

Comment by Ralph Bartholdt, former St. Maries Gazette-Record reporter

Benewah County and the Tribe are in a race to build a jail.

Without cross deputization, the Tribe with its 2,000 members, not all of whom live on the Rez, doesn't have enough "clients" — the prisoners that keep Tribal police awake at night — to warrant a jail and attract the federal dollars to build one.

Benewah County, population 9,000, needs to float a bond to build a jail to replace a facility that was built in the early 1900s.

A jail is a big deal to both entities.

It is a cash cow because the facility could house prisoners from elsewhere, including state prisoners, and that generates money. But a jail needs a steady flow of local clients to warrant building one in the first place.

Benewah County has the clients. Without cross deputization the Tribe doesn't.

There needs to be, however, a great PR and marketing campaign, something akin to the Tribe's, for the Benco public to buy into paying tax dollars to build a jail.

As most reporters know, and it should be evident by Kirts' recent remarks, Benco is pretty lousy at PR and marketing.

This is a money and power issue, like everything else between Benewah County and the Tribe. It has nothing to do with race, and not that much to do with public safety.

The greater Coeur d'Alene area has 3,300 people per square mile.

Benewah County's population covers almost 800 square miles.

There's not enough crime going on here for law enforcement officers to lose sleep over.

What Marc said (above) is true. But because the Tribe is sovereign, public info requests don't come into play in Indian Country. That means he's the guy, and his word is the official word and he and Helo do an excellent job of spreading the word evidenced by the marching band and the cymbal clashes going on.

But I haven't heard them talk about the jail issue, or whether cross-deputization is a big step in the path to getting one.