Thanks to our hosts: Gypsy Ray, Executive Director, Lake County Community Development Corporation, and Janet Camel, Planning Director, The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, hosted an incredible MEDA Fall Conference. Below are links to the presentations, websites, and photos. Thanks to everyone who joined us in Polson.

Wednesday, October 12, 2016, began with a networking social hosted by The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation. Janet Camel welcomed everyone to the KwaTaqNuk, to the Flathead Reservation, and to Polson.

Thursday morning began with a welcome from the Yamnacut Drum Group and a keynote address from Tribal Vice Chairman Leonard TwoTeeth (pictured left to right above.)

MEDA President Paul Tuss presented Senator Jon Tester with the Congressional Partnership Award from the National Association of Development Organizations. Bear Paw Development Corporation nominated Senator Tester.

Montana’s entire Congressional Delegation sent letters of greeting to MEDA attendees.
Economic Development and Native American Tribes – How it Works!
CSKT’s Planning Director, Janet Camel, facilitated a panel to describe how CSKT’s government interacts with businesses and workforce development partners, and plans for future generations. More information:
Brian Lipscomb  Energy Keepers, Inc.
Larry Hall of  S & K Electronics
Steve Clairmont  S & K Holding Company
Philip Belangie  Indian Country Programs
Carol Cunningham  Lake County CDC

How do they do it?  Government Contracting ~ Montana PTAC & NADC
Deanna Langman, Big Sky EDA and her PTAC team shared about the PTAC/NADC program. Catch the video here.

Presenters R to L: Deanna Langman, Patty Cox, Carol Cunningham, and Robert Much.

MEDA Annual Awards Luncheon and Visit with Governor Bullock
Kathie Bailey, MEDA Awards Committee Chair, worked with a Review Committee to determine this year’s winning innovative partnerships and select one economic development champion. Two 2016 MEDA Innovation Award winners were: Great Falls Development Authority and its work with ADF; Big Sky Economic Development Authority and the program BillingsWorks. Gloria O’Rourke, MEDA’s Coordinator, received the Anthony J. Preite Champion Award.

L to R: Paul Tuss, Brett Doney, Governor Bullock; Paul Tuss, Brittney Souza, Governor Bullock; Anthony J. Preite, Paul Tuss, Gloria O’Rourke and Governor Bullock.
Governor Bullock addressed the MEDA audience and responded to five questions regarding topics of interest to MEDA. Governor Bullock announced his support for Montana’s key economic development programs.

Food Entrepreneurs: Montana Grown Food and Farmers

Jan Tusick, Lake County Community Development, facilitated a panel of Mission Valley food entrepreneurs and farmers who told their stories on developing value added products from locally grown agriculture. Businesses featured included: Wendi Arnold- Flathead Lake Cheese, Dave Prather- Western Montana Growers Cooperative, Karl Sutton- Fresh Root Farm (Triple Divide Organic Seed Coop), Amanda Wlaysewski- Kvichak Fish Company and Lise Rousseau- Fat Robin Orchard

Tribal Tourism on the Flathead Reservation

Tom McDonald, CSKT Fish, Wildlife, Recreation & Conservation Division Manager, reviewed the unique State/Tribal Recreation Permit process and provided hints for great places to hike after the conference. Marie Torosian, People’s Center Manager, described cultural activities available for tourists at the Tribes’ museum in Pablo. Tim Ryan shared his thoughts and experiences as a culturally focused tour guide for Western Montana.

L to R: Janet Camel, Tom McDonald, Tim Ryan and Marie Torosian.
ALL THINGS LEGISLATIVE
Rick Edwards, (below left) MEDA Legislative Committee Chair, reviewed MEDA’s legislative priorities to date. A discussion was held with MEDA members about issues facing the 2017 Legislature.  Rick’s Presentation

(Photo above right) Sen. Dan Salomon and Rep. Ryan Lynch share their thoughts on issues facing the 2017 Legislative Session.

Networking Reception – Time to Relax!

Above L to R: Dan Stahly, Beth Epley, Robi Culver, and first time MEDA attendees Erinn Donnell and Jenni Graff

Above left: Stephanie Ray’s Sister, Mother, (Stephanie) and CTA retiring co-worker Ken Richardson. Ken was acknowledged and thanked for his service to Montana and for serving on the MEDA Board.

L to R: Sarah Converse, Jason Rittal, and Tracy McIntyre
Gubernatorial Candidate Greg Gianforte addressed MEDA and responded to five questions regarding issues of importance to MEDA.

Friday Morning Table Talks
MEDA attendees enjoyed gathering around a breakfast table dedicated to a specific topic such as MDLI Incumbent Worker Training Grant with Chris Wilhelm; MDOC Programs – Big Sky Trust Fund, Worker Training Grant; USDA Programs with John Walsh; Montana Facility Finance Authority - Industrial Development Bonds with Adam Gill; MT Infrastructure Coalition with Jason Rittal; Co-op Housing Model with Sue Taylor...and more!

Above L to R: Debi Davison, Janet Camel, Chris Wilhelm, Joe LaPlante, Mike O’Rourke, Sue Taylor, Gypsy Ray, and Jan Brown.

Professional Development Training: The Multi-Generational Workforce Rick Edwards, Instructor, Montana Tech and NorthWestern Energy

MEDA attendees benefited from an abbreviated college course on working with multi-generations in the workforce. L to R: Rick Edwards, Chris Cerquone, Leslie Messer, Tracy McIntyre, Billie Lee, and Marie Hirsch.
Closing Remarks – Mayor Heather Knutson, pictured left, shared the progress Polson has made, her family’s entrepreneurial history, and the bright future for Polson.

Evaluations and Door Prizes
Once more our hosts, Gypsy Ray and Janet Camel came to the microphone to send everyone on their way – with thanks, wishes for safe travels, and wonderful door prizes. Gypsy Ray and Janet Camel

Thanks to our 2016 Fall Conference Committee: Gypsy Ray, Co-Chair; Janet Camel, Co-Chair; Barbara Stiffarm, Chris Cerquone, Karyl Tobel, Kathie Bailey, Paul Tuss, Rick Edwards and Tracy McIntyre.

The MEDA Board met immediately following the MEDA Fall Conference.