



# Integration of Indian Education for All in K-12 Visual Arts Education

## Primary Considerations for Guiding Principles



**Indian Education**

Montana Office of Public Instruction  
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# INTEGRATION of INDIAN EDUCATION FOR ALL in K-12 VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION Primary Considerations for Guiding Principles

## Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to provide assistance to K-12 teachers with integrating Indian Education for All in visual art instruction. These primary considerations are based on discussions held in 2011-2012 with a group of Montana American Indian artists and art teachers in Montana.

## Article X, Section 1 (2) of the Montana Constitution

(2) The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.

## The Language of Art

The language of art incorporates multiple disciplines, media and perspectives; it reflects the whole human experience. It acknowledges the human spirit, promotes mutual respect for diverse peoples and, in particular, promotes the awareness of Indian people, not only in a historical context but as contemporary and contributing members of the world. Art has the power to debunk stereotypes and expose biases and can avoid objectifying Indians, as has been common throughout history. As our state moves forward with ongoing implementation of Indian Education for All, art curriculum and instruction present an excellent opportunity for integrating the Montana Art Standards and the Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians. In doing so, culturally relevant content and context become viable and essential components of effective art instruction. In adapting instruction, it is important to define and maintain tribal specificity both traditionally, and in a contemporary sense. Authenticity is defined in many ways. Designs, symbols and stylistic expressions reflect the identity and tradition of one's tribe, culture, family and self.

The Arts provide powerful tools for understanding human experiences and cultures—past, present and future as evidenced by the Arts Content Standard 5: *Students understand the role of Arts in society, diverse cultures and historical periods.*

***Rationale - It is important for students to be knowledgeable about the nature, value and meaning of the arts in the context of their own humanity with respect to community, environment, and culture, including the distinct and unique cultural heritage of Montana American Indians.***

Benchmarks from Arts Standard 5 include (students will):

- Grade 4, 5.1. Recognize ways in which the Arts have both a historical and distinctive relationship to various cultures (e.g., American Indian) and media of expression.
- Grade 4, 5.2. Identify and describe specific works of art belonging to particular cultures, times and places.

- Grade 8, 5.6. Determine the connection of a work of art to societal and cultural change or preservation, including American Indian culture and art.
- Grade 12, 5.1. Identify and describe the role of the artist in cultures and societies.

The standards and benchmarks aligned with the *Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians* provide educators guidance for integrating INDIAN EDUCATION FOR ALL content into their curriculum. *Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians*:

- EU 1–Tribal Diversity
- EU 2 –Individual Diversity
- EU 3 –Beliefs, Spirituality, Traditions, Oral History Persist
- EU 4 –Reservations – land reserved
- EU 5 –Federal Indian Policy
- EU 6 –History from Indian Perspectives
- EU 7 –Tribal Sovereignty

(For a more detailed description, please visit

<http://www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/indianed/resources/essentialunderstandings.pdf>)

The Art standards and benchmarks reinforce Essential Understanding 3, which pertains to traditional beliefs persisting into modern life. This Essential Understanding is reflected in American Indian connections to the earth and the environment through a shared heritage of Indian peoples living on the land and respecting the natural world. A historic and contemporary instance would be the bison: many tribes used (and still use) all parts of the bison for daily living and for cultural purposes (e.g., buffalo horns, skull, robe, and specific tribal symbols).

Traditional American Indian knowledge comes in the form of stories through oral traditions as evidenced by winter counts, which were created by some tribes to identify significant events in time. Beauty and function are combined in historic and contemporary art.

Communities are defined by their languages, cultures, and histories. The languages of Native Americans were not traditionally written. They were only spoken, which meant that tribal histories and other important information had to be remembered by people and passed down orally from generation to generation. This is what is known as an oral tradition. Sometimes, Native communities used creative tools to help them remember their complex histories. A winter count was one such tool that certain Native American communities of the Northern Great Plains region used to help record their histories and to keep track of the passage of years. One such example is the Lone Dog Winter Count, which contains pictographs of seventy years of history, beginning in the winter of 1800 and ending in 1871.

Lone Dog Winter Count (NMAI)

[http://nmai.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/education/poster\\_lone\\_dog\\_final.pdf](http://nmai.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/education/poster_lone_dog_final.pdf)

## Visual Art Instruction

Visual art instruction can incorporate American Indian themes in the context of teaching Elements of Art and Principles of Design, using various examples of art from multiple traditions to demonstrate complexity of style. Culturally relevant American Indian art instruction which includes content and context for background knowledge allows for depth of learning in respectful, artistic expression. Teachers will encourage students to understand the difference in being inspired by works of art and creating their own interpretation, as opposed to copying works of art. This creative process, allows students to have a richer learning experience, and provides a venue for students to relate personally to their learning and explore expressions of knowledge.

Keeping in mind the restrictions/limitations of materials and resources, when possible, every effort should be made to provide students examples of authentic works of art and appropriate accompanying information and instructional activities (e.g., *making parfleche designs from paper after seeing the real thing*). Ideally, American Indian artists would be invited for demonstrations/discussions, if possible. Appropriate and accessible activities vary, based on student demographics, geography, and resources. Expose students to authentic American Indian art, help them understand the artwork and respond by creating their own expression of art. Processes and purposes for creating traditional and contemporary art should be shared with students.

## Content and Context

Providing students general background knowledge about contemporary and historical Indian issues helps teachers incorporate accuracy and relevancy, and can be explored through an examination of Federal Indian Policy Periods (EU 5). An example would be the creation of Ledger Art, which began in the early Reservation Period.

Most ledger art was produced from the 1860s to the early 1900s during a time of great upheaval and change for American Indians, where the recording of heroic deeds and events transitioned from buffalo hide into the use of paper, pens, pencils, inks, and watercolors. Though ledger paper was the most readily available paper, Plains Indians used whatever kind of paper was available. Significant works done by Indians during imprisonment provided historical perspectives of deeds, clothing, accoutrements, etc. and the drastic events during the Federal Indian Polices. This is evidenced by several large, detailed pencil drawings on brown paper by Elk Head, Hidatsa (born ca. 1850), during his incarceration in the territorial prison in Deer Lodge.

*(The Art of Storytelling: Plains Indian Perspectives, Curriculum Insert, Montana Historical Society. 2012).*

Rebecca Hernandez provides words from the contemporary artist, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (Salish) that help us understand why such historical illustrations called *ledger art* were created:

In the most oppressive times in our history, we have produced some of the most illustrious work. When all else in our lives has failed, our ability to produce beautiful work has been the sustenance that carries us through. That process takes us to an inner world, lifts our spirit and nurtures our soul and keeps us strong today. Hernandez, Rebecca. "Identified Indian Objects: An Examination of Category." *American Indian and Culture Research Journal* 31, no. 3 (2007): 204.

### **Implementing IEFA in the Arts**

Art educators have an excellent opportunity to meet the intent of Indian Education for All by integrating culturally relevant American Indian art curriculum/model lesson plans, as well as to educate students about all groups that make up the multicultural mosaic of our state.

To support the integration of Indian Education for All in Art instruction, the following resources have been sent to school libraries:

*Redefined: Art & Identity - Inside The Mind of The Modern American Indian Artist* (DVD)

American Indian writers and visual artists address their personal perspectives on art and identity. At times, Native artists and writers are expected to produce something that is characteristically "Indian." In these interviews, people share honest, brave, and insightful ideas about their art and their identity.

*The Art of Storytelling: Plains Indian Art Perspectives*, a collaboration between the Montana Historical Society and the OPI Indian Education for All division to provide a K-12 visual arts curriculum, integrates Indian Education for All. It is based on a recent MHS exhibit of unique examples which include petroglyphs, buffalo hide accounts (a Sioux, Yantonais Winter Count and a Crow painted robe), a pictograph, and ledger art - both through historical works and contemporary Native artists' expressions. This curriculum is presented in a beautifully, cover to cover, illustrated folder using exhibit examples. Within the folder, there is background information for teachers with an introduction to ledger art; grade level lesson plans with accompanying PowerPoints; color templates to use as ledger paper; color reproductions of exhibit pieces; and maps documenting tribal homelands (1855), Montana reservations (past and current).

<http://mhs.mt.gov/education/IEFA/PictographicArt.asp>

Please check your local school library to access Indian Education for All resources and visit our OPI Indian Education for All web-page to access on-line resources to assist you with integration of Indian Education for All in the Arts. Implementation of Indian Education for All is an ongoing process and OPI will continue to develop culturally relevant Art resources and provide professional development to support your visual arts classroom instruction.

## APPENDIX

### Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 20-1-501 (Indian Education for All)

20-1-501. Recognition of American Indian cultural heritage -- legislative intent. (1) It is the constitutionally declared policy of this state to recognize the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and to be committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural heritage. (2) It is the intent of the legislature that in accordance with Article X, section 1(2), of the Montana constitution: (a) every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner; and (b) every educational agency and all educational personnel will work cooperatively with Montana tribes or those tribes that are in close proximity, when providing instruction or when implementing an educational goal or adopting a rule related to the education of each Montana citizen, to include information specific to the cultural heritage and contemporary contributions of American Indians, with particular emphasis on Montana Indian tribal groups and governments. (3) It is also the intent of this part, predicated on the belief that all school personnel should have an understanding and awareness of Indian tribes to help them relate effectively with Indian students and parents, that educational personnel provide means by which school personnel will gain an understanding of and appreciation for the American Indian people.

History: En. Sec. 1, Ch. 527, L. 1999.

#### Sources:

Hernandez, Rebecca, "Identified Indian Objects: An Examination of Category." *American Indian and Culture Research Journal* 31, no. 3 (2007): 204.

Montana Historical Society, <http://mhs.mt.gov/education>

National Museum of the American Indian, <http://nmai.si.edu>