

# Seven Essential Understandings – Summary

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 1

There is great diversity among the 12 tribal Nations of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories and governments. Each Nation has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 2

There is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined and redefined by many entities, organizations and people. There is a continuum of Indian identity ranging from assimilated to traditional and is unique to each individual. There is no generic American Indian.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 3

The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs.

Additionally, each tribe has its own oral history beginning with their origins that are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date the “discovery” of North America.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 4

Reservations are land that have been reserved by the tribes for their own use through treaties and was not “given” to them. The principle that land should be acquired from the Indians only through their consent with treaties involved three assumptions:

- I. That both parties to treaties were sovereign powers.*
- II. That Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land.*
- III. That acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists.*

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 5

There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have impacted Indian people and shape who they are today. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods.

Examples:

*Colonization Period*

*Treaty Period*

*Allotment Period*

*Boarding School Period*

*Tribal Reorganization*

*Termination*

*Self-determination*

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 6

History is a story and most often related through the subjective experience teller. Histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an Indian perspective conflicts with what most of mainstream history tells us.

## 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.