

# Sovereignty: What Does it Mean for the Northern Cheyenne Tribe?

## Fast Facts

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

## Stage 1 Desired Results

### Established Goals

**GLE 5.2.3, Essential Understanding 7** Students will be able to identify the significance of land ownership and use for at least one Montana tribe.

**GLE 5.2.3; Essential Understanding 7** Students know that tribes have *sovereign* powers that are separate and independent of the U.S. and Montana governments.

### Understandings

- Before settlers arrived, the Montana Indian tribes possessed complete ownership of the land. This is an example of tribal **sovereignty** (EU 7)
- When Montana Tribes made treaties with the U.S. government, each tribe still reserved the right to operate its own governments and manage its own tribal property and resources. Each tribal government is a **Tribal Nation**.
- By treaty, the U.S. government also took on the responsibility of protecting tribal lands and resources and protecting each tribe's right to self-government.
- History is a story related through the experience of a teller. History told from an Indian perspective often conflicts with what many history books tell us (EU 6).

### Essential Questions

- Montana Indian tribes have complete ownership of the lands on their reservations. What does this mean?
- What does sovereign power mean, in general, for Indian tribes?
- What is the significance of being a "tribal nation?" What powers do these tribal nations have?
- The Northern Cheyenne Tribe has sovereign power of land ownership. What does this mean?

### Students will be able to...

- list and describe Montana tribal government powers.
- tell the significance of land ownership for Montana tribes.
- discuss the citizenships held by Montana tribal members.



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Students will know...

- the definitions of tribal nation, tribal sovereignty, and tribal citizenship.
- some of the powers held by Montana tribes, separate and independent from the U.S. and Montana governments.

## Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks

1. Complete the work sheets and assignments with 90% accuracy (individual/groups)/.
2. Discuss orally, and summarize in writing, the powers of Montana tribal governments in general.

## Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities

Introduce the learning objectives and utilize **Story: Part I** to set the stage for learning. Students are expected to discuss and complete the definitions, and the work for Part I.

Use the ensuing discussion to aid students in thinking about and revising their understanding of land ownership and the conflicts that might come about as two different peoples claim the same land.

Utilize **Story: Part II**, discuss and complete the work, and summarize the issues of land ownership for the Northern Cheyenne tribe.

Part II: The Northern Cheyenne TEACHER BACKGROUND

**PRIOR TO THE LESSON, THE TEACHER SHOULD READ “*History and Present Situation of the Northern Cheyenne People*”, from *Lame Deer Schools: Northern Cheyenne Social Studies Curriculum: Bringing the Story of the Cheyenne People to the Children of Today*. 2006. Northern Cheyenne Curriculum Committee, Lame Deer, Montana. Available at Montana OPI Indian Education Web site.**

**THIS IS TEACHER BACKGROUND ONLY.**

The Northern Cheyenne Social Studies Curriculum identifies eight Core Understandings important to the Northern Cheyenne people. Of the eight Core Understandings, four are listed below and could be discussed in this lesson. They have been listed on Student Notes, Part II. Each student will need a copy.

**NORTHERN CHEYENNE CURRICULAR CORE UNDERSTANDINGS:**

- Cheyenne Geography spans territories ranging from the Great Lakes area to Texas and Montana.
- The Cheyenne people, through their language and culture, have been a sovereign nation from time immemorial.
- The U.S. treaty and federal policy periods adversely impacted every aspect of Cheyenne existence.
- Contemporary issues affecting the Cheyenne today have historic contexts [taken from *Lame Deer Schools: Northern Cheyenne Social Studies Curriculum: Bringing the Story of the Cheyenne People to the Children of Today*. 2006. Northern Cheyenne Curriculum Committee, Lame Deer, Montana, Available at Montana Office of Public Instruction Indian Education Web page].

## **Cheyenne History Timeline**

### **Before 1830**

The Cheyenne were a horticultural people, and a western tribe of the great Algonquian Indian family. They moved westward because of pressures from the east and adapted to a nomadic life on the Great Plains. They were governed by the Council of Forty-Four, which was made up of members of the Chiefs' Society and important Warrior Societies. Their laws came from the Four Sacred Arrows brought by Sweet Medicine from Bear Butte in Black Hills country (today, in South Dakota).

### **By 1830**

The Cheyenne split into two groups because of east-west travel of whites, which had split the buffalo herds. After that, the southern group ranged along the Arkansas and Canadian Rivers in Colorado, western Kansas, and western Oklahoma. The northern group of Cheyenne stayed on the Northern Great Plains in what became Wyoming and southeastern Montana. The Cheyenne still consider themselves to be one people, and they still interact today.

The westward movement of whites brought such things as guns, alcohol, and diseases such as smallpox and cholera. Cheyenne life was forever changed. They developed rivalries with Crow and Shoshone Indian tribes because they all were being pushed into the same lands. They developed alliances with the Sioux, the Arapahoe, and Apaches as a means to protect themselves.

### **1851 Fort Laramie Treaty**

This treaty considered all of the Cheyenne as one group, and they were assigned territory in Colorado by the U.S. government. The treaty did not work well and was broken.

### **1868 Fort Laramie Treaty**

The Northern Cheyenne group was recognized separately, and shared land with the Brule Lakota Sioux (today, in South Dakota), including the Black Hills, which was the Cheyenne's spiritual home. They were also to be given seeds and a plow with two well-broken oxen and one cow, in hopes they could become small farmers like white settlers who were moving westward.

### **1874**

Gold was discovered in the Black Hills, and the treaty of 1868 was breached by the United States. Miners were allowed into the area; this resulted in battles between the U.S. Army and the Northern Cheyenne and some of the Lakota Sioux.

### **1876**

General George Custer and his troops were defeated at Little Big Horn, 13 miles south of present-day Hardin, Montana. Chief Dull Knife and his Northern Cheyenne band had not even been at the Little Big Horn battle, but they were deprived of their homes and lands, and were moved to "Indian Territory" in western Oklahoma in 1877.

### **1877**

In Oklahoma many Cheyenne starved because they did not have enough to eat, and there was little game to hunt. They made their way back to their northern homeland, and lived on a tiny, isolated piece of land, small in comparison to what they had originally controlled.

### **1924**

The Northern Cheyenne became U. S. citizens.

### Materials/Resources Needed

Story: Part I. One copy for the teacher, one copy for each student (students will need their copy to follow along, and to use in completing Worksheet #1). Students should keep this work and the Story in their social studies notebook.

Story: Part II. One copy for the teacher, one copy for each student, as above.

### Vocabulary/Concepts

#### **Tribal Nation**

Each Montana tribal government is an independent nation. It has such powers as being able to operate its tribal government, manage its property and resources, settle disputes, raise taxes, and regulate businesses, and conduct relations with other governments.

#### **Sovereignty**

The birthright of a people who share a common culture, language, value system, and land base to exercise control over their lands, their lives, and their future, independent of other nations; the right to self-governance, self-definition, and self-education; politically independent; the inherent power to self-govern. “The inherent right of the Cheyenne to their way of life, identity, language, land, loyalty to tribe, tribal government, tribal membership, tribal ownership of a land base: tse’ mahao’ esthea’ en tse hes mena’ o’e yse nema’ o’ ehne’ ane.” [*Lame Deer Schools Northern Cheyenne Social Studies Curriculum*]

#### **Citizenship**

Members of a tribal nation have both tribal nation citizenship and U.S. citizenship.

#### **Band**

A smaller group or unit of a tribe. The Cheyenne consisted of approximately ten bands that traveled independently of one another. There was travel between and among bands and at certain times all of the bands came together. [*Lame Deer Schools Northern Cheyenne Social Studies Curriculum*]

#### **Council of 44**

The traditional chiefs who were responsible to govern and manage the Cheyenne people. These positions and roles were taught by Sweet Medicine. [*Lame Deer Schools Northern Cheyenne Social Studies Curriculum*]

#### **Treaty**

A contract between two or more sovereigns [*from Lame Deer Schools Northern Cheyenne Social Studies Curriculum*].

## Part I: Inhabitants and Settlers: Different Perspectives About and Ownership

The teacher should read this story to the class, while students take simple notes.

Suppose you are an explorer and have been exploring a new planet. You are excited by the possibilities of the new planet—it has clean water, great air, lots of food, and it looks like it would be a good place to live. As you explore, you come across other people who have been living on what you have decided to call “New Planet,” and although you don’t know their language, you are able to communicate with them a little. However, they don’t understand all of your words, and you don’t understand all of theirs. This group calls itself The People.

You’d like to move lots of new settlers to “New Planet;” it would give them a new place to live, and it looks like there’s land, food, and places to expand. Where you come from, you and your settlers are used to being able to own land—you apply for a homestead, and your government grants you a homestead if you settle on it and develop it. After it has been granted to a settler, the settler has the “right to own and sell” this land. You are only familiar with homesteading and “ownership of a piece of land” because that is how things are done where you live.

If you brought settlers to this new place you are exploring, you would expect to use the same kind of government land grant process. That is, you would measure out land, and then your settler homesteaders could apply for land, and they could “own” it.

However, the people who already live on what you call the “New Planet” do not appear to homestead, or to “own” land individually. Instead, they live in small groups or bands of several families, and cooperatively use broad areas of the land for hunting, fishing, and gathering food. They share resources as they move around what you are calling the “New Planet,” in order to take advantage of the food available.

For example, they have a certain location in which they settle for the several months when it will be winter; some meat and other foods have been stored to make sure people don’t starve. In the spring, summer, and fall the small bands move across the land, gathering foods and hunting and fishing.

They don’t seem to homestead or “own” the land, as you might expect. They don’t regard this as a “New Planet” and are puzzled by the name you are using for it. They call it The Land; they have names for places they traditionally travel to, and they respect the rights of other bands as they all gather food, hunt, and fish. They tell you they have always lived on The Land, and they have always used certain places for their hunting, fishing, and food gathering. They have stories going back many generations which tell them how and when to use certain areas. They expect to continue to use The Land as always, with no changes.

When you ask who gave them this land to use, they tell you that they have always been there, and they are bewildered by the idea that any one person could or should own a piece of land. They are only familiar with working, traveling, and living together for the benefit of their people. “Homesteads” don’t exist in their culture. Land is used cooperatively, and broad areas and regions are all a part of everyday life.

Summarize differences in land ownership between the settlers, and what you have learned about The People who already live on the “New Planet.” Use the worksheet and be prepared to discuss the differences.

# Worksheet 1: Understanding Different Perspective About Land

Name \_\_\_\_\_

IDEA	What your settlers might expect	What The People might expect
exploring other places		
the idea of "ownership"		
the idea of a "homestead"		
the idea of moving around according to seasons in order to gather food and to hunt		
other ways in which settlers might differ from "The People"		

If you move your settlers to The Land, what conflicts might you expect? Why?

## PART II: The NORTHERN CHEYENNE

1. Cheyenne bands and tribes used a wide area of the United States; they ranged from the Great Lakes area to Texas and what is now Montana.
2. The Cheyenne people, through their language and culture, have always been an independent (sovereign) nation.
3. When the United States made treaties with the Cheyenne, those treaties were not upheld, causing many problems for the Cheyenne (for example, their land was invaded by miners and settlers, and they were not given the necessary food and supplies to live).

### Story

The Cheyenne Tribe was a people of many Bands, who traveled widely as they hunted and gathered according to the seasons. Their bands could be found in the Great Lakes area, and also in Texas and what is today northern Wyoming, and southeastern Montana. They were an independent people who governed themselves through a Council of 44 chiefs, and they met at certain times to celebrate and to continue their strong tribal ties. Like other Indian tribes, they were being pushed further westward by the movement of American settlers.

There were about ten Bands of Cheyenne people in the 1830s. Each band lived cooperatively, ranging their lands in order to hunt, fish, and gather food. Each band shared resources as it moved in its area, taking care of its own people. Each Band had certain locations where they lived during certain seasons. They used the land carefully so their people would not starve. In their culture, land was not individually owned; everyone in the Band and in the tribe used land resources cooperatively. They respected the rights of other Cheyenne Bands and their allies. Their tribal stories from previous times told of how and when to use the land, and the Black Hills were considered a special place in their homelands. They expected to continue to use their lands forever in this manner.

When miners came to the Black Hills of South Dakota, the Treaty of 1851 was broken; miners ignored the treaty because gold had been found. The Cheyenne lands were invaded by miners and settlers, and the Cheyenne traditional use of these lands was forever changed. Today the Cheyenne people still regard the Black Hills as their ancestral home; they still have issues with others who claim the same land.

1. Use a U.S. map to identify the lands traditionally used by the Cheyenne. Use a pencil to shade in the areas used.
2. How were the Cheyenne people governed? How did the Bands live? What were some of their traditions?
3. Locate and label the Black Hills on your map. What happened when gold was found in the Black Hills? Why might some Cheyenne people be opposed to a new biker bar being built near Bear Butte in the Black Hills?