

# The Purposes of Tribal Government

## Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies  
Grade Level: Grade Five  
Suggested Duration: Two-Three 50-minute Class Periods

## Stage 1 Desired Results

### Established Goals

(1) The civics and government content standards for fifth grade are that each student will:  
(c) distinguish between the responsibilities of local, state, tribal, and national governments.

**IEFA 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.

### Understandings

- Montana Indian people are citizens of their tribes/nations, the state of Montana, and the United States with each reservation (and the Little Shell) having a tribal government.
- In general, Montana tribal government systems compare with federal and state governments.

### Essential Questions

- Why are Montana Indian people tribal citizens in addition to being Montana and U.S. citizens?
- How do tribal governments work? Who benefits?
- How do tribal governments interact with Montana government and the U.S. government?

### Students will be able to...

- describe the structure of the tribal government and services provided by the tribal government of at least one tribe/nation in Montana.
- compare the structure of one Montana tribal government to the basic structure of Montana government (executive, legislative, judicial).

### Students will know...

- why Montana Indian people are citizens of their tribes/nations as well as being Montana and U.S. citizens.



- tribal governments have authority to do such things as establish police forces and tribal courts, make laws, decide how tribal property can be used, decide who can be a member of a tribe, and ensure that tribal culture is preserved.
- the structure of one Montana tribal government as compared to basic structure of the Montana government (executive, legislative, judicial).

## Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

### Performance Tasks

1. Describe features of at least one Montana tribal government; for example, tribal court, police force, tribal council, how the tribe makes laws, who can be an official member of the tribe, and tribal offices and agencies.
2. Explain how a particular Montana tribal government is like Montana government and how it differs.

### Other Evidence

1. In dyads, or groups of four, students write a summary which identifies the important features of government for the tribe.
2. Students receive and complete a Tribal Government/Montana State Government comparison chart.

## Stage 3 Learning Plan

### Learning Activities:

Prior to the lesson, identify the Montana tribal governments you will use. Go to the tribe/reservation's website and copy the tribe's Constitution for use with the class.

Be prepared to define "tribal sovereignty" (see the vocabulary), although the current lesson is meant to be a bridge to beginning to understand tribal sovereignty. Take time to prepare yourself by re-reading "Essential Understanding 7" from *Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians.*"

Prepare students by reviewing the concept of sovereignty in relation to oneself. What types of power does a student have over oneself in school? What rights and responsibilities does a student have at school? What rights and responsibilities does a student have as a Montana citizen?

### **W = help students know where the lesson is going and what is expected?**

Students receive an overview of the goals and understandings from the teacher. This also includes the vocabulary needed, Essential Questions, and Understandings. Review these carefully with all students and clarify any questions.

### **H = hook all students and hold their interest?**

To build background knowledge, share the Sovereignty video with the class, which provides a basic introduction to tribal sovereignty. The video is from the resource called theREZweLIVEon which was developed by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

Next, share the brief video from Montana PBS which provides a basic introduction to Montana State Government. Have students compare/contrast the two videos and facilitate a discussion.

The teacher and students discuss the essential questions. The teacher checks out student' prior knowledge of state and tribal government, taking special care to help students with what they do not know. Student ideas may need to be clarified. Review the concept of sovereignty in relationship to personal student powers in school; what rights and responsibilities do students have at school? What rights and responsibilities do students have as Montana citizens? [List these as they are identified.]

**E = Equip students, help them experience the key ideas and explore the issues?**

You may choose to just utilize the tribal government closest to your school or provide students with multiple options and look at several tribes. Give each student a copy of the tribe's constitution or governmental rules. Provide time to read and go through the constitution. Have students highlight/underline important details on their copy. In dyads, or groups of four, have students write a summary which identifies the important features of government for the tribe.

**R = Provide opportunities to rethink and revise their understandings and work?**

Review all group summaries in a class discussion. Write the salient features of government as they are identified. Students need to copy this overall summary into their class notes. Students clarify their understandings of governmental features and revise their thinking as needed.

**E = Allow students to evaluate their work and its implications?**

Students compare their small group summary with the whole-class summary and add in information not originally included. Each student identifies what thinks is the most important tribal government feature and explains why in a brief paragraph.

**T = Be tailored (personalized) to the different needs, interests, and abilities of learners?**

Students receive a Tribal Government/Montana State Government comparison chart to complete. They could complete the worksheet individually or in small groups. Students unable to complete all parts of the assignment (for example, those with an IEP) should complete the task based on their different needs and abilities.

**O = Be organized to maximize initial and sustained engagement as well as effective learning?**

This assignment will take two-three days to complete. Allow enough time in class for students to complete their comparison worksheet. Ensure students have basic knowledge of the U.S. government structure (executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government) and Montana government (same).

**Materials/Resources Needed**

[Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians](#), Montana Office of Public Instruction

[Great States - Montana Government](#) (video), PBS, LearningMedia

Montana Tribal Constitutions, available for download on the websites shown below. Each student (or each dyad) will need a copy. These copies can be retrieved after the lesson and saved for future use.

[Sovereignty](#) (video) – TheRezWeLiveOn

Worksheets: Lesson Purpose Overview, Tribal Government/Montana State Government Comparison Chart (one for each student).

## Websites

[Montana Constitution Lesson Plan from the Montana Historical Society](#)

[Blackfeet Nation](#)

[Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy Reservation](#)

[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](#)

[Montana Indian Law - Tribal Constitutions](#)

# SOME PURPOSES OF TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**LESSON PURPOSE** By the end of this lesson you should be able to describe the purpose of a Montana tribal government and how these powers were acquired and are used today.

## YOU MUST KNOW

- Montana Indian people are citizens of their tribes/nations, the state of Montana, and the United States.
- Each Montana reservation and the Little Shell Band of Chippewa has a tribal government.
- In general, tribal governments have authority to do such things as: establish police forces and tribal courts, make laws, decide how tribal property can be used, decide who can be a member of a tribe, and ensure tribal culture is preserved.

## Vocabulary

**SELF-DETERMINATION** The idea of self-determination is that Montana Indian nations are basic governmental units. The tribal governments have *sovereign powers* to operate governments, enter into agreements, and develop and protect natural resources.

**SOVEREIGNTY:** Sovereignty is a natural power that ensures self-government, cultural preservation, and a Montana tribe’s control of its future. It is an essential power which all tribes have, and it was not given to them by the U.S. government.

**SOVEREIGN POWERS:** American Indian Nations once possessed complete sovereignty—they naturally had powers to take care of themselves, including governing themselves. Today tribes have the power to define tribal membership, tribal government, regulate domestic relations, settle disputes, manage their property and resources, tax, regulate businesses on their reservations, and conduct relations with state and U.S. governments.

## IMPORTANT TO KNOW

- Each tribe has a constitution or a charter that tells what powers it claims as a sovereign nation.
- Each tribe has its own inherent sovereign powers.
- The U.S. Government classifies tribal governments as domestic, dependent nations.

## Notes

# WORKSHEET 1

## TRIBAL GOVERNMENT/MONTANA STATE GOVERNMENT COMPARISON CHART

Name \_\_\_\_\_

| GOVERNMENT PART             | (TRIBE)<br>GOVERNMENT FEATURES | MONTANA STATE<br>GOVERNMENT FEATURES |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Executive                   |                                |                                      |
| Legislative Body            |                                |                                      |
| Judicial                    |                                |                                      |
| Tell about the Constitution |                                |                                      |