honor your Self

“DON’T EVER GIVE UP. BE WHO YOU ARE AND KNOW THAT YOU CAN SUCCEED.”

Billie Rusek is the Administrative Officer to the Coordinator of Indian Affairs in the Governor’s Office of Montana. A single mom, Billie got her GED and started taking classes at the Career Training Institute and found that she was interested in computers. She went on to the Helena College of Technology and got her Associate in Applied Sciences in Computer Technology. “I wanted a real job,” she says, “I didn’t want to be working at McDonald’s or Burger King or low-end secretarial jobs. And I didn’t want state assistance.”

Billie, who had a difficult family life growing up, and did not grow up on a reservation, felt challenged by being a minority in a white world. But she was persistent and she believed in herself. She knew she didn’t have the skills she needed to get ahead so she went out and found them. Today Billie has a great job that she loves, assisting tribes in critical ways. The Office of Indian Affairs serves as an important liaison between the state and the tribes. Billie enjoys working with representatives from all of the tribes and learning about the tribal-state relationship. “My position,” she says, “has enabled me to learn more about myself and where I come from.”

In addition to working at the office and raising her son, Billie serves on the board of the Helena Indian Alliance and is a member of both the Disproportionate Minority Contact Committee and the Montana State Government Interagency Committee for Change by Women; she is also a mentor at the Florence Crittenton Home for pregnant and parenting young women, many of whom are Native American. Next steps for Billie are to continue with her education, get her Bachelor’s degree and maybe even her Masters degree. Most importantly, says Billie, “I want to be able to make a difference in life.”

“THERE’S ALWAYS TIME. THERE’S ALWAYS A WAY.”

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