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“Bribed with our own money!” Federal Misuse of Tribal Funds

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Recommended Citation

Beck, Dave R. M., ““Bribed with our own money!” Federal Misuse of Tribal Funds” (2019). *University Grant Program Reports*. 52.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/ugp-reports/52>

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University Grant Program Report
“Bribed with our own money!” Federal Misuse of Tribal Funds

Fund Account M25485

David R.M. Beck

Native American Studies, University of Montana

Thanks to the University Small Grant that I received I was able to conduct a significant amount of research for my next book project. I received \$5,000 from the University Small Grant Program to support travel for archival research trips in the 2018-19 school year. I was able to leverage this funding with funding from UM’s Humanities Institute, the Native American Studies department, and money from my pocket, to make five archival research trips and one writing trip during 2018-19. I used UGP funding specifically to help support three research trips, to the National Archives and Library of Congress in Washington DC; the Harry S. Truman Library in Independence, Missouri; and the Special Collections at the University of Washington Library in Seattle. Transportation costs were higher than budgeted, so I adjusted by taking transportation money from per diem funding.

Since I am still in the research phase of my book project, *Bribed*, I have spent time during the year since May 2018 visiting seven of the major archival collections with holdings relating to 20th century federal Indian policy and American Indian tribal actions. With UGP funding I spent approximately two weeks in Washington D.C. and one week each in Independence and Seattle. UM Humanities funding for the project permitted me to spend another two weeks in D.C. and a week at the University of New Mexico’s Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections.

For this book I need to know both what federal officials are thinking and doing, and what tribal leaders are thinking and doing. On the one hand I am unearthing evidence of federal policies of spending money belonging to tribes to further federal, rather than tribal, initiatives in the 1950s and 1960s. Federal policy at this time focused on eliminating the political relationship between tribes and the United States. On the other hand I need to understand how tribes responded to the underhanded manner by which federal officials advanced the policy. I am thus studying how several tribes whose relationship with the federal government was terminated, and several tribes that were not terminated, responded to this attempted bribery or blackmail. To do so effectively I need to view the termination policy within the context of tribal histories dating back to a half century or more before the 1950s.

The best way to gain a deep understanding of all of this is by immersing myself in primary source materials that are available, for the most part, only in paper copy in a variety of archival collections. In Washington, D.C. I spent time in both the Library of Congress (LOC) and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) with UGP support. In the LOC I read

the papers of two Secretaries of the Interior to see how the Department of the Interior managed the policy initiative. In the NARA, for the most part, I read tribal council minutes from the 1940s and 1950s, and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Area Office records, relating to the Klamath, Uintah and Ouray Utes, the Menominee, and the Three Affiliated Tribes at Fort Berthold, all tribes that are part of the study.

In the Truman Archives I was able to read policy related papers of three commissioners of Indian Affairs involved in the termination policy. Through these I gained a better understanding of the way that the BIA viewed its role in relationship to tribal money, tribal resources, and tribal governance. At the University of Washington I read the papers of Representative/Senator Henry Jackson, who played a key role in advancing Indian-focused legislation during the termination era in both of his roles, and also had a significant collection of papers relating to the Colville reservation in his home state, another community that is a focus of my study.

Thanks to the generous support I received from the UGP (and other sources) I have been able to devote significant time to both research and writing on my new book project, and I have made significant progress on it. Though I still have more research to conduct, I am getting closer to the point where I can devote the rest of the time on this project to writing and re-writing the book manuscript. Thus far I have written approximately 175 pages of narrative and endnotes. I am very thankful to the University of Montana for providing me with this support. I will, of course, acknowledge this grant in the book when it is published, as I have recognized all the forms of support provided by UM in my past publications.

Expenditures from this fund were coordinated through the Native American Studies Department as follows, with the budget in the first column and the actual expenditures in the 2nd column. Note that I had built in \$1,058 for per diem, but due to higher cost of airlines due to short notice after the federal shutdown, and the higher cost of car travel since I used a university vehicle rather than my own, I subtracted \$568.41 from that amount in order to stay within budget. See next page:

UGP	Index M25485			
Grant			\$	5,000.00
St. Louis airfare	\$	592.00	\$	(824.00)
StL car rental	\$	272.00	\$	(376.78)
Independence Lodging	\$	558.00	\$	(571.75)
Perdiem budget/gas real	\$	322.00	\$	(41.25)
DC airfare	\$	575.00	\$	(639.00)
Photocopies			\$	(10.00)
Public transport	\$	90.00	\$	(25.00)
Per diem	\$	414.00	\$	(489.59)
UM Car	\$	245.00	\$	(444.97)
Seattle Hotel	\$	1,610.00	\$	(1,485.66)
Parking Seattle			\$	(92.00)
Perdiem		322.00		
	\$	5,000.00	\$	0.00