

The People's Way Project:

How traditional ways of knowing the land led to the creation of the most extensive wildlife-sensitive highway in North America

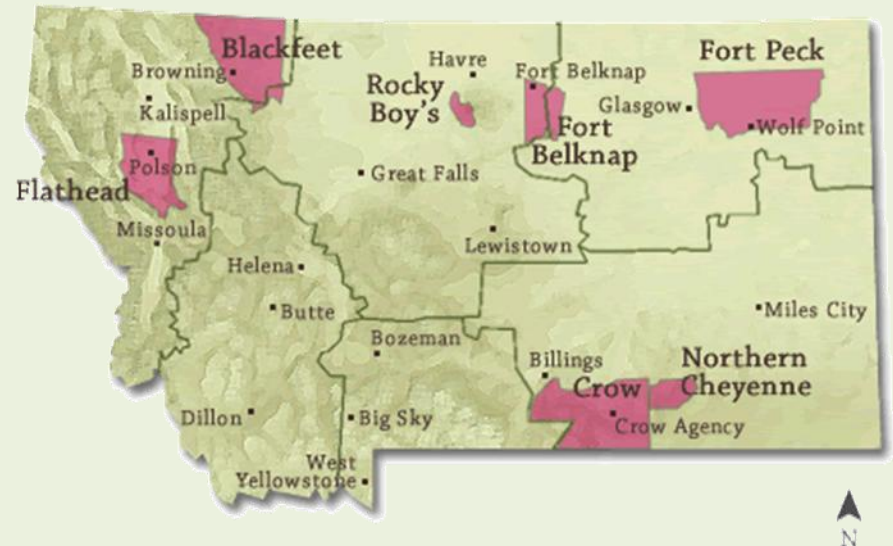
By Kim Skyelander

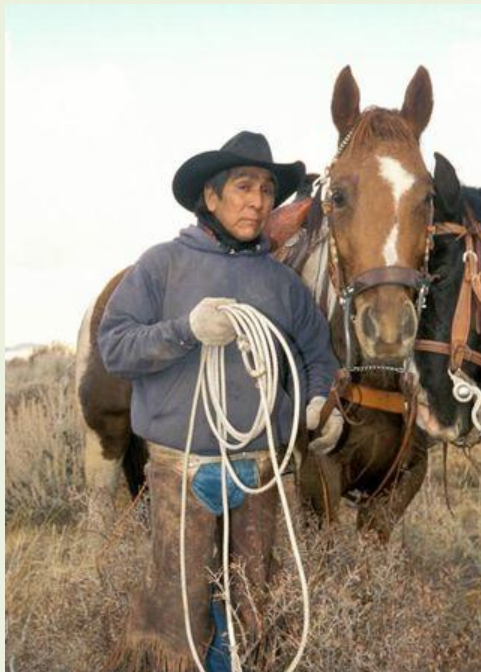




Size: 1,938 square miles
(1,317,000 acres)

Population: 21,259 of that, only
6,100 are tribal members





Salish

Kootenai

Pend D'Oreille





Flathead Lake

Flathead River

Mission Mountains

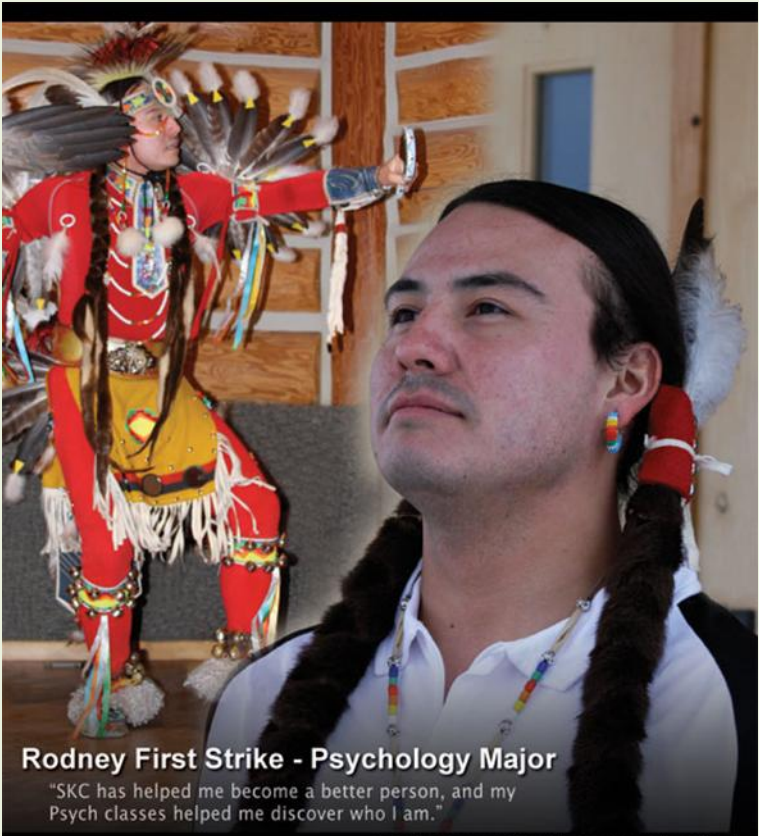
National Bison Range

Ninepipe National
Wildlife Refuge




Major Sources of Income

- Revenue from Kerr Dam (which they lease to Montana Power Company)
- The Kwataqnuk ("where the water leaves the lake") resort and casino
- S&K Holding—an electronics manufacturing firm
- Salish Kootenai College
- Land leasing, selling timber, seasonal agriculture, tourism
- Tribal and government employment




Rodney First Strike - Psychology Major
"SKC has helped me become a better person, and my Psych classes helped me discover who I am."

Salish Kootenai College is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.



SALISH KOOTENAI COLLEGE
GROUNDED IN TRADITION - CHARGING INTO THE FUTURE

DEGREES OFFERED	Associate of Arts Degree (A.A.)	Associate Applied Science Degree (A.A.S.)
Bachelor of Arts Degree (B.A.) Business/Entrepreneurship Social Work Psychology	Business Management Early Childhood Education Liberal Arts Native American Studies Psychology	Dental Assisting Technology Business Technology Media Design
Bachelor of Science Degree (B.S.) Computer Engineering Early Childhood Education Elementary Education Environmental Science Forestry Information Technology Life Sciences Nursing Secondary Science Education	Associate of Science Degree (A.S.) Elementary Education Engineering Graphics Environmental Science Forestry General Science Information Technology Nursing	Certificate of Completion (C.C.) Dental Assisting Technology Digital Arts and Design Highway Construction Training Medical Office Clerk Native American Studies Office Professionals



PO BOX 70 - PABLO, MT 59855 - 406-275-4800 WWW.SK.CEDU

The People's Way Project

The Challenge...

Reconstruct 53 miles of U.S. Hwy 93 to meet safety and capacity needs while respecting tribal cultural, community and environmental values.





**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**





The Problem...

“Pray for me, I drive 93”

Montana’s most dangerous
two-lane highway...

From 1995-1999, 42 people
were killed and 727 were
injured along the 53 mile
stretch of highway.



The Proposal... (MDT, 1989)

Expand U.S. 93 into a **four-lane undivided highway** with

- wider lanes and shoulders,
- straighter and flatter alignments
- more passing and turning lanes
- and fewer access roads bisecting the highway

Highest levels of safety and capacity for the road at the lowest cost.



The Opposition...

CS&KT strongly opposed the plan because of concerns that a four-lane highway would:

- accelerate non-tribal development
- adversely affect wildlife and wetlands
- damage tribal cultural and spiritual sacred sites
- erase parts of tribal history etched into the landscape



“The road is a visitor and should respond to and be respectful of the land and Spirit of Place.”

Tribal elders



Spirit of Place is a continuum of everything on the reservation that is
seen and unseen,
touched and felt,
and traveled through.

Stalemate...

For 10 years, the three governments could not agree on:

lane configurations,

design criteria, or

environmental impacts and enhancements.







Tribal

Circular thinking – all things related

Humans part of nature

Social, cultural, spiritual

Process of relationships

Hwy Departments

Linear thinking – get from point A to B

Humans separate from nature

Intellectual, physical, economic

End product

Solutions...

In the fall of 1998, MDT hired Skillings-Connolly Inc. of Lacey, WA.

Context-Sensitive Design-

A new kind of planning defined as "a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility."

Yes!

In the spring of 2000, the Tribes hired Jones & Jones Architects—to develop concepts for landscape architecture, roadway aesthetics, and mitigation.

- using natural materials like locally quarried stone
- landscaping along the road to enhance the characters of the towns
- dodging and maintaining pond and lake integrity and restoring those that have been divided by the existing highway



- healing the scars from road cuts and blasting
- install interpretive/name signs conveying the important cultural and natural landscape information in Salish, Kootenai, English
- re-vegetate with indigenous plants and soils, and preserving existing trees and outcrops as much as possible
- install wildlife crossing structures for animal movement and to connect habitats



Finally...

On Dec. 20, 2000 the three governments signed a historic memorandum of agreement that outlined areas where the three groups could agree on road design and environmental impacts.

"The words in the MOA are about rebuilding a road," says Fred Matt, the CSKT's tribal council chairman. "But the process leading up to it was about listening to each other, rebuilding trust, honor, and mutual respect among the governments."

Moler, 2002



"We got away from this notion that the road is the important thing," says Jim Sipes, a Jones & Jones senior associate. "The road is the visitor. You've got to be mindful that there's a history to be respected. Now we have a road that is integrated with the land rather than slicing through it; it fits the landscape."

Moler, 2002

Wildlife Crossing Structures



Goals:

Restore habitat, create corridors for wildlife migration, and conserve all species and increase human safety by reducing the number of animal-vehicle collisions.



Why the People's Way Project is Unique

42 wildlife crossings in 56-miles of highway

- 8 open-span bridges
- 33 corrugated metal pipe or concrete box culverts of various sizes,
- one 26-foot-high, 54 feet wide and 200-foot-long tunnel overcrossing
- over 16 miles of fencing (8.3 on one side of the highway, 8.3 on the other - on three different sections)
- all the crossings have "wing fencing" of up to a quarter-mile on either side of them to help guide the animals to their safe passage.





2009, \$1.88 million

Total project cost = \$121 million





May of 2008 - December of 2009,
camera work and tracking surveys
documented a bit over 6,500 wildlife
crossings or uses of the crossing
structures.

In 2008:

3,647 white-tailed deer
24 black bears
4 grizzly bears
1 elk
1 moose
147 mule deer
17 mountain lions or bobcats
121 coyotes
255 “miscellaneous species,”
including muskrats, skunks, raccoons,
badgers, otters , beavers,
mice, rabbits, wood rats, weasels,
owls, pheasants, and grouse.







Image courtesy of CSKT & MDT 2009



The Midwest Research Institute, of Kansas City, MO, (one of the nation's premier traffic operations and safety consultants,) has predicted that over the next 20 years the new road design will:

- reduce fatal crashes by 70,
- injury crashes by 520, and
- property-damage-only crashes by 650,
- for a total of 1,240 fewer incidents.



What Next?

- Another 17 to 18 wildlife crossing structures on more sections of Highway 93 North.
- The addition of numerous reptile and amphibian crossings.
- US 93 South will have 19 large mammal crossing and numerous small animal crossings in a 25 mile stretch.



