



## LESSON 2

# Tribal Governance

### ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Sovereignty
- Identity
- Tribal Government

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Describe the structure of the Cow Creek tribal government
- Identify at least three ways that the Cow Creek tribal government demonstrates the Tribe's sovereignty
- Compare and contrast a Cow Creek tribal government department with a similar Oregon state agency

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How is the Cow Creek tribal government structured?
- How does the Cow Creek tribal government contribute to its sovereignty?
- How is the Cow Creek tribal government similar to and different from the Oregon state government?

### LOGISTICS

- Where does the activity take place?  
*Classroom*
- How are the students organized?
  - Whole class
  - Teams: 2 – 4
  - Pairs
  - Individually

### TIME REQUIRED

Four class periods

## Overview

The mission of the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians (or Cow Creek Tribe) is to uphold tribal government; protect and preserve tribal sovereignty, history, culture, and the general welfare of the tribal membership; and provide for the long-term socioeconomic needs of the Tribe and its members through economic development of tribal lands. The Tribe encourages and promotes a strong work ethic and personal independence for tribal members while strongly upholding the government-to-government relationship with other local, state, and federal entities. This lesson looks at how the Cow Creek Tribal Board of Directors and individual tribal government departments put sovereignty into practice in ways that benefit the Tribe and the broader community. Students will explore how the tribal government is similar to and different from Oregon state government.

## Background for teachers

Federally recognized tribes, such as the Cow Creek Tribe, are sovereign nations with a government-to-government relationship to the United States. As such, they have the power to establish their own laws and government structures. The sovereign status of tribal nations makes them unique, but in practice tribal governments function much like other state and local governments.



For example, they typically provide police departments, emergency services, and court systems to protect their members and maintain law and order. They also support education, workforce development, healthcare, land management, and other social programs and are responsible for building and maintaining infrastructure systems, such as roads, public buildings, water, electricity, and telecommunications. In many cases, tribal governments work closely with local, state, and federal governments on these and other issues, such as public health, mental health, and child welfare.

Tribal governments are also similar to local governments. They have the freedom to invest directly in programs, services, and other efforts—such as direct philanthropy—that will benefit the local community and its citizens. Many of these efforts also benefit non-Native people in the immediate and surrounding areas.

This lesson engages students in a compare-and-contrast activity that looks at tribal and Oregon state government departments. In some instances, these are not meant to depict actual government departments, but rather the types of supports and services tribal governments provide, including philanthropic efforts.

To prepare for this lesson teachers should:

- Review all handouts and worksheets
- Read the Integrated Resource Management Plan and identify relevant information that students might use

## STANDARDS

HS.4; HS.5; HS.6; HS.60; HS.63; HS.66

## MATERIALS

**What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?**

**Note:** Students will need access to their handouts and notes from the previous lesson to complete the poster in Activity 4.

- PowerPoint slide deck: G10\_Governance
- *History of the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe: Sovereignty and Persistence* handout (one for each student)
- *Overview of the Cow Creek Tribal Board* handout (one for each student)
- Informational handouts for five Cow Creek tribal departments: Economic Development, Education, Emergency Management, Human Services, and Tribal Philanthropy (one copy for each member of a small group)
- Informational handouts for five Oregon state government departments: Economic Development, Education, Emergency Management, Human Services, Philanthropy (one copy for each member of a small group)
- *Venn Diagram – Tribal Departments and State Departments worksheet* (one per student group)
- Poster paper and poster-making supplies, such as markers (one set per student group)
- Optional: *Cow Creek Tribe Integrated Resource Management Plan* (teacher copy)



- Ensure students have access to their handouts and notes from the prior lesson on tribal sovereignty
- Identify and gather creative materials for students to use in Activity 4 (for the informational posters)

## Considerations for teachers

### Assessment

The activities in this lesson are primarily built around student discussion and engagement with the reading material. Teachers can assess student learning by monitoring student pair and small-group discussion and by reviewing the worksheets the groups create.

In Activity 4, teachers can assess student learning during small-group collaboration. Teachers may want to develop a rubric for grading the informational posters and brief presentations that the groups will create to synthesize their understanding of tribal sovereignty and governance.

### Practices

- *Small group* – Small-group activities allow students to share and analyze ideas with one, two, or three other people. This practice can be good for students who do not want to share their ideas with the whole class and/or who may be afraid of others' reactions. The teacher should monitor group discussions to determine the degree to which students are understanding the concepts.

### VOCABULARY

This lesson has four key vocabulary terms.

**Governance** – The act of governing.

**Philanthropy** – The desire to promote the welfare of others, expressed especially by the generous donation of money to good causes.

**Sovereignty** – The inherent authority of nations, including Indigenous tribes, to govern themselves.

**Tribal Sovereignty** – The inherent right of Indigenous tribes to retain and exercise the authority of self-governance as an independent nation. Tribes that are recognized by the U.S. government retain sovereign rights and maintain government-to-government relationships with federal and state governing bodies.



- *Classroom discussion* – Large-group, whole-class discussion allows students to express their thoughts and hear the thoughts of others. For the instructor, this practice is a good way to “take the pulse” of the group and see what general themes are emerging. For students, large-group discussion can be a way to express themselves or to hear differing perspectives from others.
- *Student group reporting and presentation* – When groups report out what they have discussed or provide a brief presentation, it is important to have clear norms and expectations they can use to ensure their success. The teacher should be prepared to explain to the class how to listen respectfully when a classmate is reporting on group work. The teacher should also be prepared to help students gather their thoughts and explain main ideas if they are struggling to do so.

### Learning targets

- I can describe the structure of the Cow Creek Tribe’s government.
- I can identify at least three ways that the Cow Creek Tribe’s government demonstrates tribal sovereignty.
- I can compare and contrast a Cow Creek tribal government department with a similar Oregon state agency.

## Options/Extensions

- As a possible additional activity, have students work in small groups to prepare for a town council–style meeting with representatives from each tribal department present to answer questions. First, students are assigned a department and research it using the provided handouts along with any information they can find online or in the *Integrated Resource Management Plan*. Groups then mock up a town council meeting, act as the representatives, and field questions from the “community” (their classmates). The goal is to discuss issues that may be relevant to the community as they relate to the tribal department. Questions student community members might ask include:
  - How is your department positively contributing to our community?
  - Where do you see opportunities for your department to collaborate with other departments?
  - What kind of projects would your department like to complete in the future?
- Create a lesson on the Cow Creek Foundation, the tribe’s philanthropic organization, and work with students to explore how the foundation benefits both tribal members and the broader community. The foundation’s website includes a description of the organization and examples of the projects it has supported [www.cowcreekfoundation.org](http://www.cowcreekfoundation.org). The archive of press releases has multiple resources that show which groups have received foundation grants, as well as statements from foundation leaders about the purpose of the Tribe’s philanthropy program.

## Reflection/Summary

Ask students to share the main points they learned about how tribal government functions and how it contributes to tribal sovereignty.

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## Activity 1

# Introduction to Tribal Governance

*Time: 30 minutes*

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In this activity students learn about the concept of governance and review a brief history of the Cow Creek Tribe's relationship with the U.S. government.

Introduce the activity with a classroom brainstorm. Record ideas on flip chart paper, whiteboard, or smart board. Ask students what they already know about government. Specifically, ask them what they know about:

- The purpose of government
- How government works
- Advantages and disadvantages of government
- The role of power in government

### Slide 1

Display Slide 1 and ask students to discuss the question with a partner or in table groups.

### Slide 2

Display Slide 2 and distribute one copy of the *History of the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe: Sovereignty and Persistence* handout to each student. Instruct students to read the information and label the parts following the instructions on the slide.

When students have read through the article and had time to label the parts, ask for volunteers to share what they found, specifically around acts of tribal perseverance and sovereignty.

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## Activity 2

# Cow Creek Tribal Board of Directors

*Time: 45 minutes*

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In this activity students learn about the composition of the Cow Creek Tribal Board of Directors and its election process. Students will consider how the board and election process contributes to sovereignty.

### Say:

*OK, we've learned a little bit about the history of the Cow Creek Tribe and how it has pursued its right to sovereignty regardless of the changing laws and acts of the U.S. government and the state of Oregon. As part of this sovereignty, the Tribe has its own board of directors. Let's read about the tribal board and consider how it contributes to the Tribe's ability to put sovereignty into practice.*

Distribute the *Overview of the Cow Creek Tribal Board* handout. Ask for student volunteers to read the information out loud (alternatively, students could read the handout in pairs or trios).

### Slide 3

After students have read the handout, place students in small groups of three to four students. Explain that groups will discuss the handout and will need to be prepared for a whole-class conversation when finished. Have groups engage in a discussion about the following questions:

1. What is the purpose of the Cow Creek tribal government? (see introductory paragraphs)
2. By what means is power vested in the Cow Creek Tribal Board of Directors? (through nomination and election processes)
3. What are the main similarities between Cow Creek Tribal Board of Directors elections and U.S. or state elections? What are the main differences?

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## Activity 2 *(Continued)*

4. If you were to submit a question to candidates (described in the May-June section of the voting process), what might you ask?
5. Based on what you read or what can be inferred, how do elections of board members support tribal sovereignty?

Provide students with time to discuss. Walk around the classroom and monitor students as they work. Check for understanding and correct errors as necessary. Ensure that students discuss each of the five questions.

After students are finished with their discussion, ask for volunteers to share their insights and comments with the whole class. Get a sampling of answers for all five questions as a way to synthesize the small-group discussions.



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**Activity 3****Cow Creek Tribal Government  
Departments***Time: 45 minutes*

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In this activity students learn about the structure and departments of the Cow Creek government and then compare and contrast those departments with similar Oregon state government departments and services.

**Say:**

*Now that you know a little about the Cow Creek Tribal Board of Directors, let's learn about the governmental programs that they oversee on behalf of the Tribe. In addition to other programs for tribal members, there are five key agencies that function in a governmental role:*

- *The Economic Development Department*
- *The Education Department*
- *The Emergency Management Department*
- *The Human Services Department*
- *The Tribal Philanthropy Department*

*These departments are similar to Oregon state agencies. For this activity, you will compare and contrast a Cow Creek tribal department with its equivalent Oregon state department. I will give you two informational handouts—one for the Tribe and one for Oregon—as well as a Venn diagram worksheet. Use the circle on the left to represent the Cow Creek department you will learn about. Use the circle on the right to represent the equivalent Oregon state department. Use the overlapping section in the middle to highlight what they have in common.*



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### Activity 3 *(Continued)*

Divide students into five small groups, one for each tribal and state department. Ideal group size is three to four students per group. If you have a large class, you may need to have more than one group working on each tribal department. Assign each group a tribal department and its state department equivalent and distribute the corresponding handouts and worksheet. Have each group select a reporter who will summarize the group's work for the whole class.

Allow time for students to read through all information and complete the Venn diagram as a group. Walk around the classroom and monitor students as they work. Check for understanding and correct errors as necessary.

**Facilitator note:** If time and resources allow, encourage students to find further information on the internet regarding the Cow Creek tribal departments, the Oregon state agencies, and related programs.

When students are finished, have the reporter from each group summarize what the group has written on its Venn diagram about the similarities and differences. Then process the activity with the following discussion questions:

- What did you notice about the difference between tribal and state government departments?
- What did these departments have in common?
- What do you think the benefits and challenges would be of running the types of programs for which these departments are responsible?
- What did you find interesting about what you learned?

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**Activity 4****Poster Session to Explain Cow Creek Tribal Sovereignty***Time: 55 minutes*

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In this activity students will synthesize their learning about Cow Creek tribal government to create an informational poster that illustrates what sovereignty means to the Tribe, why it's important, and how the Tribe puts it into practice through their governmental board, departments, and other processes. You will need poster paper, markers, and any other poster-making supplies that your students may want to use.

**Say:**

*We've spent the past few days learning about the Cow Creek Tribe's history, persistence, sovereignty, and examples of how its tribal government is structured and the programs and services it provides. I would like you to synthesize what you have learned by creating a poster that illustrates what sovereignty means to the Tribe, why it's important, and how the Tribe puts it into practice through the board of directors, tribal government departments, and any other processes you have learned about. For your poster, I want you to do the following:*

**Slide 6**

- 1. Title – Think about a title that conveys what sovereignty means to the Tribe and why it is so important to them. Be creative.*
- 2. History – With pictures or graphics, summarize how the Tribe has fought for its sovereignty over time, throughout its dynamic relationship with the laws and policies of the U.S. government.*
- 3. Governance – Illustrate how the Tribe's board and governmental departments are extensions of its sovereignty.*

*When your group is finished, be prepared to explain your poster to the class.*



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### **Activity 4** *(Continued)*

Encourage students to draw upon notes and worksheets that they used from previous lesson activities as a source of information for the poster session. Place students in small groups of three or four to design the posters. If students prefer to work in pairs or individually, allow them to do so as appropriate to the needs of your class and their ability levels. Pass out the poster paper and supplies and allow students sufficient time to work. Walk around the classroom and monitor student work. Provide feedback and suggestions as appropriate to assist students with their poster design.

When students are finished, ask each group to present its poster. Small-group presentations should be relatively short—no more than five minutes each.