

# Unit 5: Annotated Student Text

## CHAPTER 5

# MONTANA'S GOVERNMENT AND TRIBAL NATIONS

- What are the things all Montanans should know about Montana Indians?
- What does it mean to be sovereign?

One thing that makes Montana so special is the number of American Indians who live here. In 2020, about one out of twelve Montanans was a tribal member. Indians have lived in this region since long before Montana became a state. They are an important part of our history and an important part of our present, too.

In 1972, Montanans decided to write a new state **constitution** (a document that sets the



Artist Ben Pease painted this portrait of his aunt, Dr. Janine Pease, to honor the **resilience** (strength) of many Indian women.

*Tip: Gain background information about the Montana Constitution by reading [Chapter 21](#) of Montana: Stories of the Land or by watching Montana Mosaic [Chapter 8](#), “Montana’s Quiet Revolution.”*

*Teach Part 1: The 1972 Montana Constitution and Part 2, Lesson 1: What Do Governments Do? (pp. 236 and 242)*

rules for government). The people writing the constitution recognized how important Indians were to Montana. They wrote: "The state recognizes the **distinct** (separate) and **unique** (not the same) cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity."

What does that mean? It means that the State of Montana understands that American Indians have special traditions and beliefs and that the state is committed to protecting these traditions. Montana is the only state out of all fifty states that recognizes the importance of American Indians in its constitution.

## INDIAN EDUCATION FOR ALL

The constitution sets out big ideas, or principles. The state legislature and governor decide how to make those big ideas a reality. In 1999, the legislature passed a law they called Indian Education for All (IEFA). This law supports the 1972 Constitution by requiring that every Montana school teach about Montana Indian history and **culture** (language, customs, and ideas).

After the legislature passed Indian Education for All, the state asked each Montana tribal nation to choose a representative to help decide the best way to teach students about Montana

*Background: Gain a deeper understanding by reading the Montana Office of Public Instruction booklet [Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians](#).*

*Activity idea: Supplement this unit with a hands-on history footlocker: "Montana's First Peoples: Essential Understandings." (See p. 305 for order information).*

Indian history and culture. There are so many things to know! However, the state asked these representatives to come up with a list of the most important (or **essential**) ideas that they wanted all Montanans to understand. They chose seven things. They called these the Seven Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 1

The first thing that the tribes want everyone to know is that Montana has twelve tribes. Each tribe is **unique** (not the same as any other). They have their own history, culture, and language, and they all contribute to modern Montana.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 2

The second thing that the tribes want people to know is that not all Indians are the same, even if they are members of the same tribe. Some Indians may speak their tribal language. Others may speak only English. Some Indians may participate in tribal celebrations or **traditional** (old) ceremonies. Others do not. Every individual Indian person is different, and the way they understand what it means to be a tribal member is unique.

*Teach Part 2, Lesson 2: Tribal Governments and Tribal Sovereignty and Part 3, Lesson 1: Introducing the Essential Understandings (pp. 245 and 252)*

*Tip: The winter count lesson in Unit 2 asked students to compare two Northern Cheyenne musicians. If you taught this lesson, you can remind them of this example of EU 2. If you didn't teach that lesson, consider teaching just the section that relates to EU 2.*



Every Indian person has his or her own likes and dislikes. Victor had his portrait painted in 1964 wearing a black cowboy hat and red bandana; in 1956, Judy Larsen chose a beaded dress and eagle-feather fan for her portrait.



### ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 3

The third thing that the tribes want people to know is that traditional tribal beliefs are still important. Some of these traditions **predate** (come before) the arrival of Europeans on this **continent** (one of the earth's main areas of land). Tribes passed down important traditions and information from one generation to the next. Every tribe has **oral histories** (important stories that people pass down) that are older and are as good as written histories.

*Tip: Tribal oral traditions deserve the same respect as other communities' traditions and sacred stories. When sharing traditional stories, be careful not to refer to them as "myths" or "legends."*

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 4

The fourth thing that the tribes want people to know is that the U.S. government did not give them land. Indians lived here long before Europeans arrived. They gave up most of their lands to the U.S. government, but they kept some of it for their own use. The lands they **reserved** (kept) are called reservations.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 5

The fifth thing that the tribes want people to know is that the U.S. government treated Indian tribes and Indian people differently at different times. Sometimes the U.S. government respected tribal **sovereignty** (self-rule). Other times the U.S. government tried to erase tribes altogether. The ways the U.S. government acted toward Indians continues to affect Indian people today.



Painted by Assiniboine artist William Standing, this picture shows some of the ways life changed on the Fort Peck Reservation in the 1920s and 1930s. When you look at it, what do you notice?

*Teach Part 3, Lesson 2:  
More on the Essential  
Understandings  
(p. 259).*

*Background information:  
Federal Indian policy  
can be divided into the  
following periods:*

- *Colonization/Colonial Period, 1492-1800s*
- *Treaty-Making and Removal Period, 1778-1871*
- *Reservation Period—Allotment and Assimilation, 1887-1934*
- *Tribal Reorganization Period, 1934-1953*
- *Termination and Relocation Period, 1953-1968*
- *Self-Determination Period, 1975-Present*

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 6

The sixth thing that the tribes want people to know is that a person's point of view shapes the way they understand and explain history. Indian historians often see things differently than non-Indian historians.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 7

The seventh thing they want people to know is that tribes are **sovereign** (self-governing). They make their own laws and are in charge of governing themselves. However, the U.S. government sometimes limits what tribes can do.



*The U.S. and tribal flags in front of the Montana state capitol symbolize sovereignty.*

*Teach Part 3, Lesson 3:  
Rosebud Battlefield or  
Where the Girl Saved  
Her Brother? (p. 262)*



## AN ONGOING LEARNING JOURNEY

The Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians are just a starting point. These are the big ideas you need to understand before you can start to learn more about the different cultures and histories of Montana tribes. What are some of the things you would like to learn about Montana tribes and tribal members, from their earliest history to today?



*Dora Rides Horse teaches a traditional Crow song to students at Crow Agency School.*

*Tip: Visit the Montana Office of Public Instruction's Indian Education Division [website](#) to discover professional development opportunities and for resources you can use to incorporate IEFA across the curriculum.*