



Happy Native American Heritage Month! It's a time to celebrate the history, culture, and contributions of Indigenous communities, learn from the past, and reflect on the powerful leadership of those who have fought—and continue to fight—for justice and positive change.

While the election last week brought complex and challenging outcomes for many, it also welcomed ten Indigenous legislators to the Montana State Legislature—a meaningful step toward representation. These newly elected leaders include:

- Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy (District 16)
- Sen. Jacinda Morigeau (District 46)
- Rep. Thedis Crowe (District 15)
- Rep. Tyson Running Wolf (District 16)
- Rep. Frank Smith (District 31)
- Rep. Mike Fox (District 32)
- Rep. Jade Sottkis (District 41)
- Rep. Shelly Fyant (District 91)
- Rep. Donavon Hawk (District 72)
- Rep. Sidney Fitzpatrick (District 42)

They will take their seats in the upcoming 2025 legislative session, and we are encouraged to witness the growing representation of Indigenous voices in our state's government. There will now be 12 Indigenous Montana legislators, which represents 8% of the total body. Montana should be proud that we have one of the highest percentages of Indigenous members of our legislature and are the only state in the nation where the percentage of Indigenous elected lawmakers exceeds that of the state's overall Indigenous population.

Be sure to explore the "Find Your Y" section of this newsletter for local events and resources this month, including learning opportunities, book recommendations, and ways to support Indigenous artists. We hope this month inspires all of us to work together for a more inclusive and equitable future.

Feeling grateful to each of you for joining us in this challenging and vital work!
Jen

New & Noteworthy

Giving Tuesday: Give the Gift of Shelter

On Giving Tuesday (December 3rd), join us to help provide warmth, safety, and shelter to Missoula's unhoused families. As the costs of housing, food, and other necessities continue to rise, more families are experiencing houselessness. The Meadowlark is here to provide a

lifeline- but we need your help to meet the growing need.

Our goal this Giving Tuesday is to raise \$10,000 . Every dollar counts, and your support helps fund a safe place to stay and access to vital support services that put families back on a path to stability.

Help us reach our goal and make a real impact in the lives of our neighbors. Mark your calendar for Giving Tuesday and be a part of a community effort to give the gift of shelter.

[Learn more.](#)

Join Us for Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day!

On November 14, 1960, six-year-old Ruby Bridges bravely walked through crowds of segregationists to become the first Black child to integrate William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans. Her courage helped pave the way for desegregation in schools across the U.S.

This year, on the 64th anniversary of Ruby's historic walk, we're honoring her legacy by supporting kids as they walk to school in the name of courage. **Everyone is invited to meet at the AAA parking lot, 1200 S. Reserve St, at 7 a.m. this Thursday, November 14.** Wear purple, and enjoy a cup of hot cocoa with friends! Even a short walk—a block or so—counts in showing solidarity.

Let's come together to celebrate bravery, community, and progress! [Learn more about this national event here.](#)

Holidays at The Meadowlark

This holiday season, help us bring warmth and joy to the nearly 80 children and their families who are staying in our shelters at The Meadowlark—double last year's numbers! *We're accepting donations to fill gift baskets* with essentials and little treats to make the season special for families and survivors. Requested items include winter hats, gloves, body care items, snacks, gift cards, and more.

[Click here for the full holiday wish list and details on how to donate.](#) We are also looking for community members to 'sponsor a child' and shop for specific wish lists. Thank you for helping us make the holidays brighter!

Staff Spotlight

Jessica Colton, Planet Kids Program Manager

Jess Colton brings a wealth of personal and professional experience to her role as the manager of Planet Kids, our supervised visitation program for families impacted by domestic violence. With eight years in recovery from mental health and substance use challenges, Jess is also completing a degree in criminal justice. Her background includes five years as a peer support specialist, with roles in inpatient treatment and shelters.

Jess is deeply passionate about YWCA's mission for its inclusivity, survivor-centered approach, and emphasis on holistic wellness. She's committed to helping individuals and families navigate complex systems and achieve lasting recovery, including family reunification, as she has gone through many of these challenges herself.



Outside of work, Jess enjoys spending time with her adult children and grandbaby, who have been a vital part of her journey. She loves relaxing in Montana's hot springs and immersing herself in nature, where she finds peace and gratitude for the life she's built in recovery.

Program Updates



GUTS! Program Update

Our GUTS! youth leadership and empowerment program is in full swing! There are eight groups meeting at local elementary and middle schools this semester, as well as one at The YWCA Meadowlark and one in Arlee. Recently, participants completed a healthy boundaries activity, where they explored setting personal limits in a fun and interactive way, building confidence and respect for others.

As the semester wraps up, each group will dive into an action project aimed at benefiting their school or community. These projects, like a hot cocoa stand to support the local animal shelter or a PSA video on respect at school, are driven by the group's passions. Through planning and executing their ideas, youth learn the power of their voices to create meaningful change!

[Learn more about our GUTS! program.](#)



Find Your "Y"

Each month, YWCA Missoula highlights events, debunks myths, explores important topics, and celebrates diverse cultures and identities.

In honor of **Native American Heritage Month**, we're spotlighting some books and local events that celebrate Indigenous culture, voices, and stories.

Books for young readers:

- The Ribbon Skirt by Cameron Mukwa
- Buffalo Dreamer by Violet Duncan
- Red Bird Danced by Dawn Quigley

Books for adults:

- "All the Real Indians Died Off" and 20 Other Myths About Native Americans by Dina Gilio-Whitaker and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz
- The Wisdom of the Native Americans by Kent Nerburn
- Not Vanishing by Chrystos

Local Events

- **Art display at Missoula Public Library** – Check out art from Dre Castillo (@drecastillocreations) and Monica Gilles BringsYellow (@brings_yellow_horses) on Level 4 throughout the month. (We're lucky to also have artwork by Monica Gilles BringsYellow on display at The Meadowlark!)
- **Indigenous Made Winter Market – November 30th, 10am–3pm** at the Fairgrounds. Shop fine art, jewelry, and unique holiday gifts from local Indigenous makers. Learn more

on Instagram: @indigenoumademontana.

- **Film Screening of Frybread Face and Me** – Free screening at The Roxy Theater, Tuesday, **November 12th at 5pm**. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion moderated by Dr. Annie Belcourt, PhD, with Jason Begay, Tara Weaselhead-Running Crane, and O'Maste-Win Foster. Learn more.



Trailblazer Spotlight: Chrystos

Chrystos is a writer and activist whose published work explores Indigenous Americans' civil rights, social justice, and feminism. This two-spirited poet explores issues of colonialism, genocide, violence against Native people, queerness, street life, and other intersections of personhood. Chrystos identifies with her father's Menominee ancestry.

"Since my 20's, when I saw the need to address social justice issues in words, my work just 'pops out.' A newspaper story, an incident from my life, a book, a song, a garden snake, a sad face I see—I have no idea, actually, how these become poems," Chrystos said, in an interview for Black Coffee Poet blog. "A line begins in my mind and won't leave me alone. I've learned to sit

and write it down and the rest just flows."



Secret Seconds 50% Off Sale!

Get ready for big savings! **This Friday and Saturday, November 15th and 16th**, enjoy half off all clothing, shoes, and accessories at Secret Seconds Thrift Stores. Stop by either location—920 Kensington or 1136 W. Broadway—between 10 AM and 6 PM to snag some amazing deals. Every purchase supports YWCA Missoula programs, so you're shopping for a great cause. Don't miss it!

Get Involved



Get a Family Housing Center License Plate

Make a difference in our community by purchasing a YWCA Missoula + MIC Family Housing Center license plate. With its simple, starry mountain design, the plate represents your commitment to investing in families and children and helps fund essential services and support to unhoused families at The Meadowlark.

[Click here to learn how to get your plate](#)

Employment Opportunities

Join our team and make a difference in the community! We're currently hiring for the following positions:

- Pathways Advocate
- Family Housing Center Advocate

- Housing Stabilization Case Manager
- Family Housing Center Program Manager
- Facilities Technician
- Secret Seconds Store Clerk
- Rapid Rehousing Case Manager

[Learn more and apply](#)



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