

# Principles of Democracy

## Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies

Grade Level: Grades 6-8

Suggested Duration: 2-3 class periods

## Stage 1 Desired Results

### Established Goals

(1) The civics and government content standards for sixth through eighth grade are that each student will:

(a) explain a variety of forms of government from the past or present; (d) distinguish the structure, organization, powers, and limits of government at the local, state, national, and tribal levels.

**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 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

- Students will understand the basic concept of sovereignty and how it applies to American Indian Nations.
- Under the American legal system, Indian tribes have sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments (EU 7).

### Essential Questions

- What does it mean to be free?
- Why do we need government?
- In what ways do tribes maintain/exert their tribal sovereignty to face contemporary challenges?

### Students will be able to...

- describe sovereignty and understand how tribes exercise their sovereignty.

### Students will know...

- tribal sovereignty is what makes American Indian people as a group unique from every other minority group in this country. Tribal nations have a wide range of contemporary challenges.



Indian Education for All Unit

[opi.mt.gov](http://opi.mt.gov)

Montana Office of Public Instruction

## Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

### Performance Tasks

1. Students will develop poster board presentations regarding how specific tribal nations exercise their tribal sovereignty to deal with contemporary challenges.

## Stage 3 Learning Plan

### Learning Activities

Ask students to brainstorm the following questions:

1. What does it mean to be free?
2. Why do we need government?
3. How do the previous questions relate to American Indian people?
4. In what ways do tribes maintain/exert their inherent tribal sovereignty?

Share the following information with the students:

Tribal sovereignty is the nation-to-nation relationship between the U.S. government and tribes, . . . this relationship was established by treaties ratified by the U.S. Congress and repeatedly reaffirmed by the Supreme Court and various Executive Orders.

Today American Indian cultures meld the past with the present, . . . many of the traditions which are a part of the past continue to be extremely important – family structure, tribal values, traditional spirituality, languages, songs, and dances. Today, tribal nations have many issues that they are dealing with regarding all aspects of their lives and affecting their reservations and traditional homelands.

Assign students a tribal government to research. To provide a broader perspective regarding tribal diversity suggest students conduct research about tribes outside of Montana. Use the list of inherent powers and find specific examples of how their assigned tribal government exercises these powers.

Students will develop poster board presentations of the tribe they are researching highlighting unique aspects of the ways tribes exercise their sovereignty. Have the students explain the services provided by that local tribal government.

### Suggested Research Topics

- Native Language Revitalization
- Tribal Sovereignty
- Climate Change
- Jurisdiction
- Treaty Rights
- Indian Mascots
- Bison Restoration

Have students identify a contemporary American Indian issue to research and how tribes are working to address the issue. Have each student or team clear the topic with you first to ensure a broad coverage of topics.

Have students use the following questions to help guide their research:

- What is the issue (redefine it in their own words)?
- What do you currently know about this topic? List out a brief answer (save to compare with information gathered as the lesson progresses).
- What are some particular questions you have regarding this particular topic?
- What are some of the multiple perspectives surrounding this topic?
- Has your perspective changed as a result of your research or do you feel more informed about this particular issue?
- What resources did you use to reach your conclusions?

### **Tribal Governments**

- The authority of tribal governments is derived from the concept of tribal sovereignty that is ultimately vested in the people, the tribal membership; thus, tribal members decide the type of government they want to have as well as the extent of its authority.
- In general, where not expressly limited by U.S. law, tribal governments have the inherent powers to do such things as:
  - pass laws that pertain to them;
  - interpret laws;
  - administer justice;
  - identify major responsibilities of tribal government;
  - define powers and duties of officers;
  - determine whether acts done in the name of the government are authoritative;
  - define the manner in which officers are selected or removed;
  - define conditions for membership in the nation;
  - make laws governing the conduct of persons, both Indians and non-Indians within the reservation;
  - establish tribal police forces and courts to enforce laws and administer justice;
  - exclude non-tribal members from the reservation;
  - regulate hunting, fishing, and gathering;
  - tax members and non-Indians residing or doing business on Indian lands;
  - regulate domestic relations of its members.

Depending on the circumstances, these powers vary from tribe to tribe.

### **Resources**

Online Indigenous News Sources - Make sure to familiarize yourself with these websites prior to the lesson for more research topic ideas and for developing your own understanding about the diverse range of contemporary issues.

- ✓ Have students regularly access free online resources such as [Indian Country Today](#) and [Indians.com](#). Students can practice their listening skills by the Native American produced radio program – [Native America Calling](#).
- ✓ National organizations such as the [National Congress of American Indians](#) and the [National Indian Education Association](#) have a wealth of information on their websites pertaining to contemporary issues all across Indian Country.

- ✓ Indigenous news sources are ideal resources for conducting research projects concerning contemporary American Indian issues. Students can develop their critical literacy skills by comparing how other news outlets report similar stories as well. Consider assigning students to research as a team or in small groups with assigned roles.

#### Montana Tribal Web sites and Constitutions

- [Blackfeet Nation](#)
- [Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation](#) (Facebook)
- [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](#)
- [Tribal Constitutions](#)

Websites with information about contemporary challenges tribal governments are facing:

- [American Indian Responses to Environmental Challenges](#)
- [American Indians 101 - Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Essential Understandings Key Concepts](#)
- [Montana Tribes Digital Archives Website](#)
- [The Ways](#) Stories of culture and language from the Central Great Lakes
- [Ancient Islands in the Sky - Archaeology in the Beartooth Ice](#) This lesson is appropriate for grades 7-12.
- [Bison Restoration: Resources for Learning about Contemporary American Indian Issues](#) This lesson helps students learn about restoration of the bison to several Montana reservations and the importance to American Indians. It is appropriate for grades 6-12.
- [Crazy Mountain Cathedral](#) This lesson is appropriate for grades 7-12.
- [Learning about Tribal Sovereignty](#) This lesson will provide students with important information regarding tribal sovereignty. This is for grades 9-12.
- [Preserving the Sacredness of the Badger-Two Medicine](#) This lesson will help students understand a little more about the remarkable ceremonial and legal history of the Badger-Two Medicine region and the Blackfeet Nation. It is appropriate for grades 8-12.