

BNAS Board Report February 2023

From January 30th -February 1st Myself plus four others used monies from the ILIP grant to visit the archives in the University of Montana archives, specifically the Sherburne collection and sat in on two language classes, Blackfoot and Arapaho. We spent as much time as we could in the archives and absolutely had a blast and found some amazing information and took pictures of documents we feel would be great to share with BPS staff and students. For instance, a letter dated April 25, 1923 (nearly 100 years ago) came from a little girl from the Kirtland Farm in Medford, Oregon sent money to the Blackfeet Indian Relief Fund because she had read James Schultz article called "Starving Blackfeet." This small letter can be shown to our students (along with the Schultz article) about the importance of writing and how we can inspire good people through out the world to send our people aid and empathy. There were letters of other people and businesses sending money to the relief fund but the letter stuck out to me because the person was "a little girl who is much interested in the Blackfeet Indians." (letter is attached)

We also found a newspaper article from when the Tribe voted in favor of the Howard Wheeler Bill (also known as the Indian Reorganization Act) of 1934 that shows us that *70* percent of eligible voters casted their ballots (I believe we get less than 30% nowadays)! This is useful information that will show that it is aligned with our traditional ways to be involved with the politics of our people. Also found was a letter we assume was written by James Sherburne to the Great Falls Tribune about a man who was stabbed, nearly bled to death, but still cast is ballot for an election in the 1940's. Again, this shows how persistent we once was in involving ourselves in the pollical world that effects our reservation and people. We can show these documents to our students and showcase the power of caring about our local tribal elections.

There was various documents about the Browning Schools, carnivals beings held in 1930, basketball teams doing well and winning a lot (and walking through snow to get to a gym to practice, so I guess our grandparents were no exaggerating when they told us they walked through harsh weather to make it to school)! There were documents outlining how many students BPS had enrolled in specific years and how budgets covered only the enrolled Blackfeet and specifically said not the Cree students (which can potentially open a conversation for how we have progressed from such thinking but how we are also still stuck in such thinking). Articles about our marching band and how big it was (showing that it is in our traditions to play brass instruments)!

I have attached some documents but it's only a small fraction of what we discovered. We, the people who traveled to the archives, have yet to organize and centralize all the documents we found but will be doing that soon. One thing we all agreed upon is that it would be highly beneficial to make such trip again. The things we found were priceless and precious and we believe will add to our local history and BNAS department. In the coming months we will try and make this trip again. Out of all the wonderful traveling I have had the priviledge to

embark while working for BPS this one was the trip that I believe allows me to bring back the most useful things for our schools and students and faculty.

There were also great photographs we stumbled across that the archives will scan for us soon. I attach one of them to this report. We got the idea that we can organize a contest among our students to find the locations of those photographs of old Browning and take a new picture from that same angle. I think this will show that although a lot of time has passed since they were taken, but we are very much connected to such era, that the past is not static from the present but a direct line to who we are today.

The classes we sat in were language classes that teach Blackfoot and Arapaho. Both utilized the ASLA (Accelerated Second Language Acquisition) method in instruction, the same method our BNAS teachers have been trained in and continue to be trained within. The Blackfoot teacher, Haley Jane Running Crane, is a Browning Alumni and reached out to the BNAS to help with materials and is basically using the same curriculum we use at BPS. A 2022 graduate of BHS is in her class, Britney Wagner. So, we are in an unofficial partnership with the UM in that regard.

It was useful for the travelers to sit in on the Arapaho class for they got to see the method being used in a language they may have never heard before, to see how effective it is.

In other news, we have received a documents recording about the history of Treaties. The BNAS bought the materials from William Big Bull, a fluent speaker who created the writing system we use at BPS. We continue to make more materials for the language and, I believe, are creating the most content for our language with respect to the Confederacy.