

# Identifying Purposes of Tribal Government

## Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies  
Grade Level: Grade 6  
Suggested Duration: Two-Three Days

## Stage 1 Desired Results

### Established Goals

**Social Studies Standard 2: Grade 8 Benchmark** - Identify the significance of tribal sovereignty and Montana tribal governments' relationship to local, state and federal governments.

**Essential Understanding 7** - Under the American legal system, Indian tribes have sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments

Students describe the purpose of government, and know how the powers of government are acquired, maintained and used (Montana tribal government departments responsible for conservation, fish, wildlife, environmental issues).

Students identify and compare the powers and responsibilities of tribal government offices for at least two reservations.

### Understandings

- Each office in a tribal government has a specific, defined purpose, with specific powers and responsibilities.
- Each Montana reservation has a tribal government, and each tribal government has an office devoted to environmental issues, conservation, and/or fishing and hunting.
- In general, tribal governments have authority to do such things as establish police forces and tribal courts, make laws, decide how tribal property can be used, decide who can be a member of the tribe, and ensure tribal cultures are maintained and preserved.

### Essential Questions

- Why does each tribe have a government office that deals with environmental issues such as conservation, hunting, and fishing?
- Why does it matter that Montana Indian people are tribal citizens in addition to being Montana citizens and U.S. citizens?
- How do Montana tribal governments manage environmental and conservation issues, including hunting and fishing? Who benefits?
- With regard to matters concerning conservation, fishing and hunting rights, how do Montana tribal governments interact with the Montana government? The U.S. government?

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Students will be able to...

- describe the powers and responsibilities of tribal government offices dealing with environment and/or conservation and hunting and fishing issues for at least two tribal nations in Montana.

Students will know...

- specific examples for at least two Montana tribal nations concerning their tribal offices which deal with the environment, land, conservation, and hunting and fishing issues.

## Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

### Performance Tasks

1. List at least four ways in which two Montana tribal offices of environmental issues, fishing, hunting, and conservation are alike. List at least two specific ways in which they are different.
2. Select two (each student, or a group of 2-4 students) Montana tribal governments and make a report which outlines the powers and responsibilities of the office in each of these, that addresses fishing, hunting, and conservation.
3. Students receive and complete a comparison chart (each student).

## Stage 3 Learning Plan

### Learning Activities

Students receive an overview of the goals and understandings from the teacher. [Worksheet 1]. This also includes the vocabulary needed, the Essential Questions, and Essential Understandings. Review these carefully with all students and clarify any questions.

The teacher and students discuss the ideas and questions. The teacher checks out student prior knowledge of state and tribal government, taking special care to help students define what they do not know. Student ideas may need to be clarified. Introduce the concept of *sovereignty* in relationship to personal student powers in school. What rights and responsibilities do students have at school? What rights and responsibilities do students have as Montana citizens? List these as they are identified. Remember to review these whenever students need it.

You may wish to utilize information about the tribal governments closest to your school. Give each student a copy of the tribal constitutions. Take class time to read and go through each of the constitutions. Have students highlight/underline important details on their copies. In dyads or groups of four, have students write summaries which identify the important features of government for the tribe. Have students pay particular attention to any wording which speaks to land, conservation, environment, and wildlife [sometimes this is not readily evident, so it requires careful reading].

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Review all group summaries in class discussions. Write the salient features of government for each tribe as they are identified. Students need to copy this overall summary into their class notes. Students clarify their understandings of governmental features, and revise their thinking as needed.

Students compare their small group summary with the whole-class summary and add in information that was not originally included. Each student identifies what he/she thinks is the most important tribal government feature, and explains why in a brief paragraph.

Students receive a Tribal Government comparison chart to complete. Students unable to complete all parts of the assignment (for example, those with an IEP) should complete the task based on their different needs and abilities.

Ensure that students have basic knowledge of the U.S. government structure (Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government) and Montana government (same).

### Resources

- Tribal Constitutions for at least two Montana tribes.
- Information (see Tribal Nation Internet sites) about the tribal offices responsible for environmental concerns, conservation, reservation land rights and responsibilities, fishing and hunting. *Note: In order to facilitate the lesson, provide these overviews.*
- Tribal Government Comparison Chart (see these attached; depending on the depth of lesson planned you may choose to make an overall comparison of these governments first before concentrating on their particular environmental or land and/or conservation/fishing/hunting departments).
- Recognize that these departments will probably not be completely congruent; one may have more powers and responsibilities than the other—this is a function of their *sovereignty rights* as the tribes have defined them.
- Montana Tribal Web sites and Constitutions
  - [Blackfeet Nation](#)
  - [Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy Reservation](#)
  - [Crow Tribe](#)
  - [Fort Belknap Indian Community](#) Assiniboine/Gros Ventre
  - [Fort Peck Tribes](#) Assiniboine, Sioux
  - [Little Shell Tribe](#)
  - [Northern Cheyenne Tribe](#)
  - [Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes](#)
  - [Tribal Constitutions](#)
- These web sites link to numerous on-line tribal constitutions. Students may also research other tribes besides those residing in Montana)
  - [Constitutions](#)
  - [Native American Constitution and Law Digitization Project](#)

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### Teacher Note

Prior to the lesson, identify the Montana Indian tribal government you will use. Go to the Tribe/Reservation's Web site and copy the tribal constitutions for use with the class.

Be prepared to define "tribal sovereignty" (see the glossary), although the current lesson is meant to be a bridge to beginning to understand tribal sovereignty. Take time to prepare yourself by re-reading Essential Understanding 7 from *Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians* (this document can also be found at the Montana Office of Public Instruction Web site).

Prepare students by reviewing the concept of sovereignty in relation to oneself. What types of power does a student have over herself in school? What rights and responsibilities do students have at school? What rights and responsibilities do students have as Montana citizens?

## Worksheet 1 - Comparing Tribal Government Departments

### LESSON PURPOSE

- By the end of this lesson you should be able to describe the purpose of Montana tribal government departments responsible for conservation, fish, wildlife, environmental issues.
- By the end of this lesson you should be able to identify and compare the powers and responsibilities of tribal government offices for at least two reservations.

### YOU MUST KNOW

- Each Montana reservation has a tribal government, and each tribal government has an office devoted to environmental issues, conservation, and/or fishing and hunting. (EU 7)
- In general, tribal governments have authority to do such things as establish police forces and tribal courts, make laws, decide how tribal property can be used, decide who can be a member of a tribe, and ensure tribal culture is preserved.
- Montana Indian people are citizens of their tribes/nations, the state of Montana, and the United States.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO FIND OUT

- Why does each tribe have a government office that deals with environmental issues such as conservation, hunting, and fishing?
- Why does it matter that Montana Indian people are tribal citizens in addition to being Montana and U.S. citizens?
- How do Montana tribal governments manage environmental and conservation issues, including hunting and fishing? Who benefits?
- With regard to matters concerning conservation and fishing and hunting rights, how do Montana tribal governments interact with the Montana government? The U.S. government?

### VOCABULARY

**SELF-DETERMINATION:** The idea of self-determination is that Montana Indian nations are basic governmental units. The tribal governments have *sovereign powers* to operate governments, enter into agreements, and develop and protect natural resources.

**SOVEREIGNTY:** Sovereignty is a natural power that ensures self-government, cultural preservation, and a Montana tribe's control of its future. It is an essential power which all tribes have, and it was not given to them by the U.S. government.

**SOVEREIGN POWERS:** Indian tribes once possessed complete sovereignty—they naturally had powers to take care of themselves, including governing themselves. Today tribes have the power to define tribal membership, tribal government, regulate domestic relations, settle disputes, manage their

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property and resources, tax, regulate businesses on their reservations, and conduct relations with state and the U.S. government.

### **IMPORTANT TO KNOW:**

- Each tribe has a constitution or a charter that tells what powers it claims as a sovereign nation.
- Each tribe has its own sovereign powers.
- The U.S. government classifies Tribal governments as domestic, dependent nations.

### **Notes:**

## Worksheet 2 - Comparing the Purposes of Tribal Agencies/Offices

Investigate the purposes and responsibilities of two Montana tribal government offices that deal with environmental issues and/or fishing, hunting, and conservation. Use the table below to make your comparisons. Be prepared to defend your summaries of the similarities and differences.

Item	Tribal Government 1	Tribal Government 2
What does the tribal government’s constitution or articles of incorporation say about land use, conservation, and fishing and hunting rights?		
What office or offices within this tribal government control or work with environmental issues, conservation, land, and fishing and hunting?		
How do these offices function? For example, who do they answer to? How do they interact with a tribal council?		

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What are their responsibilities?		
What fishing and hunting rights do tribal citizens have?		