

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
July 7, 2005

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AMERICAN INDIAN BUSINESS LEADERS (AIBL) EXPANDS WITH NEW MIDWEST OFFICE



(Missoula, Mont.) –The American Indian Business Leaders (AIBL) organization recently expanded by opening a new Midwest AIBL office at the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College (FDLTCC) in Cloquet, Minn.

The new Midwest AIBL office is part of a larger plan to increase small-business and entrepreneurship opportunities and resources for American Indian students in midwestern and northeastern America.

AIBL is a nonprofit organization that focuses on American Indian student interest and participation in business, entrepreneurship, leadership and tribal economic development activities through the on-going creation and maintenance of student and professional chapters.

Headquartered in Missoula, Mont., since inception in 1995, AIBL has grown nationally to over 50 chapters.

“I am proud to be a part of the significant growth AIBL has experienced in the past decade,” said Tina Begay, AIBL Executive Director. “This new office is going to be a critical part of providing more resources to American Indian small-business students in the midwestern and northeastern United States.”

The new Midwest AIBL office is funded through a \$1.9 million, five-year, Title III grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The new Midwest AIBL office will serve as the regional headquarters for organizational expansion into the midwestern and northeastern United States.

In the third year of administrating the grant, Dr. Jean Ness of the University of Minnesota wrote the successful bid in collaboration with the FDLTCC.

“These grants are designed to help strengthen institutions,” Ness said. “AIBL is a real vehicle to strengthening our student’s business abilities and opportunities.”

In addition to the new Midwest AIBL office, the grant monies are focused on expanding the educational environment for students interested in small-business and entrepreneurship at FDLTCC, including:

- ❖ Development of a four-year, comprehensive Sustainable Development bachelors degree with core components that include Small Business/Entrepreneurship; American Indian Studies; Environmental Science; and Alternative Energy
- ❖ Enhancement of library resources for reference on small-business/entrepreneurship and sustainable development
- ❖ Increased retention of Native students through a Family Education Specialist that engages with students and their families involved in the educational process to improve factors that allow a student to succeed in school.

AIBL alumni, Ms. Erin Langenbrunner, has been chosen to lead the new Midwest AIBL office as Director.

As a former FDLTCC and University of Montana Business School student, Langenbrunner says that including AIBL in the plan to increase small-business and entrepreneurship opportunities at FDLTCC makes sense, because AIBL provides important networking opportunities and helps students enhance their small business and entrepreneurship skills.

“When I joined AIBL, it really sparked my interest to study business,” Langenbrunner said. “AIBL instilled in me a belief that if you dare to dream you’ll succeed. It’s critical for emerging small-business owners and entrepreneurs to get that kind of support.”

Some of Langenbrunner’s first priorities as Director of the new Midwest AIBL office will include reaching out to other Tribal Community Colleges in the region to help guide the creation of new AIBL chapters; provide support to business students through continued development of resources at FDLTCC; and work to increase students’ networking opportunities through participation in AIBL activities.