

LITTLE SHELL VOICES

Official Little Shell Tribal Newsletter - May 2026

Aanii (Hello),

I want to take a moment to share some positive updates about the work our ICWA Department is doing to support Little Shell families and protect our children.

Because our ICWA team has been so involved and active in cases, the State has started to change how they work with Indian Custodians. Now, if an Indian Custodian can become a licensed foster parent, the Department can support guardianships that give children more stability and protection when parents aren't able to safely care for them.

We're also seeing progress here in Cascade County. The County is now using a safety plan that allows them to work with Indigenous families before things go to court. This helps families get support earlier and can prevent situations from getting worse.

Our ICWA Department is also working with the State on a Court Improvement Program to bring an ICWA Court to Cascade County. The goal is to make the court process more understanding, more culturally aware, and less stressful for our families.

Right now, our ICWA team is working on 14 active cases, along with helping other families who aren't in court but still need support. Most of this work is happening in Cascade County, but we are also helping families in other states.

The team is doing a lot behind the scenes. Helping families understand the process, providing home visits, giving rides to court and meetings, sitting in with parents during CPS meetings, and connecting families to resources. They also help with enrollment, offer Positive Indian Parenting support, and assist in court when needed.

Most importantly, they make sure families don't feel like they are going through this alone.

I'm very proud of the work our ICWA staff is doing every day, and I want to thank them for their dedication to our children and families.

Miigwech (Thank you),
Chairman Gerald Gray

INSIDE

• Community Corner

• Cultural Corner

• Wellness Corner



FOOD DISTRIBUTION



OLDER AMERICANS MONTH – POWERED BY CONNECTION

Each May, we recognize Older Americans Month, a time to honor the strength, wisdom, and contributions of our elders. This year's theme, Powered by Connection, reminds us how important it is to stay connected to one another and to the resources that support our health and well-being.

At our FDPIR program, our elders are a priority. We are here to help make sure they have access to healthy, nutritious foods that support a long and independent life. Good nutrition is key to overall health, and we are proud to be part of that support system.

We also understand that not everyone is able to come in, which is why we offer deliveries to help reach those who need it most. Whether you visit us in person or receive a delivery, our goal is to make sure no elder goes without the food and care they deserve.

May is also Strawberry Month, a reminder that fresh, healthy foods can be both nutritious and enjoyable. Strawberries are packed with vitamins and make a great addition to a balanced diet. We are happy to offer strawberries through our FDPIR program, helping our elders enjoy healthy foods while taking care of their overall well-being.

Food brings people together, and even the smallest connections—whether it's a visit, a conversation, or a delivery—help strengthen our community and remind our elders that they are valued and supported.

May is National Strawberry Month

mijim
CENTER

1301 Stuckey Rd.
Great Falls Mt 406-
315-2400 Ext 130

COMMUNITY CORNER COMMUNITY CORNER

HOUSING

APPLIANCE REPLACEMENT PROGRAMS



The Tribe is Offering Two Appliance Replacement Programs

HUD Appliance Program

- Reside in **Tribal Service Area: Cascade, Glacier Blaine or Hill Counties in Montana.**
- Little Shell Tribal Member must Own or Reside in the House (**NO AGE RESTRICTION!**)
- Low Income Household

Appliances Offered:



Pembina Appliance Program

- Reside anywhere in **Montana.**
- Little Shell Tribal Member **Elders 62 years** or Members with a **Long-Term Disability**
- Low Income Household

Appliances Offered:



ICWA

GREETINGS FROM THE ICWA DEPARTMENT!! WE HOPE EVERYONE IS ENJOYING THE SPRINGTIME!

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.

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.

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

The ICWA Department attended the National NICWA Conference and is putting what was learned to go use.

Starting with a parenting class that will begin on May 4th at 4:00pm and will be going for 8 weeks. If you are interested, please call Edith at 406-315-2400, extension 120.

ENROLLMENT



ENROLLMENT QUESTIONS?

Call: 406.315.2400 ask for Jessica OR Email: Enrollment@lstribe.org

CULTURE

SPRING INTO MAY WITH THE CULTURE DEPARTMENT

Allot going on in the Tobacco, Alcohol and Substance Prevention and Culture Department.

A few changes for the Summer Months, we will only be hosting one Culture Class and one Bingo night a month. The classes will continue to be hosted for Culture class from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and for Bingo 5:30-7:30 p.m.

The decision to make these changes was due to the need for improved health of all of us. We native people are generally more active outdoors in the summer months, gardening, traveling and of course the need to intake vitamin D (Sunshine).

We will continue to have potlucks for both programs. It's always interesting to see what delicious food will be contributed and thank you all for graciously participating. We hope to have a BBQ theme for both events.

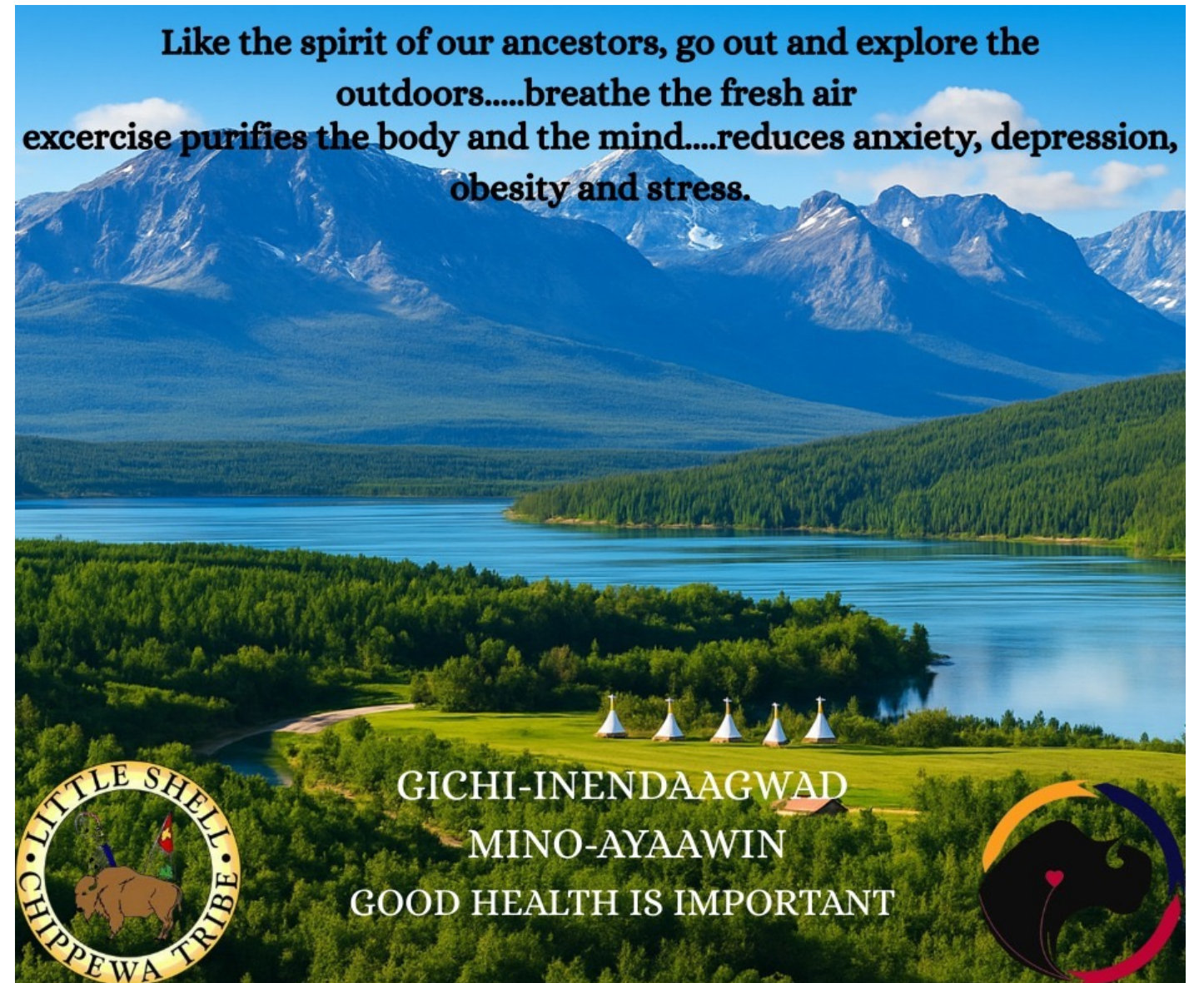
We will provide burgers, hotdogs, or other BBQed meats, and just ask everyone to bring a side, fresh fruit or veggies, and of course dessert.

In the absence of the double Bingo night and Culture night for the summer. We look to offer a lot of outdoor activities. Our focus is about getting in shape and good health. "GICHI INENDAAGWAD MINO-AYA AWIN", Which translates to Good Health is Important. We encourage everyone to start getting more active with the nicer weather. Get out and go walking, running etc.

We will be hosting traditional medicine gatherings. Which will require a lot of hiking and walking on unlevel ground to reach the traditional medicines. We do not want anyone to get hurt or have a medical emergency when participating in these learning activities.

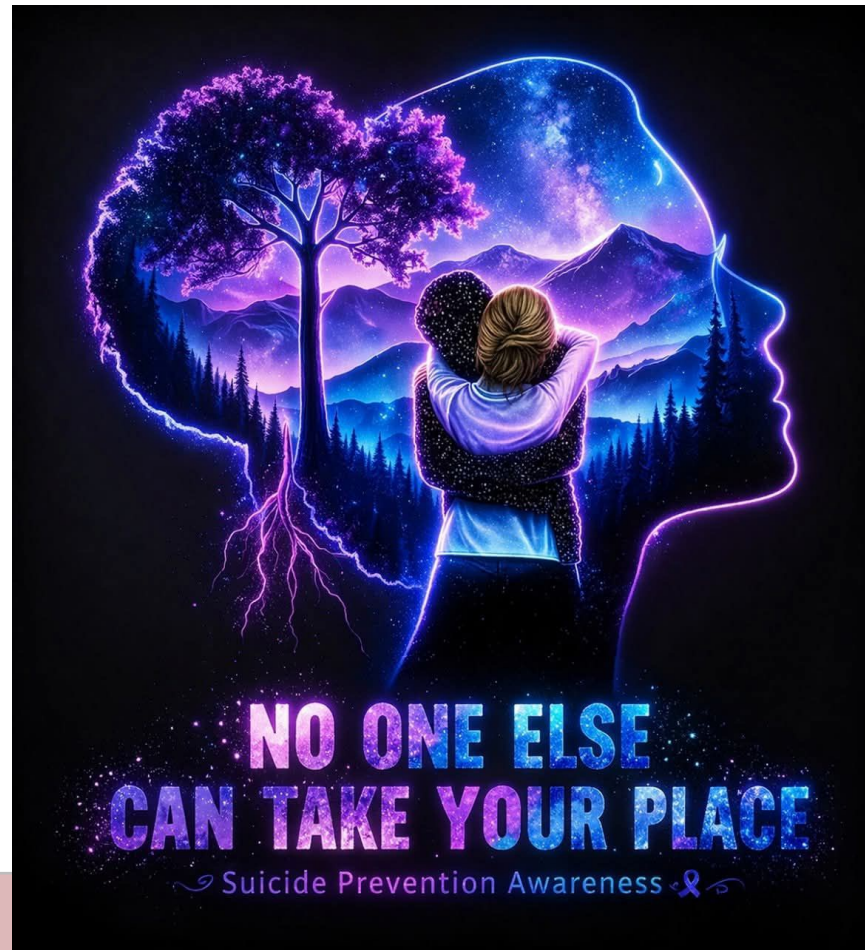
With school so close to being out and us wrapping up our youth activities at the schools, we also want to encourage our youth to get out and off their phones, to learn more about our culture and traditional ways with our elders and connect with nature. There will be opportunities to participate in swimming and gym activities to include water aerobics for our Elder's and Youth groups. Craig is putting together a Little Shell youth competition climbing team, which will compete statewide. These are just a few of the activities we will be hosting in May.

Sneak peek for June.... We will be hosting the Youth Warrior Summit. More details will be forth coming, please be sure to check the Little Shell Tribal Health and Wellness Facebook page for sign ups and more information.



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

HEALTH AND WELLNESS



SELF HARM IN NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE

Native American communities in Montana, including the Great Falls area, face disproportionately high suicide rates, with Indigenous youth suicide rates over five times the state average. From 2017–2021, Native Americans accounted for 10% of Montana suicides despite representing only 6.5% of the population. These rates are often driven by, systemic disparities, substance abuse and domestic violence.

Past trauma's, relationship issues and self-doubt are just a few of the reasons why some of us Native American's start down the path of self-harm. Suggested ways to reduce these devastating numbers are to encourage each other. Speak positive thoughts of encouragement. Talk to an elder, family member or friend. There are healing properties when your harmful thoughts are vocalized. Participate in cultural events, connect with nature, Fresh air leads to fresh ideas and thoughts. The #988 suicide hotline is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week to listen or offer advice. The Little Shell Clinic offers a full team of licensed professionals. Call or stop by and make an appointment. Please always remember ... never make a permanent solution to a temporary problem.



MAY 5TH IS MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND PERSONS DAY

PLEASE WEAR YOUR RIBBON SKIRTS OR SHIRTS IN SUPPORT

MMIWP – started out as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women movement. However, due to increased rates of children and men the movement has now been changed to add the acronym.

KEY FACTS ON THE MMIWP CRISIS:

- High Rates of Violence: A 2016 study found 84.3% of American Indian/Alaska Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime, with 56.1% experiencing sexual violence.
- Systemic Issues: Many perpetrators are non-Indigenous, and tribal courts often lack jurisdiction to prosecute them, leading to high rates of unsolved cases.
- Data Gaps: Data on MMIWP is often not collected or reported properly by law enforcement agencies, hiding the true extent of the crisis.
- Key Initiatives: In 2023, Washington state created the first MMIWP Cold Case Unit. May 5th is nationally recognized as Missing & Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day.
- Impact: The crisis is often associated with high rates of domestic violence and human trafficking