

Montana Small Schools Alliance
HONORING MONTANA'S FIRST PEOPLES

UNIT: Pen Pal Friends

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SCHOOL AND COUNTY: Helmville School in Powell County

GRADE LEVEL: 2-8

1-3 months or beyond

INDIAN RESERVATION REFERENCED: Fort Belknap

SUBJECT AREA: Writing, Reading, Social Studies

OVERVIEW: Students will write letters to same age/gender students on the Fort Belknap Reservation. Helmville students will learn about a new 'friend' from a reservation and gain an appreciation and an awareness of a fellow Montanan and where he/she resides.

CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Writing Standard 1: Students write clearly and effectively.

Writing Standard 2: Students apply a range of skills and strategies in the writing process.

Writing Standard 4: Students write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Writing Standard 6: Students use the inquiry process, problem-solving strategies, and resources to synthesize and communicate information.

Social Studies Standard 3: Students apply geographic knowledge and skills (e.g., location, place, human/environment interactions, movement, and regions).

Social Studies Standard 6: Students demonstrate an understanding of the impact of human interaction and cultural diversity on societies.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT MONTANA INDIANS:

Essential Understanding 1: There is a great diversity among the 12 tribal Nations of Montana in their language, cultures, histories, and governments. Each Nation has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana. There is a 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 2: There is a 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.

MATERIALS:

Map of Montana Reservations (Full Circle Calendar Map, May 2006),
Friendly letter model
Paper, pencil
A contact person on the reservation to distribute the letters

ACTIVITIES: (30 minute time period for four days)

Day 1: Students will be introduced to the Map of Montana Reservations and be able to locate the Fort Belknap Reservation. Discussion will be about the history and uniqueness of the reservation. Computer research can be done by grades 4-8.

Day 2: Students will study the Friendly Letter model provided. Parts of the letter and a general discussion about what makes a nice letter to a pen pal and what is not appropriate in a friendly pen pal letter.

Day 3: Begin letter to "Dear Friend". Write the original, exchange papers to practice editing. Hand in. Teacher will finish with the revisions.

Day 4: The final copy will be made. Attach school picture. (Grades 3 and 4 made a paper snowflake to send to their 'new friend'. Older students sent a Helmville School bookmark to their pen pal.) Next, wait patiently for a response!

ASSESSMENT:

Teacher will use a rubric containing items: neatness, sentence structure and punctuation, friendly letter components, completion, and enthusiasm. The students will share orally with the others the letters they receive.

EXTENSIONS:

Encourage students to learn more about the reservation and share what they have learned. Ask for parent comments about their child's project.