

# Montana Indians Differ in Language and Culture

## Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies  
Grade Level: Grade Three  
Suggested Duration:

## Stage 1 Desired Results

### Established Goals

**GLE 6.3.1,2** Students will know there are differences among tribes; i.e., languages, cultures, and government.

**GLE 3.1** Students will know and locate the seven Indian reservations of Montana.

**GLE 3.5.1; 3.6.1,2** Students will know about the importance of tribal communication then and now, tribal language development and similarities and endangered tribal languages.

**IEFA Essential Understanding 1** There is a 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.

### Understandings

- Each tribe has its own language; language is an important part of a tribe's culture (GLE 3.3.2).
- Each tribe has a unique culture, separate from other tribes' cultures (GLE 3.3.2).
- Some Montana reservations have more than one tribe on them; these tribes must work together to preserve the unique tribal cultures (e.g., Fort Belknap and Fort Peck Reservations and governments).

### Essential Questions

- What is language?
- Why is it important that each tribe has its own language?
- How can you tell the difference between different tribes' languages?
- How was it that each tribe developed its own language as opposed to all tribe having the same language?
- Are there tribal languages that are in danger of extinction?
- How could language extinction be prevented?
- What is the government like on a reservation shared by more than one tribe?



Indian Education for All Unit

opi.mt.gov Montana Office of Public Instruction

Students will be able to...

- explain that members of tribes speak English but they also have a tribal language.
- explain what “extinct” means; they will explain why many tribal languages are in danger of becoming extinct.
- explain that each Montana tribe has its own language and culture; on shared reservations both tribes must work to save both languages.
- talk about the characteristics (unique languages and cultural elements, for example) of identified tribes, using their notes and work sheets they have produced as they compare information about tribes.
- explain that there are seven Indian reservations in Montana and 11 tribes live on these reservations; however, some tribal members do not live on reservations.
- explain that the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe does not have a reservation but is a federally-recognized tribe.
- write definitions for language, extinction, and language extinction. They will take down important information in their notebooks and on class assignments as they explore essential questions and process through suggested activities.
- share information about Montana tribal languages, cultures, community, and trade with others in classroom discussions.

## Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

### Performance Tasks

1. Each student keeps a notebook of the new words learned, with definitions and ideas about each word. Indicators of quality for the proficient level include all new vocabulary words are carefully defined and sometimes a sentence is written to indicate the student knows how to use the word correctly in context; the notebook is easy to read; and the student uses the vocabulary words to review at intervals decided by the teacher.
2. Each student knows the quality indicators required to be at the proficient level for the notebook assignments (see rubric).

## Stage 3 Learning Plan

### Learning Activities:

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 are working on their broad understanding of “extinct languages” and languages that are in danger of becoming extinct.

Students listen carefully; the purpose is to learn more, and where necessary, revise their ideas about the usefulness of language, based on their understandings. By the end of the discussion, students should be able to tell about the importance of languages, and why language extinction is occurring.

Students participate in instructional activities which have been designed to show the importance of language.

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 these activities in about two class periods; this should keep student engagement and learning high.

### **“SHOP UNTIL YOU DROP”**

Divide students into small groups. Tell them they all speak a different language and must secure items they need to survive from the other groups. This can be simulated using items needed for returning to school, items needed to make cookies, a new pair of shoes, etc. Each group of students is provided with necessary items to trade, but none speak the same language.

Ask students in individual groups to record how they are going to attempt to get chocolate chips for cookies or pencils from the group that has the chocolate chips or pencils (or whatever simulation you choose) when they are unable to speak their language. Some answers you might expect may be to use signals or signs; just take what they need (which happened historically with the obvious disagreement taking place), depending on the groups. This might make the activity more interesting. Maybe all students don’t need what a group has to offer, and the group wants to keep what they have to trade with another group to obtain an alternative good.

After students decide what they need from the other groups, they predict or plan how to obtain these goods.

Remind students that classroom policies or rules remain in place unless you are comfortable with chaos. The chaos might make the simulation more accurate however!

After an appropriate time has passed or the activity has reached an ending point, it is extremely important to process what happened during the activity. Ask the students: How did this work for your group? What happened? What means of communication did you use? Did it work? How do you think this happened in the past when American Indian groups visited historic trading gathering places?

All responses should be recorded as a group. Students then should be asked to write their personal response to the question: What would be the best way for me to communicate with someone whose language I did not understand?

This second activity may take a shorter amount of time and be easier.

### **“NEED BEADS?”**

For this activity materials needed are: four colors of beads with enough for each member of the class to have one bead of each color (plastic pony beads are available at any craft section at the many varied “all in one” shopping centers), leather lace cut into lengths that, if tied, would fit the wrist of the students.

Each student gets a length of lace and four beads of the same color.

The activity directions are: Students cannot speak during this activity but must by the end of three minutes have a bead of every color to put on their bracelet. All speaking must stop, allow students to mingle to exchange beads, when they all have a bead of each color, the student should thread their beads on the leather lace and tie. This will signal that the student has completed the activity.

This activity can be made more difficult by giving uneven number of colored beads to students so it is more difficult for students to obtain the colors they need.

Follow this activity with a discussion of what happened, how students communicated, how they would communicate if they did not share the same language, for example.

### **Vocabulary**

language, language extinction, communication, language development, reservation, Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Dakota, Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, Chippewa-Cree, Blackfeet, Salish, Kootenai, Pend d’Oreille, little Shell Chippewa, Fort Peck, Flathead, tribe, culture

### **Teacher Resource**

Crawford, James. 1995. [“Endangered Native American Languages: What Is To Be Done and Why?”](#) *The Bilingual Research Journal*. Winter 1995, Vol 19, No. 1 (pp. 17-38).

## Indicators of Quality for Self-Assessment of Notebook (based on Montana Performance Indicators)

Proficiency Level	Organization	Consistency	Accuracy	Neatness
4. Advanced	The notebook goes beyond the level of accuracy and work expected for the proficient level. The student routinely keeps a notebook without being reminded to do so.	Everything is consistently done, as expected, for each assignment. The student requires no reminders to be consistent and is a self-starter.	The notebook contains vocabulary words accurately labeled; other additions the student has made are also accurate. The student has gone beyond the basic assignment.	The notebook work is neat and shows student initiative beyond that expected at the proficient level.
3. Proficient	This notebook is easy to read; the student could easily review the vocabulary and items which the teacher has indicated should minimally be in the notebook	Almost all required vocabulary words have been identified and defined. The work is easy to read. The student has been nearly consistent in producing quality work.	The required vocabulary words and definitions are accurate. The student could easily review these and may occasionally add in other information found.	The notebook is generally neat and easy to read. The student has attempted a personal “proficient” based on abilities and the challenge of the assignment.
2. Nearing Proficiency	This notebook is usually easy to read but sometimes the work is sloppy and the student cannot review the work easily.	Some of the vocabulary words have been written and defined, but the student has selected incorrect definitions or the definition given is not complete.	Minor errors are made and these contribute to misunderstanding of the notebook content. When asked about the errors, the student may know what should have been produced to be accurate.	The notebook is not neat and may not be easy to read. Erasures and strikeouts have been made that are noticeable. The performance does not reach the student’s ideal of “proficient as compared to other assignments where that level was achieved.
1. Novice	The notebook cannot be found OR few assignments have been attempted. The student requires help to get started.	The student cannot consistently produce the work as expected and/or requires help to complete the work.	The notebook contains major errors or no work was attempted.	The notebook is sloppy and not easy to read. Erasures, strikeouts, spacing errors may also be represented.