

January 7, 2025

Commissioner Clayton Christian
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
560 North Park Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620-3201

Dear Commissioner Christian:

This is a request for the Board of Regents to confirm the recommendation of an honorary degree to Wendy Red Star, to be awarded at Montana State University's (MSU) commencement ceremony in the Spring 2025. Ms. Red Star was recommended by the MSU Honorary Degree Committee and Faculty Senate leadership voted in favor of this honorary degree recommendation.

Wendy Red Star (Honorary Doctor of Arts):

Wendy Red Star, an esteemed Apsáalooke (Crow) contemporary artist, has made significant contributions to the fields of art, education, and cultural preservation, while maintaining a profound connection to her heritage and the state of Montana.

Wendy Red Star was raised in Pryor, Montana, on the Crow Reservation, and her cultural roots deeply inform her artistic practice. She is a proud alumna of Montana State University, where she earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 2004 with an emphasis in sculpture and a minor in Native American Studies. She continued her academic journey at the University of California, Los Angeles, completing her Master of Fine Arts in 2006.

Red Star's multidisciplinary work spans photography, sculpture, installation, and multimedia, addressing themes of Native American identity, history, and representation. Her art critically engages with colonial narratives, offering powerful visual commentary that blends humor, irony, and vivid imagery. One of her most acclaimed series, "The Four Seasons," juxtaposes historical images with contemporary interpretations, challenging stereotypes and inviting discourse on Indigenous histories.

Throughout her career, Wendy Red Star has earned numerous prestigious awards, including the MacArthur Fellowship (2024), Joan Mitchell Foundation Emerging Artist Fellowship (2015), and Eiteljorg Contemporary Art Fellowship (2009). Her work has been exhibited internationally in prominent institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, and the Portland Art Museum. These accolades reflect her exceptional creativity and her significant impact on the global artistic landscape.

Office of the President

216 Montana Hall
P.O. Box 172420
Bozeman, MT 59717-2420
www.montana.edu


Tel 406-994-2341

Beyond her artistic achievements, Red Star is a dedicated educator and advocate for Indigenous representation. She has lectured at esteemed institutions, including Yale University and Dartmouth College, and has collaborated with museums to inspire the next generation of artists and cultural advocates. Her commitment to amplifying Native women's voices in the art world underscores her role as a mentor and leader.

Wendy Red Star's remarkable contributions to art and culture, coupled with her dedication to education and community engagement, make her an exemplary candidate for this distinguished honor. An honorary doctorate from Montana State University would not only recognize her outstanding achievements but also affirm the university's commitment to celebrating diverse perspectives and fostering cultural understanding.

Thank you for considering this nomination. I am confident that Wendy Red Star's legacy will continue to inspire and enrich communities worldwide and it would be tremendous for the students, faculty and staff of Montana State University to honor Wendy Red Star with an honorary degree at MSU's Spring 2025 commencement ceremony. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,


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President