

**Indians—Poor—Counties—Wards—Citizens.**

Indians, though citizens, if wards of the government, are not entitled to aid from the county when indigent.

W. F. Allison, Esq.,  
County Clerk and Recorder,  
Cut Bank, Montana.

December 24, 1928.

My dear Mr. Allison:

You request an opinion whether the county has a right to grant aid to an Indian, whether he holds a patent in fee or not.

I call your attention to the case of *State vs. Big Sheep*, 75 Mont. 219. While this case does not answer your specific inquiry, it lays down certain principles that point the way to the solution of your question.

An Indian, though a citizen of the state, is, nevertheless, a ward of the government unless he has severed his tribal relations or obtained a patent in fee.

As wards of the government, the government owes the duty to look after the personal wants of the Indians, and as long as they remain wards of the government, though they may be citizens of this state, it is my opinion that the federal government and not the county must look after those who are indigent. Of course, those who have severed their tribal relations stand on exactly the same footing as any white person.

Very truly yours,  
L. A. FOOT,  
Attorney General.