

# Montana Tribal Governments

## Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies  
Grade Level: Grade Three  
Suggested Duration: Four 25-30 Minute  
Class Periods

## Stage 1 Desired Results

### Established Goals

- (1) The civics and government content standards for third grade are that each student will:
  - (a) describe and identify the basic functions of local government, including tribal governments;
  - (c) identify key symbols of nations.
- (3) The geography content standards for third grade are that each student will:
  - (a) examine maps and other representations to identify historical and contemporary political and cultural patterns in the Americas.
- (4) The history content standards for third grade are that each student will:
  - (a) identify tribes in Montana by their original and current names.

### Understandings

- Governments take care of business for citizens and make rules for us all to live by.
- Each Montana tribal nation has a government which takes care of the business of its citizens.
- Our (tribe, town, county, city – use the one closest to your situation) has a government which takes care of the government business for citizens.

### Essential Questions

- What is a reservation?
- What are governments?
- How do governments help us?
- How is responsibility connected to government?
- Why is it important to understand reservations and their governments?
- How do tribal seals reflect each tribe's unique culture and heritage?



Students will be able to...

- Identify the location of Montana tribes on a map.
- tell about various forms of government and how it takes care of business.
- tell about tribal governments.
- tell how each tribe has a unique governmental seal that reflects tribal culture and heritage.

Students will know...

- the names of Montana tribes and where each tribe is located.
- that each tribal nation has a unique form of government that meets the needs of citizens.
- that tribal nations have their own governmental seal that reflects their culture and identity.

## Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

### Performance Tasks

1. Identify Montana tribes on a map and correctly label the tribes and their location.
2. Tell/write about Montana government, local government, and reservation government.
3. Examine tribal seals and learn about their importance through active listening, discussion and reading.,
4. Interview a governmental official from a city, county state, or tribal government.

## Stage 3 Learning Plan

Students receive the assignment and expectations, including the list of vocabulary and concepts they are expected to know, the Essential Questions, Understandings, and the materials they need to complete their work.

Teacher and students should discuss the Essential Questions. These Essential Questions will guide their discussions and the whole class activity.

Teachers guide the discussion activities carefully, checking frequently for student understanding and misconceptions.

Students listen carefully; the purpose is to learn more, and where necessary, revise their ideas about government, based on their understandings. By the end of the discussion, students should be able to tell how state, local, and tribal governments are alike. Some (but not all) may also be able to state some of the differences among the different types of government.

Students state their own understanding of what the Montana government does for citizens, and what the tribal government does for tribal members.

Students will be able to identify the seals of each tribal nation and learn about the symbols on each seal.

Students who are not able to complete all features of the assignment (they may have an IEP, for example) should perform based on their different needs and abilities.

Students will complete the activities in about four class periods (about 25-30 minutes each); this should keep student engagement and learning high.

## Learning Activities

### Lesson 1

Begin the class by showing a video from South Dakota Public Television. The video is designed for younger students, and it features a young Lakota boy sharing information about tribes in South Dakota. The video clip provides a brief introduction about governments and nations and information is shared about the location of reservations and tribes in South Dakota.

After viewing the clip, inform students they will be doing a similar map activity that was demonstrated in the video.

Now let's locate the Montana tribes and identify which American Indian tribes are located on what reservations in Montana.

Locate the tribes. Distribute copies of the unlabeled Montana map and ask students to fill in the map.

Have them try it out on their own. They can also work with a partner to fill it in.

Allow time for all students to correctly label their maps and then facilitate a class discussion.

Display the Tribal Territories Map and post on the board/wall for future reference.

### Lesson 2 - Teaching about the Seals of the Tribal Nations

Make color copies of the *Montana Tribal Nations Seals* and have students partner up and ask them to review a seal using the Examining the Tribal Seals KWL Worksheet which is included at the end of this lesson plan.

Distribute a color copy of a tribal seal and the Examining the Tribal Seals KWL Worksheet (below) to each pair and ask them to fill in the first two columns: What I *Know* and What I *Want* to Know. Allow ample time for students to examine the seal and write down their answers.

Next, hand out the description the description of the seal to each student group and have them fill in the third column: What I *Learned*.

Display an image of each tribal seal and ask students to share their observations and questions along with the information they learned about the tribal seal they examined.

Once all students have shared their observations facilitate a class discussion. Reinforce key concepts and close out the lesson by displaying each tribal seal and sharing what the symbols on each seal mean. Provide an opportunity for students to finish filling out their tribal seals worksheet and the What I *Learned* category.

### Lesson 3 - Learning about roles and responsibilities of governments.

Have students make a chart with three headings: Federal – State – Tribal

Provide them with background information so they can fill out their chart by listing out responsibilities of each type of government. Facilitate a class discussion and reinforce key concepts and ideas related

to each type of government. Refer to the *Governmental Responsibilities: Community, Tribal, State, Federal* lesson for a listing of various governmental responsibilities.

Allow students an opportunity to share their artistic talents and provide an option for including their own drawing of a tribal seal as part of the chart.

#### Lesson 4 – Assessment

Hand out for a second time unlabeled copies of the reservation map and see how many reservations and tribes' students can locate on their own. Review names and locations of the tribes and provide instructions for the final assignment.

Close out the activity by having students summarize what they have learned about unique characteristics of tribal governments and connect this information back to the tribal seals and how each tribe's culture and heritage is reflected in their government. This could be done as a written assignment, poster presentation, class presentation or discussion.

### Materials Needed/Teacher Resources

[\*Governmental Responsibilities: Community, Tribal, State, Federal - Grade 4\*](#)

[Indian Education for All \(IEFA\) Staff](#)

[\*Learning About the Seals of the Tribal Nations\*](#)

[Map of Montana with Reservations Unlabeled](#)

[Map of Tribal Territories in Montana](#)

[Montana Governor's Office of Indian Affairs](#)

[\*Montana Indians Their History and Location\*](#)

[\*Montana Tribal Nations Seals\*](#)

[South Dakota Native American Reservations](#)

### Vocabulary

citizens government leaders reservation responsibility seal

### Background Information for Students

Montana is home to twelve American Indian tribes, all recognized as nations by the United States. Treaties and executive orders established the seven reservations in our state. The Little Shell Chippewa Tribe, which has no reservation, was recognized by the federal government through Congressional action in December 2019.

Each tribe has its own culture, language, identity, and history which continue to be important today despite many changes over the last two centuries. Tribal seals are emblems of tribal governments and as such express the sovereignty of Montana tribal nations. The symbols on these seals represent important aspects of tribal histories and cultures and can be used as a starting place for introducing students to Montana tribes, and for studying the similarities and differences among them.

## Montana tribes and their location/reservation

- Blackfeet Reservation - Blackfeet
- Crow Reservation - Crow
- Flathead Reservation - Salish, Pend d'Oreille, Kootenai
- Fort Belknap Reservation - Gros Ventre and Assiniboine
- Fort Peck Reservation - Assiniboine and Sioux
- Northern Cheyenne Reservation - Northern Cheyenne
- Rocky Boy's Reservation - Chippewa Cree
- Little Shell (no reservation but tribe does have land holdings in Great Falls) – Chippewa

## What is a reservation?

A reservation is a territory reserved by tribes as a permanent tribal homeland. Some reservations were created through treaties while others were created by statutes or executive orders. Most often reservations are comprised of part of a people's pre-contact homeland.

## How are tribes organized?

Tribes have the inherent right to operate under their own systems of government. Tribal governments have diverse structures. Many have adopted constitutions, while others operate under Articles of Association or other bodies of law, and some still maintain traditional systems of government. The chief executive of a tribe is generally called the tribal chairperson, but may also be called principal chief, governor, or president.

Essential Understanding 7: American Indian tribal nations are inherent sovereign nations and they possess sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments.

- A. Tribal self-governing powers predate the existence of the United States. Tribal nations have been governing themselves since time immemorial.
- B. Some limits have been placed on tribal sovereignty over the last two hundred years. In general, tribes are free to exercise any of their sovereign powers unless Congress has specifically limited them.
- C. Among other things, tribal sovereignty gives tribes the right to:
  - a. Determine their own form of government;
  - b. Set rules laying out who belongs to the tribe and who does not;
  - c. Make laws for tribal members and uphold those laws through tribal courts.

## Extension Activity – Kids with Questions

At this point in their study, students should be able to use their reservation maps to identify the closest tribal government, contact that tribal chairperson, or a local tribal member, and invite that person to the classroom for a discussion of tribal government operations, policies, and responsibilities.

Students should also contact the mayor/county commissioner of their community and invite that person to the classroom to discuss city/county government. This special occasion can be done with multiple or individual classrooms.

Invite both individuals for the same class session if possible. This will provide the students an excellent opportunity to compare and contrast following the visit.

The essential component of this activity is student preparation! Make certain the essential questions are integrated into all parts of this activity.

Students should extensively discuss what they want to know using the inquiry process prior to the government discussion. Prior to the visit, questions and follow up questions should be recorded/written, and divided up among students, so each student has a question or follow up question. Development of this will require not only the use of the inquiry process but also advance anticipation of answers guest speakers might give (teacher help is needed for this component).

Ask students if they have seen reporters question local leaders or the President of the United States on television. Try to configure this session so the same setting is simulated.

Students, teachers, and guest speakers should have great fun working together to enhance understanding of both government functions. How are these governments alike, and how they are different?

Following the guest speaker forum, students should individually, or in small groups, write to both speakers, citing one piece of information the speaker explained in a way that increased student understanding. They should also thank the speaker for coming to their class.

A synopsis of this enjoyable event should be recorded in student notebooks (follow-up activity). This can be completed individually, or in small groups.

The Montana Governor's Office of Indian Affairs' website has contact information for Montana tribes and you may consider contacting IEFA staff for suggestions regarding guest speakers.

## Examining the Tribal Seals KWL Worksheet

<b>WHAT I KNOW</b> (What the symbol appears to be, the tribe(s) it comes from, and the reservation)	<b>WHAT I WANT TO KNOW</b> (One or two "How" or "Why" questions about the symbol.)	<b>WHAT I LEARNED</b> (Information about this symbol and why this is important to the tribe)