

Salish Kootenai College  
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by Dennis LaBonty

Salish Kootenai College (SKC) is a Tribal College located in Pablo, Montana, in the heart of the majestic Mission Valley on the Flathead Indian Reservation. It was established in 1976 to ensure Salish Kootenai College's ability to provide quality postsecondary educational opportunities for Native Americans locally and throughout the United States. SKC is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), and the Dental Assisting, Highway Construction Training, Nursing, and Social Work programs are accredited by their respective associations.

Academic programs continue to flourish. These consist of five certifications, twenty-two associate degree programs, and sixteen bachelor degree programs. With a talented and dedicated staff and faculty, students are prepared to enter the workforce and make a difference in any path they choose to follow. SKC is an open-enrollment institution with a student body representing twenty-two states and seventy tribes. Each year students graduate in business, environmental science, forestry, hydrology, tribal historic preservation, nursing, education, information technology, and other degree programs.

The state-of-the-art campus includes the D'Arcy McNickle Library, open throughout the year, student housing and family living units, the Joe McDonald Health & Wellness Center, which is available for student and community recreation. Campus growth and new construction in facilities and buildings are state-of-the-art. These enhancements translate into unique student-learning experiences, academic achievements, and community outreach. Moreover, SKC's campus is the second largest campus in terms of physical size in Montana and its surrounding natural scenery is aspiring.

Salish Kootenai College graduates are prepared for many careers through small classroom enrollments and hands-on learning experiences. Students are involved in prestigious programs including:

- A tribal student-crafted satellite that is now orbiting the Earth. This was a joint project with the U.S. National Reconnaissance Office GRACE mission. SKC was one of 13 selected colleges participating in the CubeSats project.
- The American Indigenous Research Association Conference, a three day conference of national speakers and workshop presenters. This annual conference is hosted by SKC.
- The Life Science Department recently attracted significant funding from the National Institute of Health and the US Environmental Protection Agency to establish a research Center for Tribal Risk Assessment. The Center is currently engaged in assisting national tribal environmental work groups that work directly with the EDPA to set policy to control and minimize exposure to toxic compounds in tribal communities.

Two collegiate sports include basketball and rodeo. In basketball the Lady Bison and Bison (men's) teams placed first in the 2015 American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) national basketball tournament. While the rodeo team is only in its second year, its future looks bright.

Salish Kootenai College is an outstanding institution of involved students with dedicated and highly-qualified faculty. It has numerous programs that generate successful tribal-community minded graduates near and far. SKC is a community of students, faculty, and staff that are passionately committed to "excellence" in higher education.

**Editorial Note:** *Montana ACTE would like to express their condolences to the Salish Kootenai College community on the passing of their President Robert DePoe III.*