



Learning about Tribal Sovereignty

Dear Students,

Thank you for your interest in learning more about Montana American Indian tribes. In this lesson you will be learning about tribal sovereignty. There are several links to on-line resources to provide you with important background information regarding tribal sovereignty.

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. (Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians - #7)

Suggested Assignments: Your teacher may offer various types of assessments to gauge your understanding of this complex topic; i.e., virtual poster presentation, participation in an on-line discussion forum, multimedia presentation formats such as a video or podcast. This lesson provides one example of a possible assignment.

Write a brief paper using the suggested structure and submit to your appropriate teacher.

You are a reporter for the local/regional newspaper and you have been assigned to write a story about tribal sovereignty. Your editor has asked that you assume the readers have little or no background knowledge about the issue. Be sure to include key themes and facts all Montanans should know about tribal sovereignty and reference relevant Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians. The editor would like the article to be at least 500 words. Consider using the following title for your article – *Essential Understandings All Montanans Should Have about Tribal Sovereignty*.

Introduction

For a brief introduction to this topic watch this video and use a 3 – 2 – 1 prompt to review the film. Write down three things you saw in the video that caught your attention, two questions you have about information presented in the video, and one thing you really enjoyed. Utilize the questions you put forth as a way to guide you in your research and writing.

- ✓ There are currently 574 federally recognized Native American tribes in the United States and every one of them has the right to govern themselves and their lands. This [brief video clip](#) produced by BESE looks at the impact U.S. policies have had on tribal nations.



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Background Resources

- For basic background information about American Indians, check out [American Indians 101 Frequently Asked Questions](#).
- The [Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians](#) publication from the Office of Public Instruction has excellent background information to help guide you in your research.
- This [video clip](#) features Mike Jetty, Indian Education Specialist, providing an overview of the Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians.
- [Frequently Asked Questions from the Bureau of Indian Affairs](#)

Tribal Specific Resource

- To learn about contemporary sovereignty issues regarding tribes on the Flathead Reservation utilize [TheRezweLIVEon](#) Web site developed by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

Key Concepts

- The twelve sovereign tribes, located in what is now the state of Montana, are distinct from one another in their history, culture, and language.
- Tribal sovereignty is the inherent right of tribes to independent self-governance.
- Tribal governments are fully functioning governments that provide an array of services similar to those of federal, state, and local governments.
- American Indian individuals and tribes are still here with distinct and intact governments, languages, and cultures that contribute to modern Montana.
- Tribal self-governing powers predate the existence of the United States and are not delegated powers granted by Congress or any other entity; they are inherent powers of sovereign nations that have never been extinguished.
- In general, tribes are free to exercise any of their sovereign powers unless Congress has specifically limited or modified them in some way.
- Despite the complex evolution of tribal sovereignty in America, it remains one of the most important attributes of tribal independence.

[Essential Understandings Key Concepts](#)

Feel free to contact [Indian Education for All staff](#) at OPI to assist you in your research and good luck with your article.