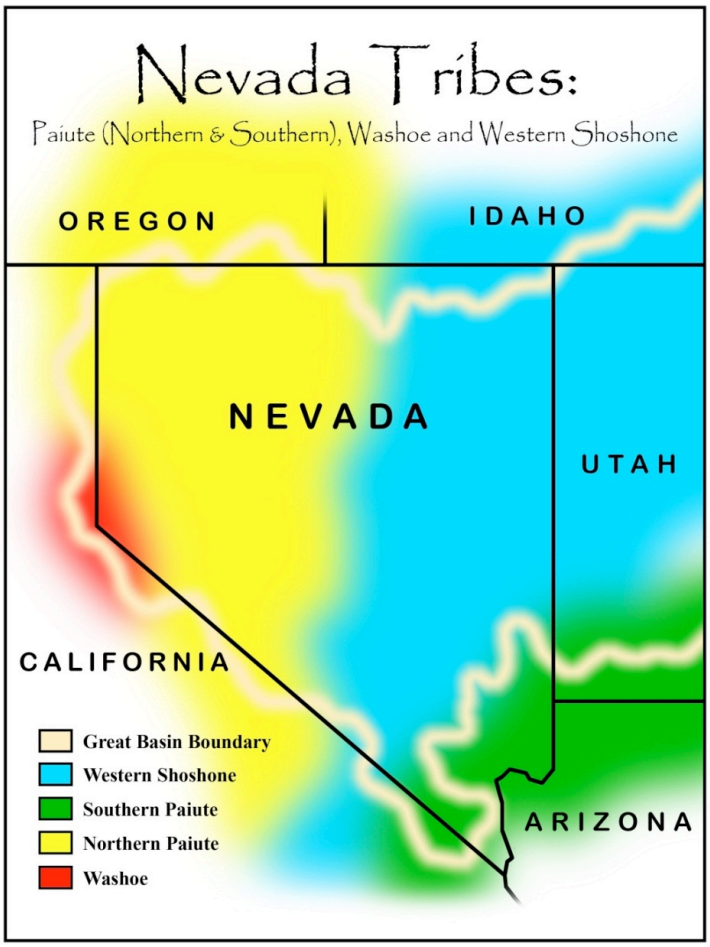
Essential Understanding 1

There is great diversity among the 4 tribal Nations of Nevada in their languages, cultures, histories, and governments. Each Nation has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Nevada.



The 4 tribal Nations consist of 27 tribes/bands located on both reservations and colonies located throughout Nevada.

Essential Understanding 2

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

Background

Identity is an issue with which human beings struggle throughout their lifetime. Questions of "Who am I?" and "How do I fit in?" are universal questions of the human condition. Historically, schools have been places for students to explore their identities. However, when the culture of students' homes and communities is not evident in school, finding a way to belong within that system is more difficult and can lead to frustration. Educators need to ensure that each student has an opportunity to feel included in the classroom either through materials or pedagogical practices.

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 pre-date the "discovery" of North America.

Background

Tribal languages, cultures, and traditions are alive and well throughout Indian country. Indigenous languages are still spoken, sacred songs are still sung, and rituals are still performed. It is not important for educators to understand all of the complexities of modern day contemporary American Indian cultures, however, educators should be aware of their existence. They should also understand the ways culture might influence much of the thinking and practice of American Indians today.

Essential Understanding 4

Reservations are lands that have been reserved by the tribes for their own use through treaties, statutes, and executive orders and were not "given" to them. The principle that land should be acquired from the Indians 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.

Essential Understanding 5

Federal policies, put into place throughout American history, have affected Indian people and still shape who they are today. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods.

PERIOD	DATES
Colonial Period	1492 - 1828
Treaty Period	1778 - 1871
Removal & Relocation Period	1828 - 1887
Reservation Period	1850 - 1887
Allotment & Assimilation Period	1887 - 1934
Indian Reorganization Act	1934 - 1945
Termination Period	1945 - 1968
Tribal Self-Determination Period	1968 - Present

Please note that the identified years in this table are approximate, and they were compiled by using a number of different sources that are generally in agreement; however, some dates may vary by up to five years. There is not much apparent difference but, in order to alleviate any confusion, this notation is significant.

Essential Understanding 6

History is a story most often related through the subjective experiences of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an American Indian perspective frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.

Background

Much of America's history has been told from the Euro-American perspective. Only recently have American Indians begun to write about and retell history from an Indigenous perspective.

Books such as Lies My Teacher Told Me by James W. Loewen, expose the underlying bias within much of our history curriculum that has excluded certain voices. In examining current curriculum content, it is important to keep the following in mind:

> Children's history books use terms such as "westward expansion" and "Manifest Destiny" to describe what would be more accurately called ethnic genocide. These books alternately portray Indians as "noble savages," "faithful Indian guides," or "sneaky savages" who lead "ambushes" and "massacres," while in contrast, cavalrymen fight "brave battles." These books propagandize the "glory and honor" of taking land and oppressing native people for European purposes that are portrayed as holy and valid (Skinner).

A transformation such as the following would benefit all Americans as we work on building a free and democratic society for all:

> A multicultural history curriculum, by focusing on the experiences of men and women of diverse racial, ethnic, and religious groups in United States history, will provide students with a historical context in which to situate and understand the experiences and perspectives of these groups in American society today (Mehan, et. Al.)

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.

Background

A very important but often unappreciated point is that tribal sovereignty does not arise out of the United States government, congressional acts, executive orders, treaties, or any other source outside the tribe. As Felix Cohen puts it, "perhaps the most basic principle of all Indian law. . . is those powers which are lawfully vested in an Indian tribe are not, in general, delegated powers granted by expressed acts of Congress, but rather inherent powers of alimited sovereignty, which has never been extinguished Cohen 122)."

Sovereignty can be defined as "The supreme power from which all political powers are derived." It is inherent---it cannot be given to one group by another. In government-to-government negotiations, states and Indian nations exercise or use their sovereign powers.

"Sovereignty ensures self-government, cultural preservation, and a people's control of their future. Sovereignty affirms the political identity of Indian Nations—they are not simply a racial or ethnic minority (Chavaree)."