

## Resources for Teaching about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples



*Native Americans in Montana are four times more likely to be reported missing than their counterparts, according to a state Department of Justice report. And while Indigenous people comprise 6.5% of Montana's population, in 2025, they accounted for 24% of the state's active missing persons reports. More than 80% of people reported missing in 2023 were under the age of 18.*



### Established Goals - Montana Social Studies Standards

SS.CG.9-12.5 evaluate how citizens and institutions address social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international levels.

SS.H.9-12.3 identify ways in which people and groups exercise agency in difficult historical, contemporary, and tribal contexts.

SS.CG.9-12.7 explain the foundations and complexity of sovereignty for federally recognized tribes in Montana.

SS.CG.9-12.12 evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in ensuring civil rights at the local, state, tribal, national, and international levels.

### Understandings

Students will develop an understanding regarding contemporary American Indian issues and how the issues relate to the seven [Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians](#).

Students will understand how difficult it can be for tribal governments, state governments, local governments and the US government to work through contemporary issues such as MMIP.

American Indian people are continuing to navigate the legal system to ensure their people are thriving.

The issues surrounding MMIP are complex and understanding the contemporary and historical context is necessary for taking informed action to address this topic in a relevant manner.

**NOTE: AS YOU TEACH ABOUT THIS ISSUE, BE AWARE OF POSSIBLE EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS AND PROVIDE GUIDANCE WHERE STUDENTS COULD GO FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AT THE SCHOOL AND LOOP IN SCHOOL COUNSELORS/OTHER SUPPORT STAFF. IF POSSIBLE, CONSIDER UTILIZING LOCAL TRIBAL KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS TO PROVIDE CULTURAL SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS.**

## General Background Information and Resources for Instruction

Review these lesson plans for ideas, resources and teaching strategies:

[Using Inquiry Processes to Research American Indian Issues - Grades 6-8\\*](#)

[Contemporary American Indian Issues\\*](#)

[Native Case Studies - Enduring Legacies Native Cases](#) (Evergreen College)

[In This Moment: A Guide for Addressing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples Crisis in Media](#)

**Day 1 - Interview with Jen Murphy – share with students and go through the discussion questions. Facilitate a class discussion after watching the clip.**

**MMIP interview with Jen Murphy** - Author of *More Like Her*, Photographer and MMIP Activist

### Discussion Questions:

- ✓ What does she say about the issue of MMIP – What is it and what are tribal nations and the state of Montana currently doing to address this serious issue.
- ✓ Jen mentions Jermain Charlo. Who was Jermain and what was the context of her case? Conduct research regarding her case and what happened.
- ✓ What advice does Jen give for persistence?
- ✓ Why did she write a children’s book about this issue?
- ✓ What does she say about finding issues you are passionate about?



### Take Aways

- ✓ Always be aware of your surroundings and practice safe behaviors
- ✓ Be a good friend and help others who might be having a hard time
- ✓ Be a good listener and practice empathy
- ✓ Find a good way to get at issues of bias and discrimination – we need to treat all people fair regardless of their background or status
- ✓ Develop a personal safety plan
- ✓ Social action connection – help to raise awareness of this issue

### Day 1 & 2 - Primary Source Document Review Activity - Living up to our Ideals

Review Sections 3 and 4 from the Montana State Constitution. Have students read them aloud and facilitate a class discussion about what they think these statements mean. Bring up the issue of MMIP and pose the question: How well are we doing in upholding our Constitutional obligations to Indigenous Montanans? Tell students they will be conducting research about MMIP, and they will

analyze how well we are doing as a state in living up to our Constitutional obligations regarding this issue.

### **Excerpts from the Montana State Constitution (1972)**

Section 3. INALIENABLE RIGHTS. All persons are born free and have certain inalienable rights. They include the right to a clean and healthful environment and the rights of pursuing life's basic necessities, enjoying and defending their lives and liberties, acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and seeking their safety, health and happiness in all lawful ways. In enjoying these rights, all persons recognize corresponding responsibilities.

Section 4. INDIVIDUAL DIGNITY. The dignity of the human being is inviolable. No person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws. Neither the state nor any person, firm, corporation, or institution shall discriminate against any person in the exercise of his civil or political rights on account of race, color, sex, culture, social origin or condition, or political or religious ideas.

**Day 3** – Analyze the artwork from students at Frazer High School and facilitate a class discussion. Artwork is included at the end of this lesson plan. In addition, review the statements from the Frazer school art department – what do the students have to say about this issue and why did they do the artwork?

Research MMIP - Provide students with resources to conduct some research into MMIP issues. Share the following links with students to use as they begin their research. Utilize the questions from the [Contemporary Issues lesson plan](#) to guide students with their research. Students will gather evidence and present their findings in the form of a brief research paper and/or oral presentation. If class time allows have students present their findings to their classmates. This could be done through poster board presentations, role plays, speeches, and debates.

- ✓ Research jurisdiction issues and develop an awareness of the multiple layers of law enforcement at the local, state, tribal and federal level that handle MMIP cases.
- ✓ Research MMIP efforts from different entities including tribal, state, federal and social justice groups. i.e. [Operation Not Forgotten](#)
- ✓ Media coverage for MMIW comparison activity. Representation matters and in general does the mainstream media treat missing person issues the same or different depending on who is missing? Find specific examples to support this idea and explain.

### **Montana Resources**

[Indigenous Education - MMIP Resources](#)

[Missing Indigenous Persons Review Report to the Legislative Interim Committees – 2024](#)

[Missing Persons Tool Kits](#)

[Montana Community Foundation – MMIP News and Resources](#)

[Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force](#)

[The Snowbird Fund](#)

Indian Education for All Unit

[Tveraa Photography MMIW Project](#)

### **MMIP in the News**

[Behind the billboards: Visibility and resources for the MMIW crisis](#)

[Indigenous-led MMIP awareness art show fosters healing at University of Montana](#)

[Efforts going into addressing MMIP cases in Montana](#)

[Jen Murphy: Using Photography to Amplify Awareness of MMIP](#)

[What does a red handprint symbolize? The meaning raises awareness to a crisis](#)

[MMIP Awareness Rally in Great Falls - KRTV](#)

[SB 107: Provide for human trafficking prevention education in public schools](#)

### **Nationwide Resources**

[Administration for Children and Families](#)

[Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women](#)

[Indian Law Resource Center](#)

[Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center](#)

[Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons – Department of Justice](#)

[My Cause My Cleats](#)

[National Indigenous Women's Resource Center](#)

[National Congress of American Indians](#)

[National Resource Center on Domestic Violence](#)

[New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)

### **Film**

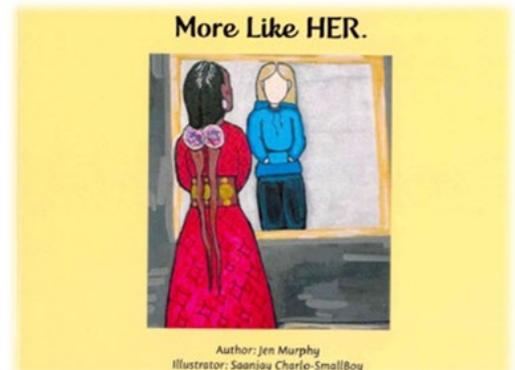
[Not Afraid](#)

[Our Sisters in Spirit & Say Her Name](#)

[Somebody's Daughter - Somebody's Daughter – Film Trailer](#)

**New IEFA Literature Resource:** Jen Murphy has created a children's book entitled, *More Like Her*, consider using the book with your classes as you teach about this issue. [Ordering Information for the book – More Like Her](#)

[Check out the IEFA Lesson Plan for \*More Like Her\*](#)



**Review MMIP legislation and conduct an analysis of MMIP legislation from other states and the federal government. Utilize this recent article to begin the discussion - [New laws address Montana's missing and murdered Indigenous people crisis](#)**

**Examples of National Legislation – Have students review the key components and connect back to relevant Social Studies Standards. Pose the question – How well are we doing in our state and country in addressing MMIP issues as they relate to the following standards?**

- evaluate how citizens and institutions address social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international levels.
- identify ways in which people and groups exercise agency in difficult historical, contemporary, and tribal contexts.
- evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in ensuring civil rights at the local, state, tribal, national, and international levels.

### **Savannah's Act**

S.227, otherwise known as Savannah's Act, was signed into law on October 10, 2020, and directed the US Department of Justice to review, revise and develop protocols to address MMIP issues.

Savannah's Act set out to:

- ✓ provide training to law enforcement agencies on how to record tribal enrollment for victims in federal databases;
- ✓ develop and implement a strategy to educate the public on the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System;
- ✓ conduct specific outreach to tribes, tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations regarding the ability to publicly enter information through the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System or other non-law enforcement sensitive portal;
- ✓ develop regionally appropriate guidelines for response to cases of missing or murdered Native Americans;
- ✓ provide training and technical assistance to tribes and law enforcement agencies for implementation of the developed guidelines; and report statistics on missing or murdered Native Americans. (U.S. Congress 2020)

### **Not Invisible Act**

Also in 2020, the 116th U.S. Congress passed Public Law 166, otherwise known as the Not Invisible Act. The act directed the US Department of Justice and the US Department of the Interior to establish a commission to make recommendations to federal partners in combating MMIP and human trafficking. The Act sunsets 2 years after its establishment. The commission completed an in-depth review of the problem at hand and completed a report titled, "Not One More: Findings and Recommendations of the Not Invisible Act Commission". The US Departments of Justice and the Interior made strides in responding to the commission's report. Their response to the commission is compiled in a report dated March 2024.

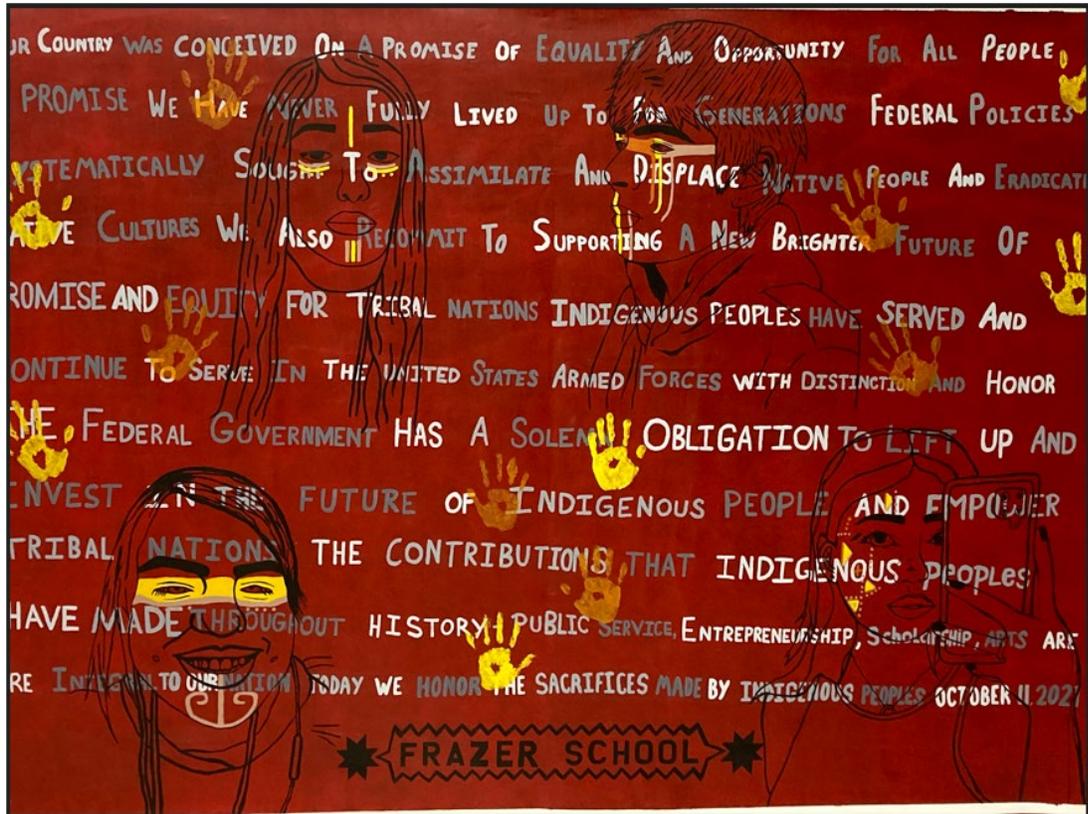
The Not Invisible Act identified six areas for the commission to address. (Departments of Justice and the Interior 2024)

1. Identifying, reporting, and responding to instances of missing persons, murder, and human trafficking on Indian lands and of Indians;
2. Legislative and administrative changes necessary to use programs, properties, or other resources funded or operated by the Department of the Interior and Department of Justice to combat the crisis of missing or murdered Indians and human trafficking on Indian lands and of Indians;
3. Tracking and reporting data on instances of missing persons, murder, and human trafficking on Indian lands and of Indians;
4. Addressing staff shortages and open positions within relevant law enforcement agencies, including issues related to the hiring and retention of law enforcement officers;
5. Coordinating Tribal, state, and federal resources to increase prosecution of murder and human trafficking offenses on Indian lands and of Indians; and
6. Increasing information sharing with tribal governments on violent crime investigations and prosecutions in Indian lands that were terminated or declined.

**Art Activity – Have students design their own MMIP posters and then display in the school/community.**

**MMIP Art Projects from students at Frazer High School (Special thanks to Teresa Heil and students at Frazer for permission to use their artwork)**





Indian Education for All Unit

## **Stand up for MMIWG**

Frazer School's Art Department is raising awareness of the Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) movement through art activism. Frazer School is located on Fort Peck Indian Reservation in northeast Montana and students are primarily enrolled members of the Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes. We reflected on what our district has accomplished to honor MMIWG as highlighted in the *Bearcub Strong* video and M.L. Smoker's poem, '*Book of the MMI Chapter 1*': ([@12:17 M.L. Smoker](#)). Frazer students then gathered ideas through Google Meets while distance learning. Students worked collaboratively back in-person to create the 'Stand up for MMIWG' mural, while acknowledging the history of Indigenous rights. This mural demonstrates how Indigenous people continue to use their sovereignty to seek justice, which is designated as an Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians by the Montana Office of Public Instruction. [Essential Understanding 7](#): Under the American legal system, Indian tribes have sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments. However, the extent and breadth of tribal sovereignty is not the same for each tribe.

## **Remembering the Fallen Indigenous Children**

Frazer School's Art Department is using art activism to raise awareness of the ongoing horrific recovery of unmarked Indigenous children's graves at former residential school sites across North America. Frazer School is located on Fort Peck Indian Reservation in northeast Montana and students are primarily enrolled members of the Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes. Students worked collaboratively, while researching and recognizing the injustices and heartbreaks shared by many Indigenous families throughout generations. This mural demonstrates how history is voiced through an Indian viewpoint, which is designated as an Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians by the Montana Office of Public Instruction. [Essential Understanding 6](#): History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.

## **Native America**

Frazer School's Art Department is raising awareness of the presidential proclamation on Indigenous Peoples' Day through art activism. Frazer School is located on Fort Peck Indian Reservation in northeast Montana and students are primarily enrolled members of the Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes. Students worked collaboratively, while researching and recognizing the contributions and sacrifices made by Indigenous people throughout history. This mural demonstrates the complexity of regulations and guidelines placed upon Indigenous people by the Federal government, which is designated as an Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians by the Montana Office of Public Instruction. [Essential Understanding 5](#): There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people in the past and continue to shape who they are today. Many of these policies conflicted with one another. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods.