

IEFA

Connecting Resources
Hilleman & Vaccines



IEFA CONNECTING RESOURCES

HILLEMAN & VACCINES

Indian Education for All - Montana Office of Public Instruction

What is IEFA?

Montana's constitutional requirement and duly enacted policy require recognition of the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and a commitment in our educational goals to preserve their cultural heritage. Every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, should be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner. The OPI Indian Education for All (IEFA) Unit works with districts, tribes, and other entities to ensure all schools have the knowledge, tools and resources necessary to honor the IEFA requirement and integrate it into their teaching materials and methods.

THE ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS:

The work of classroom teachers is complex and multifaceted. Teachers must focus on the needs of individual children using a continual cycle of instruction and assessment. At the same time, they must also be masters of their assigned content and be cognizant of the Montana Content Standards in all teaching areas.

Now, beyond knowing the learner, the content, the standards, and the instructional methods, teachers must learn and teach the Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians.

The Essential Understandings were developed by a group of Indian educators representing each Montana tribe, who gathered to attempt to build consensus on a set of common core understandings. It is a remarkable document given the diversity of the tribes represented.

These Essential Understandings represent broad concepts common to Montana tribes all students should know. They are gateway standards, or entry points, into the rich histories, cultures, and perspectives of each Montana tribe.



INDIAN EDUCATION FOR ALL ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS REGARDING MONTANA INDIANS

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 1

There is great diversity among the twelve sovereign tribes of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories, and governments. Each tribe has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 2

Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. 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 histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories predate the “discovery” of North America.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 4

Though there have been tribal peoples living successfully on the North American lands for millennia, reservations are lands that have been reserved by or for tribes for their exclusive use as permanent homelands. Some were created through treaties, while others were created by statutes and executive orders. The principle that land should be acquired from tribes only through their consent with treaties involved three assumptions: I. Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers; II. Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land; III. Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists or states.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 5

There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people 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:

- 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

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.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 7

American Indian tribal nations are inherent sovereign nations and they possess sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments. However, under the American legal system, the extent and breadth of self-governing powers are not the same for each tribe.



Indian Education for All Unit
Montana Office of Public Instruction

Blackfeet Reservation



The reservation is home to the Blackfeet tribe. Of the approximately 15,560 enrolled tribal members, there are about 7,000 living on or near the reservation.

The Blackfeet, or Southern Piegan (*Amskapi Pikuni*), combined with their three counterparts in Canada – the Blackfoot (*Siksika*), Blood (*Kanai*), and Northern Piegan (*Apa'tosee Pikuni*) – make up the Blackfoot Confederacy.

The Blackfeet Reservation is in northwestern Montana along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. Its one-and-a-half million acres are bordered on the north by Canada and on the west by Glacier National Park.

Crow Reservation



About 75 percent of the Crow tribe's approximately 10,000 or more enrolled members live on or near the reservation.

The Crow tribe call themselves "Apsáalooke," which means "children of the large-beaked bird." It was misinterpreted as the word "Crow" by non-Indians.

The Crow Reservation is in southcentral Montana, bordered by Wyoming to the south, with its northwestern boundary about ten miles from Billings.

Flathead Reservation



The Flathead Indian Reservation is home to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes. The tribes are a combination of the *Séliš* or Bitterroot Salish, *Qlispé* or Upper Pend d'Oreille, and the *Ksanka* or Kootenai. Of the approximately 7,753 enrolled tribal members, about 5,000 live on or near the reservation.

The reservation is located north of Interstate 90 between Missoula and Kalispell. The reservation comprises over 1.2 million acres.

Fort Belknap Reservation



The Fort Belknap Reservation is home to two tribes, the Assiniboine, or Nakoda, and the Gros Ventre, who refer to themselves as A'aninin or "People of the White Clay." Combined enrollment is approximately 4,000.

The combined reservation and additional tribal lands encompass 650,000 acres of the plains and grasslands of northcentral Montana.



Fort Peck Reservation

The Fort Peck Reservation is home to two separate American Indian nations, each composed of numerous bands and divisions: the Sioux, or Dakota and Lakota, and the Assiniboiné, or Nakoda. About 6,800 Assiniboiné and Sioux live on the Fort Peck Reservation, with another approximately 3,900 tribal members living off the reservation.

The Fort Peck Reservation is in northeastern Montana, 40 miles west of the North Dakota border and 50 miles south of the Canadian border, with the Missouri River defining its southern perimeter. It includes more than two million acres of land.



Little Shell Chippewa Tribe

The Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians is a band of the Chippewa Indians headquartered in Great Falls, Montana. The Little Shell enrollment total is 5,300 tribal members. The tribe has been recognized by the State of Montana since 2000 and received federal recognition through Congressional action in December 2020.

The Little Shell traditionally lived in the areas of the Red River, the Saskatchewan River, Winnipeg and Manitoba, and Turtle Mountain, North Dakota, to Pembina, North Dakota. They eventually settled in various communities throughout Montana with their tribal offices located in Great Falls.



Northern Cheyenne Reservation

The Northern Cheyenne Tribe call themselves Tsetsêhesêstâhase/So'taahe. There are approximately 11,266 enrolled tribal members with about 5,012 residing on the reservation.

The Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation is located in present-day southeastern Montana and is approximately 444,000 acres in size with 99% tribal ownership. Lame Deer is the tribal and government agency headquarters. It is bounded on the east by the Tongue River and on the west by the Crow Reservation.



Rocky Boy's Reservation

Rocky Boy's provides a home for about 2,500 members of the Chippewa-Cree tribe. The name "Rocky Boy" was derived from the name of a leader of a band of Chippewa Indians. It actually meant "Stone Child," but it was not translated correctly from Chippewa into English, and "Rocky Boy" evolved.

Rocky Boy's Reservation is near the Canadian border in northcentral Montana.



Sacrifice Cliff and a Deadly Pandemic

By Shane Doyle, EdD

Hello Montana students!

Itchik dalom! (Apsaalooké greeting pronounced “it-chick da-loam”) This means, “It is good that you are here!” We are living through historic times in 2020, and that makes it extra important to study history and learn about the other moments in time when our ancestors faced tremendous challenges and overcame them through the strength of family, community, and individual faith. Making sacrifices is a natural and necessary part of everyone’s life. Sometimes we must make small sacrifices, and sometimes we must give up more than we would choose, or want to, in order to achieve a more important goal for everyone, and in doing so we benefit ourselves much more in the long run. The two Essential Understandings to keep in mind when you are doing this lesson are EU3 – tribal oral histories are still told and remembered, and EU6 – Native Americans have their own unique historical perspectives.

This lesson provides us with an unforgettable story about a pandemic that occurred during the 1800s here in Montana, including one camp along the Yellowstone River. It happened where present-day Billings is located, during the 1830s, when an extremely deadly virus was spreading through and devastating many Native communities, including the Apsaalooké (Crow) Nation. The virus was called smallpox, and like many other viruses it started across the Atlantic Ocean and was brought to America by sick people who traveled here and passed it along when they interacted with tribes while trading merchandise. Smallpox was extremely lethal, killing around 90% of the Native American people who became sick with it. All total, smallpox and other viruses like typhoid, typhus, and diphtheria killed over half the Apsaalooké Nation in the 1800s, reducing their population from around 10,000 in 1780 to about 3,000 by 1850. There were three major smallpox outbreaks in the Apsaalooké community, the first in 1790, then again in 1825, and the last major wave in 1837. During these times of sickness and suffering, the tribe understood the importance of physical distancing and isolation in order to protect from continued disease transmission. Larger groups split up into smaller bands and families isolated themselves for months at a time. This practice of separation helped the tribe survive through the devastating illness. Today, almost 200 years later, people around the world are still using the same strategies to keep safe from viruses. Here is a [resource from PBS](#) where you can learn more about how disease pandemics killed most Native Americans after contact with Europeans in 1492.

The Apsaalooké people understood how diseases were passed from person to person, and this might be one explanation behind the famous story of the Sacrifice Cliff; the men who gave their lives out of their grief and despair, may also have meant to spare others in their tribe the same fate.

Read this [story in the Billings Gazette](#) newspaper; it will provide some information about the interesting history behind the legendary Sacrifice Cliff in Billings, Montana.

Check out this [high-resolution image](#) of Sacrifice Cliff to get a perspective of the area.

The map below will help you identify where the city of Billings is located and the historic homeland and original reservation of the Apsaalooké (Crow) people (in yellow). Sacrifice Cliff is in the middle of traditional Apsaalooké territory.



To learn about the origins of the small pox epidemic of 1837 and the impact on other tribes check out this [resource from the North Dakota Historical Society](#). It details how the outbreak of smallpox on the Upper Missouri River killed approximately 90 percent of all Mandans and one-half of the Arikaras and Hidatsas.

Although smallpox probably killed many millions of people over time, a cure was discovered by an English scientist named Edward Jenner in 1796. The cure, now known as a vaccine, went on to eventually eradicate the disease in the 1970s. Now the smallpox virus only exists as small samples in highly secured laboratories. You can read more about the history of vaccines at this [website](#).



Sacrifice Cliff: A Tragedy for the Ages

Use what you learned from this lesson to answer the following questions.

- 1) What does the article from the Billings Gazette tell you about the Apsaalooké (Crow) and their connection to Sacrifice Cliff? How does Mardell Plainfeather describe the event and what does this tell you about the terrible grief that enormous loss can cause?

- 2) List some of the differences and similarities between the 1837 smallpox outbreak in Montana and the 2020 Covid-19.

Differences

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

Similarities

- f.
- g.
- h.
- i.
- j.

- 3) What are some of the sacrifices you have made in order for your family, friends, school, and community to persevere through the COVID-19 pandemic?

Dr. Shane Doyle is an educational consultant and member of the Apsaalooké (Crow) Nation. His Apsaalooké name means Old Buffalo Bull, and he lives in Bozeman with his wife, Megkian, and their five children.

Vocabulary Guide for Younger Students

This lesson may be adapted for younger age groups by using the following vocabulary guide:

VOCABULARY

Acquire: Buy, obtain or gain

Consensus: Agreement reached by a whole group

Decimate: Kill in large numbers

Depict: Show or give a description of

Distraught: Deeply upset

Epidemic: Widespread outbreak of an infectious disease

Misnomer: An incorrect name

Penance: Voluntary self-punishment

Prominent: Noticeable, important

Riparian: On the banks of a river or stream

How did a virus kill 2/3 of the Blackfeet Tribe in Montana in the 1837 Great Plains Smallpox Epidemic? Middle School Life Science

This Indian Education for All lesson about smallpox is designed to support instruction related to MS-LS-1. In the 5E Model, this lesson Engages and Explores. To meet the Montana science content standard, additional lessons allowing for student Explanation, Elaboration, and Evaluation should be taught.

Lesson resources for virology, disease transmission, background information on epidemic affecting Native American tribes:

Virus Engineering Lesson:

https://www.teachengineering.org/lessons/view/duk_virus_mary_less

Science News for Students – Explainer: What is a Virus?

<https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/explainer-what-virus>

AmericaPox: The Missing Plague:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEYh5WACqEk>

The Infection Game:

<https://flusurvey.ie/media/uploads/Shape5InfectionGameSF.pdf>

Smallpox Outbreak in Montana 1837:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1837_Great_Plains_smallpox_epidemic

Montana Science Content Standards

MS-LS1 From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes

MS-LS1 From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes		
Students who demonstrate understanding can:		
MS-LS1-1. Conduct an investigation to provide evidence that living things are made of cells; either one cell or many different numbers and types of cells. <i>[Clarification Statement: Emphasis is on developing evidence that living things (**including Bacteria, Archaea, and Eukarya) are made of cells, distinguishing between living and non-living things, and understanding that living things may be made of one cell or many and varied cells. **Viruses, while not cells, have features that are both common with, and distinct from, cellular life.]</i>		
The performance expectations above were developed using the following elements from the NRC document <i>A Framework for K–12 Science Education</i> :		
Science and Engineering Practices Planning and Carrying Out Investigations Planning and carrying out investigations in 6–8 builds on K–5 experiences and progresses to include investigations that use <u>multiple variables</u> and provide evidence to support explanations or solutions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an investigation to produce data to serve as the basis for evidence that meet the goals of an investigation. (MS-LS1-1) 	Disciplinary Core Ideas LS1.A: Structure and Function <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All living things are made up of cells, which is the smallest unit that can be said to be alive. An organism may consist of one single cell (unicellular) or many different numbers and types of cells (multicellular). (MS-LS1-1) 	Crosscutting Concepts Scale, Proportion, and Quantity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phenomena that can be observed at one scale may not be observable at another scale. (MS-LS1-1) <hr/> Connections to Engineering, Technology, and Applications of Science Interdependence of Science, Engineering, and Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineering advances have led to important discoveries in virtually every field of science, and scientific discoveries have led to the development of entire industries and engineered systems. (MS-LS1-1)
Articulation to DCIs across grade-bands: HS.LS1.A (MS-LS1-1)		



Montana State Standards Connections:

*ELA/Literacy –
WHST.6–8.7*

Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration. (MS-LS1-1)

*Mathematics –
6.EE.9*

Use variables to represent two quantities in a real-world problem that change in relationship to one another; write an equation to express one quantity, thought of as the dependent variable, in terms of the other quantity, thought of as the independent variable. Analyze the relationship between the dependent and independent variables using graphs and tables, and relate these to the equation. (MS-LS1-1)

Background Information Building

National Geographic - Small Pox

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOW6gs9rZGI> Transcript

“Along with eager conquistadors, guns, cavalry, and Christianity, the Age of Exploration unintentionally brought what would become the number one destroyer of Native American populations. It is estimated that as much as 95% of Native Americans throughout North and South America were decimated by disease within a short time of the arrival of the Europeans. Killing more than any swords, guns, or armies combined, smallpox, a disease stemming from dense populations of domesticated animals, killed about 50% of the Inca population in the first epidemic during the early 16th century. Smallpox first appeared over 3,000 years ago, but because of the relative seclusion of the natives in the Americas, it was not known in the new world until its first recorded outbreak in 1518 – when crew members from a Spanish ship spread the disease to the native peoples of Hispaniola, today known as the Dominican Republic and Haiti. The disease rapidly wiped out over half of the native population there. In 1520, one of the soldiers under Spanish explorer Hernando Cortes unwittingly started an epidemic that spread the disease throughout the empire killing 1/3 of the Aztec population. Why were these outbreaks so seemingly one-sided? Why weren't European populations decimated by new world diseases? Most infectious diseases are a result of germs passed on to humans from close-quartered domesticated animals. And, while the Europeans had many more kinds of domestic animals than native peoples of the new world, they also had built up immunities that the natives lacked. Smallpox is considered one of the most perilous of infectious diseases in human history. The disease killed hundreds of millions of people over the centuries. In the 20th century alone it killed over 300 million people before it was finally declared eradicated in 1979.”

Procedure

Use PowerPoint and embedded video (4:30 mins) included with this lesson to Engage and Explore. Do the Montana Smallpox Activity for further engagement following the presentation.

Materials

- 30 Scenario cards (see chart below to maintain the correct populations if class size is smaller than 30)
- 4 different colors of paper cut into thirds along the length of the paper (this makes a perfect envelope in which to glue the scenario cards. The paper is folded in half to conceal the scenario until students are instructed to open them and read)
- Glue or tape

Suggestion: Mark the outside of the paper envelope with the three Blackfeet scenario cards where the person died from secondary complications with two dots. If the class size is less than 30, remove these three scenarios first. Mark the four Blackfeet scenario cards where the individual survives and moves to live with the Cree with one dot. If the class size is less than 27, remove these cards next. Follow the chart below as a guide.

Procedure

- Following the presentation, which includes a 4:30 video about smallpox and Jenner's vaccination, pass out the scenario cards instructing students not to look at the inside yet.
- Instruct students to form groups based on their paper color and stand together in a corner of the room.
- Next, the students open the paper and read their card. The students should then further organize themselves according to the information on the card.
- Instruct all students with a skull and cross bones to sit down.
- Have one representative from each subgroup read their cards aloud.
- Encourage discussion that emphasizes:
 - how American Indians in Montana, especially the Blackfeet Tribe, were devastated by smallpox,
 - why it might be that the military, most missionaries, and the Hudson Bay Trading Company were the first to receive vaccinations (was this fair?),
 - how it was that the Hudson Bay was able to acquire the vaccine,
 - how the Indian Vaccination Act of 1832 made no efforts to actually supply enough vaccines for all Indians

The point of the smallpox activity is to demonstrate the impact of devastation on the Blackfeet population, it is a good idea to mark the outside of the envelopes that contain Blackfeet story card with a dot or star. If class sizes are smaller than 30, it will be important to make sure that the ratios of the scenario cards are correct to convey how deadly these viruses were to non-dominant populations.

Class Size	Blackfeet Scenarios	Cree Scenarios	Missionary Scenarios	US Army Scenarios
30	21	3	3	3
25	16	3	3	3
20	11	3	3	3
15	9	2	2	2
10	7	1	1	1

Evaluate

There are several formative assessment strategies that could be implemented here depending upon class size and time allotted.

1. Two-minute quick write: What did you learn today?
2. A 3-2-1 quick write: 3 things you were fascinated by; 2 things you learned; 1 thing that confuses you
3. One and Done: One sentence about what inspired you about science and viruses today?



IEFA CONNECTING RESOURCES

HILLEMANN & VACCINES

The following information was produced by students in the Montana School of Journalism's Native News Honors Project (<https://nativenews.jour.umt.edu>) and is reproduced here with permission for educational use.

BORDERS AGAINST INFECTION:

Montana tribes enforce sovereignty during COVID-19

Story by Kasey Faur and Madeline Broom

(2020)

The tribal council on the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation installed checkpoints at the entry points of the reservation's borders on March 24, two days before Gov. Steve Bullock announced a shelter-in-place order for Montana.

Just east of there, on the Fort Belknap reservation, the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes implemented a stay-at-home order on March 27, one day before Montana's took effect.

In total, every reservation in the state has, in some way, been proactive in trying to curtail the spread of the novel coronavirus, which has shut down most of the planet. Tribal administrators said they are acting to protect citizens who tend to fall in the more susceptible populations

American Indians and Alaskan Natives are twice as likely to be diagnosed with diabetes, have a greater prevalence of obesity, and are more likely to be smokers than other ethnic groups in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This puts Native Americans at higher risk for dying from COVID-19, making the stakes high for leadership on Montana reservations to mitigate the spread.

This is where tribal sovereignty comes in. "There's major push back when tribes enforce their sovereignty both in Montana and across the country," said David Beck, a Native American Studies professor at the University of Montana.

This push back comes in many different forms and from many different places, including federal and state governments and law offices who actively pursue anti-sovereignty cases. Sometimes, the push back can be violent. This time is no different.

IEFA CONNECTING RESOURCES

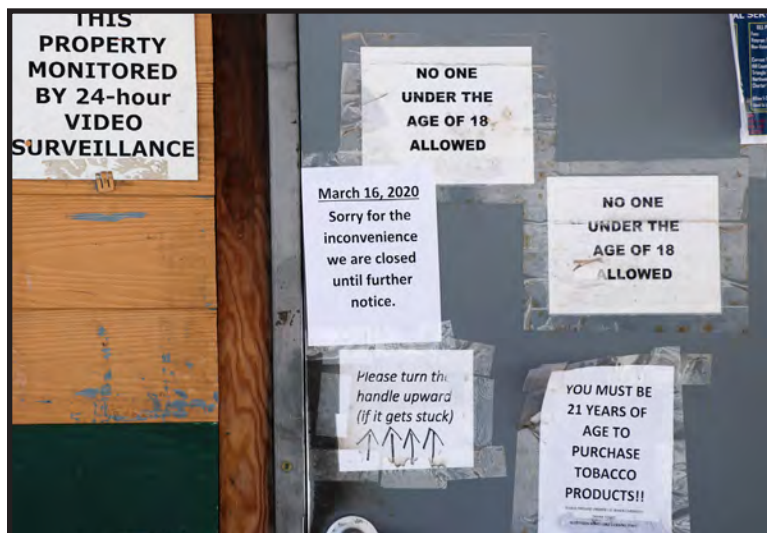
HILLEMANN & VACCINES

Tribal reservations are recognized as sovereign nations, with the authority to legislate policy within their borders. There are many different ways tribes enforce sovereignty, from exercising their rights to fish and hunt on certain lands, to being able to regulate their own water quality standards.

Amid the pandemic, several Montana tribes have enacted policies to protect tribal members.

- On the Flathead reservation, home of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the tribe has created a unified task force with Lake County, partnering up to tackle COVID-19 on a reservation where a majority of the residents are not enrolled tribal members.
- On the Blackfeet reservation, the tribal government has encouraged everyone to stay home and roads have been closed to all non-essential travel.
- The Northern Cheyenne Tribe has put an overnight 10 p.m. curfew mandate in place, which they later changed to 8 p.m., the earliest in Montana.
- The Crow Tribe has implemented similar checkpoints to the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's reservation on its reservation's borders in southwestern Montana.

From closing borders and instituting checkpoints to enforcing curfews and closing recreational areas, tribes have done whatever is in their power to get ahead of COVID-19.



Signs were posted on a casino door in Rocky Boy's reservation Monday after the Chippewa Cree Tribe declared a state of emergency on March 14.

Photo by Sam Pester



IEFA CONNECTING RESOURCES

HILLEMANN & VACCINES

The allotment period, also known as the General Allotment Act, plays a role in what tribes are able to do within their borders. The act was meant “to break up tribal governments, abolish the reservations, and assimilate Indians into non-Indian society as farmers,” according to the United States Natural Resources Conservation Service.

To accomplish this goal, Congress divided tribal lands into individual parcels, gave each tribal member a parcel; and sold the “surplus” parcels to non-Native farmers.

These “surplus” parcels became known as fee land, which tribal governments don’t have jurisdiction over. The General Allotment Act ultimately reduced the amount of land held by American Indian tribes on reservations from 138 million acres in 1887, when the Allotment Act was passed, to 48 million acres in 1934, when the act was abolished. The landholdings have slowly increased to 56 million acres since then, mostly through land buy-back programs.

The fee lands complicate how much jurisdiction a tribal government has within its reservation boundaries.

Gov. Bullock announced the first phase of reopening after the state mandated stay-at-home order, which he let expire on April 26. Every tribe in Montana has since released a statement saying orders would not be lifted on their reservations.

ROCKY BOY’S INDIAN RESERVATION

Monte Mills, co-director of the Margery Hunter Brown Indian Law Clinic at the University of Montana said placing a restriction on who has access to a reservation is easier when the tribe owns most of the land, as is the case for the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy’s reservation. This land is described as in “trust” of the tribe and is under the full jurisdiction of the tribe.

The tribal council of the Rocky Boy’s reservation was the first in Montana to place checkpoints at the entries of its reservations. This is the closest any Montana reservation has come to closing its borders.

The checkpoints were mainly installed to keep people with out-of-state license plates off the reservation; to keep people from bringing COVID-19 in, according to councilwoman Jody LaMere.



IEFA CONNECTING RESOURCES

HILLEMAN & VACCINES

Law enforcement regularly screens any person inside a vehicle for symptoms of COVID-19: fever, shortness of breath, cough. If they have such symptoms, they are advised to self-quarantine for 14 days.

Chippewa Cree Tribal Chairman Harlan Baker said as of late April, less than 10 people have been turned away from entering. He said those turned away had “no business” being on the reservation, they weren’t residents, vendors or suppliers, but rather, they just wanted to “check things out,” he said.

LaMere said the tribal council is working hand-in-hand with the attorney general’s office to make sure its regulations aren’t violating any state or federal laws.

“I don’t sleep very good at night thinking that we’re responsible for so many thousands of people.” - Shelly Fyant

FLATHEAD INDIAN RESERVATION

The Flathead reservation spans four counties: Lake, Missoula, Sanders and Flathead.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes do not have the authority to close the Flathead reservation’s borders because it would be a treaty violation, said communications director Rob McDonald. The Hellgate Treaty of 1855, which established the Flathead Indian Reservation, secures the right for the U. S. government to build a road through the reservation and grant both tribal members and other U.S. citizens equal and complete access.

“We can take action as far as our tribal lands, but we don’t really have the authority to close [the Flathead reservation],” said Shelly Fyant, chairwoman of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The reservation is too spread out and “checkerboarded” to effectively close its borders, Fyant said.

The CSKT also formed a Unified Command Center with Lake County, “which was pretty historic in and of itself,” said Fyant, who specifically referenced the Flathead water compact, a deal that has taken the better part of a decade with contentious negotiations between the state and the tribe. “We don’t have a very civil relationship with Lake County Commissioners. But we all decided we needed to do what was in the best interest in the health of all the members.”





IEFA CONNECTING RESOURCES

HILLEMAN & VACCINES

The Unified Command Center recently put five 6 foot by 10 foot signs around different entry-points of the reservation, telling people to stay home because of COVID-19.

Implementing restrictions much stronger than what the state government has enacted would be difficult to enforce, according to Monte Mills, co-director of the Margery Hunter Brown Indian Law Clinic at the University of Montana.

This is because tribal police, and the tribal council, only have jurisdiction over tribal members on reservation land. Only 40% of the reservation's population identifies as Native American, according to the United States Census.

The Flathead reservation, spread out as it is, is home to half of Flathead Lake, the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness and a number of popular campgrounds. It is important, Fyant said, for non-residents of the reservation to say out and help mitigate the spread of the virus. In order to further discourage visitors, recreational areas were closed.

“We have such a beautiful reservation, people flock here,” she said.

Since Gov. Bullock announced the shelter-in-place order, Fyant and other tribal council members have seen vehicles with out-of-state plates on the reservation. Fyant and her boyfriend recently saw a camper with Indiana plates and thought, “Wow, people are really still coming here.”

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Division of Fish, Wildlife, Recreation and Conservation manager Tom McDonald said the waters are still open to boating and fishing for everyone, because activities on the water are agreed upon between CSKT and the state, so it would be more difficult to get those restricted. “There are still people fishing and boating on the Flathead [Lake],” he said.

Fyant said she worries some people are treating the shelter-in-place order like it's a vacation.

“People are just going here and there and everywhere,” she said, explaining she's seen people going to the store in big groups and lingering around rather than just going in, getting what they need, and leaving.



IEFA CONNECTING RESOURCES

HILLEMAN & VACCINES

“I don’t sleep very good at night thinking that we’re responsible for so many thousands of people,” she said.

A frustration for the Salish and Kootenai tribal council has been a disruption in the places it accesses and its cultural routines. For instance, Fyant said the tribe’s annual fall Bitterroot dig, in which tribal members take buses to Hot Springs, Montana will be noticeably affected. Participants in the annual event come together to gather Bitterroot and pray to honor their dead. This year, Fyant said, there is going to be a much smaller group attending, and while people are welcome to attend on their own, the event is going to be much more low-key than usual.

The Salish and Kootenai aren’t alone. Almost all Montana tribes have canceled community events.

“[COVID-19] is really changing the dynamics of how we are used to gathering. But it is what it is, we have to adjust,” Fyant said. “As Native people, we’ve always been able to do that, we’ve always been having to adjust to situations as they change, like with climate change: Plants and medicines bloom earlier than usual, and we’ve had to adjust to that.”

“If there’s a threat to human lives—I’ll close the roads first and beg for forgiveness later.” - Robert DesRosier

BLACKFEET INDIAN RESERVATION

The Blackfeet tribe hasn’t closed its borders, and the tribe’s incident commander, Robert DesRosier, hopes it doesn’t come to that.

“We probably could close our borders if we wanted to, but that’s a scenario we don’t want to go into,” DesRosier said. If the tribal council decided it had to close the borders of the Blackfeet reservation, he said, it would establish checkpoints and try to keep people from stopping, but they couldn’t keep people from driving through unless human lives were in danger.

In winter of 2018, DesRosier ordered the closure of a state highway West of Browning, a federally owned road on the Blackfeet reservation, due to extreme blizzard conditions. “Roads don’t have right-of-way over human lives,” he said.





IEFA CONNECTING RESOURCES

HILLEMAN & VACCINES

Above all, DesRosier said when taking measures to contain COVID-19, it's important to be realistic.

"I've closed roads before," DesRosier said. "If there's a threat to human lives, I'll close the roads first and beg for forgiveness later."

The Blackfeet reservation shares a border with Canada, as well as other federal and state roads, so closing them and trying to keep people from driving would be a "contentious issue."

The Blackfeet tribe issued an order on April 2 to close all vacation rentals on the reservation and another one to restrict all non-essential traffic on the reservation.

DesRosier said these orders were made to keep the virus at bay by keeping people from traveling within the reservation and by keeping outsiders from bringing COVID-19 to them.

"We're putting out a public plea," Blackfeet incident commander Des Rosier said, "Take this seriously and stay home."

DesRosier said while most people seem to be taking the virus seriously, the police department has issued citations to a few people who were caught out past curfew when they didn't need to be.

"We're making sure we have our rules in order and everything is enforced," he said.

NORTHERN CHEYENNE INDIAN RESERVATION

When COVID-19 first came to the council's attention, the initial reaction was to close the reservation's borders, said Dana Eagle Feathers, Northern Cheyenne tribal councilman. The problem is Highway 212, which runs through Lame Deer, the heart of the Northern Cheyenne reservation.

The governor's office and Montana Department of Transportation told the council it couldn't stop or re-route traffic on Highway 212 as it's a state highway. The Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council also needs the highway to stay open so supplies can still be delivered to the reservation.

IEFA CONNECTING RESOURCES

HILLEMAN & VACCINES

Eagle Feathers said he personally believes the council could close the reservation if the safety and health of the residents is in danger because the highway is within the boundaries of the reservation.

For these reasons, the tribal council has posted signs at each entrance of the reservation asking truckers and non-residents to not take 212 and to instead take I-90 around from South Dakota through Wyoming to Montana, or, for westbound traffic to detour at Broadus, a town in Montana.

At the roundabout in Lame Deer, similar signs are posted asking truckers and non-residents not to stop as they are passing through, although the Northern Cheyenne tribe doesn't have the resources to enforce this, according to Eagle Feathers.

The signs and detour requests triggered outrage and a torrent of racist and vitriolic comments on Facebook, particularly in a message posted on March 28 to The Montana Department of Transportation Sting Location, a Facebook page made to help enforce "commercial vehicle laws and statutes," according to the page's "About" section.

The message described the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council's suggestion to detour around the reservation and Highway 212.

"Just give 'em a bottle of whiskey and a pack of cheap smokes, they'll move," one Facebook user commented.

"It's not like people are stopping and passing out blankets with smallpox on them," another said. "Oh wait, that's already been done before."

There have been rumors circulating in truckers' circles and among the tribal council that Natives are throwing rocks and bricks at trucks and vehicles with-out-of-state plates who drive down Highway 212. Eagle Feathers said this rumor is untrue.

On April 9, the tribe's president put out an order announcing that products such as medical supplies and groceries are still allowed to be



The Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council had concerns about keeping Highway 212 open when COVID-19 came to their attention. The governor's office and Montana Department of Transportation told the council they couldn't stop or re-route traffic on Highway 212 as it's a state highway.

2015 File Photo/Kristen Kirkland



IEFA CONNECTING RESOURCES

HILLEMANN & VACCINES

delivered to the reservation via Highway 212 as they are important to the health and well-being of reservation residents.

Eagle Feathers said he doesn't believe COVID-19 is as bad as it's been made out to be, but he's happy the tribal council and reservation are reacting the way they have, "so that way, if we have an actual disaster, we'll already have these things in place."

"If we can survive smallpox, we can survive just about anything," he said.

CROW INDIAN RESERVATION

The Crow tribe has met similar racism, both on Facebook and at checkpoints posted at the entries of the Crow reservation. Besides the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's reservation.

Crow resident and former chief of staff to the tribal vice president, Noel Two Leggings said he's seen Facebook posts and heard stories of people responding to being turned away from the checkpoints by calling the people "dirty Indians," "alcoholics" and "drug addicts."

Two Leggings said that even if COVID-19 wasn't a problem, the Crow tribe still has a right to do what it wants with its land, including turning people away if it deems necessary.

Two Leggings said he had a recent experience at the Cenex gas station in Hardin, a town right outside of the borders of the reservation with an out-of-stater seeking escape at the Big Horn River on the Crow reservation.

"I saw a maroon Ford F-250 pulling an R.V...., and saw the plates were from New York," Two Leggings said. "I asked him what [he and his family] were doing out here and he said, 'We're escaping from the coronavirus.'"

Two Leggings said he told the man he should've been more considerate because he could have infected somebody, coming from out of state, and then he followed the vehicle after it finished filling up just long enough to see them enter the Crow reservation and go up toward the Big Horn River.

"When I come off the reservation, I follow the rules, I respect the law, and I just wish non-Natives could do the same, but they don't," Two Leggings said. "They just think they can do whatever they want."