to the lack of reporting common in Native communities. Sexual violence is any type of sexual activity done without consent. We often don't know when someone is struggling with something. Sexual violence is no exception.

If you believe someone you know and love has experienced sexual violence, here are some warning signs:

Pulling out of their favorite activities or hobbies

Your relative may be showing little or no interest in their favorite activities.

Small signs of loss of trust

Your relative might stop trusting you or your family members with small or large things.

TRIGGER WARNING

Recognizing Rape, Finding Bravery and Beginning Healing

Follow along all day as a Native American survivor shares her personal dating violence story from college. #SAAM2022 #NativeSAAM

#CenterNativeVoices pic.twitter.com/Mdo7uqi05a — strongheartsdv (@strongheartsdv) April 13, 2022

ISOLATION

You may notice that your loved one is absent or turning down more invitations. They may have secluded themselves in their homes or workplaces or finding reasons to spend more time alone or with very few people.

Signs of depression or energy fatigue

Your relative may be starting to show signs of depression. This can include changes in appetite and weight, conversations that include hopelessness or lack of outlook on life, and either uncontrollable emotions or numbing of emotions.

Loss of interest in conversations or seeming spaced out

Your relative might be experiencing zone out or feelings of disconnection while in the middle of a conversation. This could look like slow responses to questions, looks of lost in thoughts or slower speech when talking.

Seeming to be uncomfortable when talking about sex or topics related to sex

This can be a little hard to detect if you don't already know how comfortable someone is with talking about the topic of sex. But if you see a dramatic change in the comfortability of one's expression and opinions of sex this could be a sign of sexual violence.

If your partner has a change in interest in sex or being touched

If you are concerned that your partner may have experienced sexual violence, one warning sign may be that they no longer show interest in sex and pull away when you try to approach or touch them. The main component here is that they seem to have lost trust or interest in sexual touch, but not necessarily in your relationship.


While not every sexual assault or rape leaves physical injuries, here are a few to look out for:

- Bruising
- Vaginal or anal bleeding
- Broken or dislocated bones
- Difficulty walking

It can be difficult to talk with someone who has experienced something as traumatic as sexual violence. But as a relative, your support can mean a lot to a victim-survivor.

StrongHearts Native Helpline is here to chat about ways that you can support a relative experiencing the effects of sexual violence. Call or text 1-844-7NATIVE or chat here on strongheartshelpline.org, advocates are available 24/7 for free, safe and confidential support.

If you would like more information about how you can help someone in an unhealthy or abusive relationship visit our [Help a Friend or Relative](#) page.



We are here
for you.

1-844-762-8483
strongheartshelpline.org



STRONGHEARTS
Native Helpline

Keeping Your Teeth and Gums Healthy When You Have Diabetes



People with diabetes have a higher chance of having teeth and gum problems. This is why it is important to manage your blood sugar and take care of your teeth and gums.

Ways to take care of your teeth and gums:

-  **Brush your teeth twice a day.**
-  **Floss your teeth each day.**
-  **Get a dental exam at least once a year.**
-  **Avoid foods and drinks that are high in sugar.**
-  **Do not use commercial tobacco, including smokeless and chewing tobacco.**



Let your health care team know if you have any of these problems:

- Red or swollen gums
- Pain when chewing
- Loose and shifting teeth
- Bad breath that does not go away
- Sore or bleeding gums when brushing or flossing



NATIVE AMERICANS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE



Statistics



There are less than 3 million Native Americans in the United States

6.8%

6.8% more Native Americans need treatment for their alcohol use compared to general U.S. population



Fetal alcohol syndrome rates are as high as 2.5 per 1,000 live births within native people

8.2%

8.2% more Native Americans need some form of substance abuse treatment compared to others

Causes of Addiction in Native American Communities



Mental Health Concerns Among American Indians



~21% of Native Americans report past-year mental illness



Native children & adolescents have the highest rates of lifetime depression among any group

Meeting the Treatment Needs of Native Americans

Common protective factors of Native Americans include:

- A strong connection to culture
- Supportive families
- An enduring spirit
- Traditional health practices and ceremonies
- Flexibility
- Wisdom passed from tribal elders



COMMUNITY CORNER

HEALTH AND FOOD DISTRIBUTION TEAM

A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY STARTS HERE

April is all about promoting health and wellness, and this month, we are excited to highlight two key events that align with our mission to support the well-being of our tribal citizens and community.

WORLD HEALTH DAY - APRIL 7, 2025

World Health Day, organized by the World Health Organization, is an opportunity to reflect on global health priorities and the importance of access to quality healthcare for all. This year's theme focuses on building a healthier future for everyone.



MONTANA FITNESS & HEALTH EXPO - APRIL 20-21, 2025

The Montana Fitness & Health Expo in Great Falls is the perfect event to explore new ways to stay active and healthy. With vendors, demonstrations, and fitness experts on-site, it's a great chance to connect with resources and try something new.

Event Details:

Location: Montana ExpoPark

Time: 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Highlights:

Fitness class demonstrations

Local health services and products

Free wellness screenings

We encourage everyone to attend this event and explore how fitness and health can be fun and accessible for the whole family.

COMMUNITY CORNER

FDPIR UPDATES:

FDPIR provides items like lean meats, whole grains, and low-sodium options to support heart health and overall wellness.

We offer resources to help participants create nutritious meals, including cooking tips and recipes for traditional dishes.

FDPIR HEALTHY TIP OF THE MONTH:

Traditional Native foods like berries, bison, salmon, and wild rice are not only delicious but packed with nutrients that support overall health. Try incorporating one of these into your meals this month!



CONTACT US

Have questions about FDPIR or want to sign up? Contact Little Sheel Food Distribution. 406-315-2400 Ext 130. We're here to support you with food resources and guidance.

COMMUNITY CORNER

HOUSING TEAM PEMBINA APPLIANCE PROGRAM (PAP)

LST Pembina Appliance Program provides emergency appliance assistance to Little Shell tribal elders and disabled tribal members.

Approval for emergency assistance is on a case-by-case basis. The Program is funded by the Tribe's allocation of the Pembina Settlement, funding is limited.

PAP is available to Qualified Elder Little Shell tribal homeowners living in Montana.

To see if you are eligible, review the application today! HOUSING PROGRAM Montana Little Shell Chippewa Tribe montanalittleshelltribe.org



Little Shell Tribe Community Needs Assessment



The Little Shell Tribe needs to hear from you!

Survey Now Open! LSTsurvey.com

All tribal member households are invited to participate and help shape the future of our housing and community programs.

Share what matters most to you:

- What new programs and activities should the tribe offer?
- What types of housing do we need, and where should it be built?
- How can the Tribe better serve you and your household?

Exciting Raffle Opportunity!

Complete a survey to enter a \$500 raffle
 Ten raffles over ten weeks
 One winner each week!
 The earlier you participate, the more chances you have to win!



Scan for Survey

Visit LSTsurvey.com for more information
 Contact Sarah Gaines at s.gaines@lstribe.org | 406-316-2400 x 133
 Lets Go Community!

COMMUNITY CORNER

ICWA TEAM



SPRING GREETINGS FROM THE ICWA DEPARTMENT!!

The ICWA Department is looking to assist Little Shell Citizens in becoming licensed foster parents so our children can stay within their culture. There is such a need to keep our children in our culture. Please contact the ICWA Department to help us understand the barriers so we can work on getting them out of the way!

Native American children make up one third of the children in foster care in Montana even though they are only 10 percent of the population of Montana. The Little Shell ICWA Department is dedicated to decreasing this over representation.

I encourage everyone to write to their State Legislature to support the Montana Indian Child Welfare Act! This is a great law and it is VERY IMPORTANT for the future of Indian Country!

ICWA Definition of an Indian Child:

- Unmarried
- Under the age of 18
- A tribal member or eligible for membership and the biological child of a tribal member (25 U.S.C. § 1903)

CONTACT US

If anyone would like more information on ICWA please feel free to call me!
(406) 315-2400 ext. 120