

# INDIAN EDUCATION FOR ALL ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS REGARDING MONTANA INDIANS

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 1

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.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 2

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.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 3

The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories predate the “discovery” of North America.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 4

Though there have been tribal peoples living successfully on the North American lands for millennia, reservations are lands that have been reserved by or for tribes for their exclusive use as permanent homelands. Some were created through treaties, while others were created by statutes and executive orders. The principle that land should be acquired from tribes only through their consent with treaties involved three assumptions: I. Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers; II. Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land; III. Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists or states.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 5

There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people and continue to shape who they are today. Many of these policies conflicted with one another. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods:

- Colonization/Colonial Period, 1492-1800s
- Treaty-Making and Removal Period, 1778-1871
- Reservation Period – Allotment and Assimilation, 1887-1934
- Tribal Reorganization Period, 1934-1953
- Termination and Relocation Period, 1953-1968
- Self-Determination Period, 1975-Present

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 6

History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.

## 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. However, under the American legal system, the extent and breadth of self-governing powers are not the same for each tribe.

