

Who is an American Indian – Tribal Nation Membership Criteria

Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies
Grade Level: High School
Suggested Duration: 3 – 4 Class Periods

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

THE SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT STANDARDS FOR NINTH THROUGH TWELFTH GRADE

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

(g) explain the foundations and complexity of sovereignty for federally recognized tribes in Montana.

(4) The history content standards for ninth through twelfth grade are that each student will:

(a) analyze how unique circumstances of time, place, and historical contexts shape individuals' lives;

(e) explain events in relation to both their intended and unintended consequences, including governmental policies impacting American Indians;

(g) analyze how historical, cultural, social, political, ideological, and economic contexts shape people's perspectives.

Understandings

- There is no generic American Indian.
- There are many and varied ways to be identified as an American Indian.
- American Indian identity is directly related to federal Indian policy, including the Dawes Act.
- It is up to Tribal Governments and communities to determine who is a tribal member.
- “Blood Quantum” was designed to benefit the federal government. There is no “quantum” amount that is indigenous.

Essential Questions

- Who is an American Indian?
- How did changing US federal Indian policy impact the identification of American Indians?
- In general, what are some unique aspects of American Indian identity that differ from non-Indigenous Americans?
- Why might a tribe not want to use blood quantum for determining membership? Explain.
- How has the imagery in American film and television negatively influenced how American Indian people should look and act?



Students will be able to...

- analyze and discuss tribal membership requirements.
- Explain how US federal Indian policy and the Dawes Act has impacted tribal membership.
- apply understandings to document various tribal enrollment criteria and processes.
- analyze how false American Indian imagery has influenced how “mainstream” America believes American Indian people should look and behave.

Students will know...

- about tribal membership criteria regarding American Indian enrollment.
- that contemporary American Indian identity is a complex issue and that mainstream media has often perpetuated stereotypical imagery.

Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks

1. Students will prepare a brief document describing the entire enrollment process specific to one tribal nation.
2. In addition, they will analyze multiple perspectives regarding cultural and philosophical issues on the topic of American Indian identity and the use of blood quantum to determine membership. Each student will demonstrate required knowledge through research, presentation, and discussion.

Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities

Day 1

To introduce the lesson utilize the [Proud to Be video](#) from National Congress of American Indians and use a 3 – 2 – 1 prompt to review the film.

- 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.

Display Essential Understanding 2. Have students write down four or five words that stick out in their mind and write a short statement about why they chose those words. Then also display the key concepts and have students write a brief statement about what this means to them and discuss.

Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. There is no generic American Indian.

KEY CONCEPTS

- There exists no universally accepted rule for establishing an individual's identity as Indian. However, as a general rule, an Indian is a person who has some biological Indian ancestry and is recognized as an Indian by a tribe.
- For millennia, individual tribal groups successfully educated their children using highly effective indigenous pedagogies that imbued Indian children with all the knowledge and skills they needed to thrive in their world.
- Boarding schools and other federal policies of assimilation brought disruptions to the traditional transference of knowledge in tribal communities and have had wide-ranging and lasting impacts on American Indian individuals and communities.
- Students who maintain a strong sense of pride in their language and culture tend not to experience school failure.
- Ideally, school curricula will offer equal recognition of the contributions students' home cultures bring to the learning situation and will help all students develop the self-esteem and self-confidence that can enhance their learning.

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 key concepts so it is understandable to all. Facilitate a class discussion regarding the Key Concepts for Essential Understanding 2.

Print out or display copies of individuals from the [OPI IEFA Poster Series](#) and share with the class. Facilitate a class discussion after they review the posters.

Ask students if they have ever heard about the issue of "blood quantum." To close out the class period have students listen this brief podcast from NPR, [So What Exactly Is 'Blood Quantum'?](#) Have them summarize key points put forth in the podcast and turn in at the end of the class period.

Day 2

As a hook, begin the class period by showing this clip of Crow performance artist – [Supaman \(Crow Musician\)](#). Ask students to share their reactions to the clip and facilitate a class discussion. Be sure that these two concepts are discussed/addressed:

- Supaman never mentions blood quantum as a part of his reflection on what it means to be Crow. What things does he reference when talking about his Crow identity?
- His reflections on stereotypes around Rap music and how he overcame them.

Next, revisit the issue of blood quantum and how it ties in with Indian identity and enrollment. Tell students they will be researching tribal enrollment requirements in addition to summarizing the major issues associated with the use of blood quantum as the major factor in determining tribal membership.

Assign students a tribal nation to research (individually or in small groups). Consider assigning separate groups to research issues associated with identity and representation in media and film.

To get them started, share the resources identified in this lesson for use in conducting their research.

Refer to the essential questions to help guide them with their research.

You may want to offer various types of assessments to gauge understanding of this complex topic; e.g., virtual poster presentation, participation in an on-line discussion forum, multimedia presentation formats such as a video or podcast. This lesson provides one example of a possible assignment.

Students will display essays/poster boards/other visual aids and give an oral interpretation of their research.

Materials/Resources Needed

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?

To access tribal constitutions, visit [Montana Indian Law - Tribal Constitutions](#)

Tribal Government Websites

[Blackfeet Nation](#)

[Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation](#), Facebook

[Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes](#)

[Crow Tribe](#)

[Fort Belknap Indian Community](#) Assiniboine, Gros Ventre

[Fort Peck Tribes](#) Assiniboine, Sioux

[Little Shell Tribe](#)

[Northern Cheyenne Tribe](#)

On-line Resources for Researching Blood Quantum and Identity

[Tribal Enrollment Process](#)

[Everyday Native](#)

[Reservation Mathematics: Navigating Love in Native America](#)

["Matters of Race."](#) Public Broadcasting System.

[A Guide to Tracing American Indian & Alaska Native Ancestry](#)

[Reel Injun: On the Trail of the Hollywood Indian](#)

[The Dawes Act](#)

[The Rez We Live On – Resource from CSKT](#)

[American Indian Identity and Blood Quantum in the 21st Century: A Critical Review](#)

[Rethinking Race: The Sociology of American Indian Identity](#)

[The Term 'American Indian,' Plus Ethnicity, Sovereignty, and Identity](#)

For information about American Indians check out these frequently asked questions.

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

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