

**Class:** Indian Education for All Workshop  
Cut Bank 2006

**Biography**

James D. Meuchel:

I have been a teacher in the Cut Bank School System for 30 years. Living close to the Blackfeet Reservation and interacting with the Blackfeet people I realize the need to integrate more Native American information into my classes.

**Issue:** Blackfeet Tribal Court System

**Background:**

I feel remiss in not discussing in more depth, the Blackfeet Tribal Court System. As Cut Bank is located near the Blackfeet Reservation knowledge of how the federal, state, local, and tribal court systems work and relate to each other is of vital importance. This unit is an attempt to compare and contrast these three systems.

**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 the land should be acquired from the Indians only through their consent with the treaties involved three assumptions:

- I. That both parties to the 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.
- IV. That acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists.

## **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.

### **Golden Triangle Curriculum Cooperative- Social Studies Curriculum: Grades 9-12 Government Objectives**

Gr9-12 AMG.01

Gr9-12 AMG.02

Gr9-12 AMG.03

Gr9-12 AMG.04

Gr9-12 AMG.08

Gr9-12 AMG.10

**Note:** The following lessons may quite easily require more time than indicated. This will be dictated by questions generated by the students and class discussion

### **Lessons:**

Day 1      -overview of federal, state, and tribal governments  
                    concept of representative government  
                    importance of participation  
                    -federal court system  
                    law making body  
                    enforcement of laws  
                    types of laws  
                    jury system  
                    types of courts  
                    selection of judges  
                    jurisdiction

- Day 2      -Montana state/local court system  
                 law making body  
                 enforcement of laws  
                 types of laws  
                 jury system  
                 types of courts  
                 selection of judges  
                 jurisdiction
- Day 3      -Blackfeet tribal court system  
                 law making body  
                 enforcement of laws  
                 types of laws  
                 jury system  
                 types of courts  
                 selection of judges  
                 jurisdiction
- Day 4      -Blackfeet tribal judge, speaker  
                 -court system and jurisdiction
- Day 5      -federal law enforcement officer (FBI/BIA), speaker  
                 -conflicts in the law at the federal level  
                 -problems enforcing the law at the federal level
- Day 6      -state/county officer (MHP/sheriff), speaker  
                 -conflicts in the law at the state/county level  
                 -problems enforcing the law at the state/county level
- Day 7      -summary discussion  
                 -emphasis on compare/contrast chart  
                 -address specific questions

Day 8 -assessment

**Assessments:**

- group notes
- discussion notes
- power point notes
- student generated power points
- chart for court systems comparisons/contrasts
- section quizzes
- final test over comparison chart
- antidotal evidence

**Activities:**

- group work
- class discussion
- power point presentations
- vocabulary lists
- worksheets
- possible field trip to local court (practicality?)
- student generated power points
- reading comprehension exercises
- speakers (video each speaker)

**Resources:**

-textbook and supplemental information

Magruder's American Government (text)

Blackfeet Tribal Constitution

Blackfeet Tribal Laws and Code

Native American Rights Fund-

[www.narf.org/nill/triballaw/onlinedocs.htm](http://www.narf.org/nill/triballaw/onlinedocs.htm)

Iroquois Constitution- [www.iroquoisdemocracy.pdx.edu/](http://www.iroquoisdemocracy.pdx.edu/)

Montana Government- [www.mt.gov/govt/tribal.asp](http://www.mt.gov/govt/tribal.asp)

Blackfeet Nation- [www.blackfeetnation.com](http://www.blackfeetnation.com)

Tribal Government Today- Lopach, Brown, & Clow 1998 University Press of Colorado

**Note:** As time progresses I would hope to incorporate a unit on contemporary Blackfeet tribal government.

