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maribeth dwyer • news editor

BLACKFEET BONNIE HEAVYRUNNER COMBES SEEKS A CAREER OF SERVICE TO TRIBES

BROWN/stc
9-24-80
Glacier-Reporter
w/pic

IMMEDIATELY

Ask Bonnie Heavyrunner Combes what she wants from her college education and she will tell you that she wants more than just a degree, salable skills and a good job.

Bonnie is a Blackfeet from Browning who graduated from a Bureau of Indian Affairs high school in Oklahoma in 1970. Today, nearly 10 years later, Bonnie is a sophomore at the University of Montana aiming for law school and a career advising Indian tribes in their dealings with the world beyond the reservation.

Bonnie's plans have evolved through a series of increasingly responsible jobs, for the most part related to tribal legal systems, that she has held since finishing high school.

Following a short, abortive stint at Denver Community College--"I didn't really complete anything," she says--Bonnie returned to Browning where she became the dispatcher for the tribal police department.

The next year she became the tribal court clerk and held that job until 1977 when she left for a similar position with the Lehmi tribe in Bellingham, Wash. There she acted as court administrator, tribal prosecutor and legal researcher.

She took a year off to have a baby, a daughter Aislinn, her Blackfeet name Eveningstar, then worked briefly for an attorney in Oklahoma before returning to Montana to start college.

"I had thought about returning to college for a long time, but it took a long time to decide," she says.

Despite her well-thought-out goals, returning to college was tough. At times the logistics alone seemed overwhelming as she tried to attend class, arrange for babysitting, work and still make "family time."