

Purposes of Tribal Governments

Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies

Grade Level: Grades 6-8

Suggested Duration: Three class periods (two days for research and one day for writing/reporting)

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

(1) The civics and government content standards for sixth through eighth grade are that each student will:

- (d) distinguish the structure, organization, powers, and limits of government at the local, state, national, and tribal levels.

Understandings

- There are similarities and differences in the structure of Montana tribal governments. Each of the 12 tribal nations in Montana display unique aspects in their governance structure. [EU 1 & EU 7]

Essential Questions

- What elements do Montana tribal governments have in common?
- What are the basic elements of contemporary tribal governments near your school?

Students will be able to...

- apply criteria to compare and contrast Montana tribal governments.

Students will know...

- the basic structures of tribal governments in Montana.

Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks

- Each student will demonstrate adequate knowledge about tribal governments through research, presentation, and discussion.



Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities

To introduce the lesson, utilize the sovereignty video from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and use a 3 – 2 – 1 prompt to review the film. There are currently 574 federally recognized Native American tribes in the United States and every one of them has the right to govern themselves and their lands.

Ask students to:

- Write down three things you saw in the video that caught your attention, two questions you have about information presented in the video, and one thing you really enjoyed. Utilize the questions you put forth as way to guide you in your research and writing.

Next, project the information regarding Essential Understandings 1 and 7 and ask students to write down four or five words that stick out in their minds and write a short statement about why they chose those specific words.

Ask for some initial reactions to the information. If students want to read their responses, that is acceptable; or they can summarize. At the very least, ask a student to paraphrase the information so it is understandable to all. Facilitate a class discussion regarding the Key Concepts for these essential Understandings.

For enhancing student background information, you might consider incorporating concepts from the frequently asked questions (FAQs) into your discussion about American Indians and sovereignty.

Assignment: Divide the class into eight groups. Assign each group one of the eight Montana tribal constitutions.

Students will analyze each tribal constitution using the attached handout. Have hard copies of each tribal constitution printed out beforehand and distribute to each of the eight groups.

Students will be required to fill out the tribal government worksheet (ask them to use complete sentences). Tell them they will also be doing a five-minute oral presentation of their findings to the rest of the class. (Assigning cooperative learning roles is suggested to maximize student participation).

Materials/Resources Needed

[Sovereignty \(video\)](#), theREZweLIVEon, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

General Information

There are seven Indian reservations and twelve Indian tribes in Montana. They are Blackfeet on the Blackfeet Reservation, Crow on the Crow Reservation, Salish, Kootenai, and Pend d’Oreille on the Flathead Reservation, Gros Ventre and Assiniboine on the Fort Belknap Reservation, Dakota and Assiniboine on the Fort Peck Reservation, Little Shell Chippewa (no reservation), Northern Cheyenne on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, and Chippewa Cree on the Rocky Boy’s Reservation.

These twelve tribes make up the eight sovereign tribal nations in Montana, each with its own distinct and unique form of government.

- [American Indians 101 Frequently Asked Questions](#)

- [FAQ from the Bureau of Indian Affairs](#)

Montana Tribal Constitutions

Tribal Government Websites

- [Blackfeet Nation](#)
- [Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation](#) (Facebook)
- [Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes](#) Salish, Kootenai, Pend d'Oreille
- [Crow Tribe](#)
- [Fort Belknap Indian Community](#) Assiniboine, Gros Ventre
- [Fort Peck Tribes](#) Assiniboine, Sioux
- [Little Shell Tribe](#)
- [Northern Cheyenne Tribe](#)

Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians

There is great diversity among the twelve sovereign tribes of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories, and governments. Each tribe has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana. (EU 1)

KEY CONCEPTS

- The twelve sovereign tribes, located in what is now the state of Montana, are distinct from one another in their history, culture, and language.
- Tribal sovereignty is the inherent right of tribes to independent self-governance.
- Tribal governments are fully functioning governments that provide an array of services similar to those of federal, state, and local governments.
- The political, demographic, and cultural landscape of Montana has rapidly changed in the last two hundred years.
- American Indian individuals and tribes are still here with distinct and intact governments, languages, and cultures that contribute to modern Montana.

American Indian tribal nations are inherent sovereign nations and they possess sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments. However, under the American legal system, the extent and breadth of self-governing powers are not the same for each tribe. (EU 7)

KEY CONCEPTS

- Tribal sovereignty stems directly from the fact that tribal nations constitute distinct political communities that have the right to determine their own laws and form of government.
- Tribal self-governing powers predate the existence of the United States and are not delegated powers granted by Congress or any other entity; they are inherent powers of sovereign nations that have never been extinguished.

- Some limitations have been placed on tribal sovereignty throughout the past two centuries by Supreme Court rulings and Congressional statutes, which is why tribes are sometimes referred to as “limited” sovereigns today.
- In general, tribes are free to exercise any of their sovereign powers unless Congress has specifically limited or modified them in some way.
- The extent and breadth of self-governing powers is not the same for every tribe.
- Despite the complex evolution of tribal sovereignty in America, it remains one of the most important attributes of tribal independence.

Tribal Government Structure

Analyze a tribal constitution by answering the questions below. Incorporate the questions or prompts in your answer and write on a separate sheet of paper, using complete sentences.

The Preamble

A preamble reflects the hopes and aspirations of the group. Summarize the preamble in two or three sentences.

Articles

The framework and powers of tribal governments are outlined in several articles or sections. There are separate articles for each branch, or governing body. Articles spell out the structure of each branch and the qualifications, method of selection, length of term, and duties of officials in each branch.

The Executive Article

How is the executive power structured?

What are the qualifications for the office of the executive (i.e., the president or chairperson)?

What is the method of selection?

What is the length of the term of office? What are the duties of the official(s)?

The Legislative Article

How is the legislative power structured?

What are the qualifications for office in the legislature (i.e., the tribal council)?

What is the method of selection?

What is the length of the term of office? What are the duties of the officials?

The Judicial Article

How is the judicial power structured?

What are the qualifications for office in the judiciary (i.e., tribal judge)?

What is the method of selection?

What is the length of term in office? What are the duties of the official(s)?

Bill of Rights

A bill of rights lists the fundamental rights and liberties of a citizen of the tribe. Is there a bill of rights in the tribal constitution you are researching? If so, list those rights afforded to the tribe as stated in the constitution.

Membership

Tribes can determine the qualifications for membership in the tribe. Does the constitution include a section on the qualifications of a tribal member? If so, complete the following questions.

What are the qualifications for membership in the tribe?

Who can vote in tribal elections?

Additional Issues

Many tribes address other issues in their constitution and bylaws, such as elections, education, or economic development. Does the constitution you are researching have additional articles? Briefly summarize them.

When was the constitution adopted?

Do you think the tribal nation you are studying has an equal balance of powers?