ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 1
➢ There is great diversity among the 12 tribal Nations of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories, and governments. Each Nation has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

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.

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
➢ 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 Indian 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: Colonization Period, Treaty Period, Allotment Period, Boarding School Period, Tribal Reorganization Period, Termination Period, Self-determination Period.

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 an Indian perspective frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.

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.
Indian Education for All: THROUGH OUR OWN EYES

The Challenge of IEFA

BY ELLEN SWANEY

The Indian Education for All (IEFA) Act requires Montana teachers and faculty members to teach Indian history and culture at all levels, from kindergarten through college. Meeting the law’s intent with regard to Montana’s tribal histories is relatively easy. It will be a matter of compiling information about each tribe and integrating it into classroom instruction. Certainly that requires time, patience, and a lot of hard work, but it can be done. Materials are available from the eight tribal governments, the seven tribal colleges, the Office of Public Instruction, the campuses of the Montana University System, and private individuals and organizations. Much harder will be defining how teachers and faculty members effectively teach about the cultures of Montana’s 12 tribes. Our challenge is presenting information in a way that honors the unique culture of each tribe. Salish, Kootenai, Blackfeet, Little Shell Chippewa, Cree, Chippewa, Gros Ventre, Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Nakota, and Assiniboin (Fort Belknap and Fort Peck) cultures and languages are quite distinct from one another, so even schools on or near reservations will be teaching about tribal cultures that are different from their own. In addition, tribal peoples have a unique political status in the United States, so our educational materials must convey that as well.

My concern is that instruction might end up trivializing highly complex cultural issues. For example, Indian culture is often presented through the arts, especially our traditional arts such as powwow dancing and beadwork. These visual representations are often the best known and most easily demonstrated aspects of a culture, but they are not the culture. Rather, they are a manifestation of a much broader and more complex set of value orientations. To present such a narrow cross section of a culture trivializes the richness and complexity of the lives of Native peoples. It does not begin to touch upon how our Native beliefs, attitudes and values, verbal and nonverbal language, and objects and artifacts affect our views of authority, relationships, action, and time. Our views

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tend to be on the opposite end of the spectrum from the values of mainstream American culture, and unfamiliarity sometimes breeds contempt. Educators and students must understand that, while Native perceptions of the world may be different, they are not deficient. The greater the breadth of our knowledge about all the peoples who live on this land, the greater the gain for our nation as a whole.

Moreover, really exploring culture raises thorny issues about the culture of the American school system. Honestly engaging IEFA requires us to consider the political, economic, and power issues involved with including people who are culturally different. Such discussions will be difficult, but anything less will result in superficial treatment of a fundamentally important component of this law.

As an American Indian, I have to continually remind myself that I, like all of us, was schooled within the American education system. I was trained as a teacher within that system. With that background, it can be very difficult even for Indian teachers to step back and see how we might have been damaged by being required to assimilate. We then need to recognize that, as long as we teach within that mainstream cultural system, we may, in turn, be damaging our Indian students, unless we are very cognizant of cultural differences. Some of that damage is evidenced by the current dropout rates among Indian students.

Counteracting this damage will require some changes in teacher education coursework. The Essential Understandings of IEFA (page 189) must be infused into teacher education classes, just as they will be integrated into the curricula of elementary and high schools. The current requirement that preservice teachers complete a course in multicultural education is a start, but clearly more needs to be done in order to promote the understandings — the changes of hearts and minds — required to prevent losing so many of our Indian students. Professional development that unlocks the mysteries of intercultural communication styles and emphasizes the impacts of culture on teaching and learning will be vital for all American educators — teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members — to better equip them to meet the needs of the culturally diverse students, and especially American Indian students, in their schools.

This is groundbreaking work in the field of American education. A group I am involved with, the Montana University System Indian Education for All work group, is currently developing a plan for the implementation of IEFA within the Montana University System campuses. Clearly, Native American Studies departments and schools of education will play vital roles in making these changes. But we are also looking at ways to include Indian education in the coursework of other departments, so that the education of all graduates from Montana’s universities will be complete.

Challenges lie ahead, but Montana’s system of higher education, together with its elementary and high schools, is working to meet those challenges.
Indian Education for All: THROUGH OUR OWN EYES

Preserving Our Histories For Those Yet to Be Born

BY LINWOOD TALL BULL

O MANY of our children cannot relate to the histories and lessons they are taught in school today. They are presented stories that do not fit within our cultural teachings. For example, our children cannot relate to the story about George Washington chopping down a cherry tree. Such stories may be told to teach certain values — in this case, not to tell a lie. But they are not teaching our most important values. To us, young George’s parents should have told him that cherry trees, like all living things, should be treated with respect. The bigger lesson that children learn from young George’s story is that it is okay to be destructive, wasteful, and disrespectful of living things as long as they tell the truth about it. That’s not a lesson we want our children to learn.

Indian Education for All is one of the good things happening in our schools today. Because of it, there is much new interest in learning about Indian people. Every tribe in Montana and throughout the United States has a colorful, interesting history, strong stories and legends, knowledge about plants and healing, and survival skills. Knowing more about each other will help non-Indian and Indian children learn to live together well. When we start to learn more about Indian history and culture, all children in our schools will be getting an education about the best of both worlds.

The Dog Soldiers is an ancient society that has always protected and preserved the ways of our people. As a Headsman for today’s Dog Soldiers, I hope we will be leaders in carrying our traditions and customs forward in a way that others can understand and respect. By taking the lead in preserving the past, we will protect the future of those yet to be born. That is why I’m proud to be working on the Tribal Histories Project that will help all Montana schools teach about the Northern Cheyenne people.

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Indian Education for All: THROUGH OUR OWN EYES

The First Best Place

BY LINDA McCULLOCH

It is an exciting time for education in Montana as we “recognize the distinct and unique cultural heritage” of the Indian Nations that called our state the “First Best Place.” In 1972, with the redrafting of its state constitution, Montana committed itself to preserving the cultural integrity of American Indians through its education system. In the face of diverse challenges, many educators worked diligently over the past 34 years to ensure this promise was met. We owe much of our current place in history to these relentless advocates. As the state’s education leader, my goal is to realize this constitutional promise and to ensure that tribal stories will reverberate throughout our state’s classrooms.

Today, with Indian education included in the legislature’s statutory definition of a quality education and with the 2005 legislative appropriation, we may begin to see many of these past efforts realized. We enter into this era of Indian Education for All with optimism and confidence that all of our state’s citizens will come to understand and value the tribal histories, stories, and philosophies that have helped shape Montana.

Twelve tribal nations are located in Montana. Eleven of these nations reside within homelands reserved either through treaties or by executive order. One, the Little Shell Band of Chippewa, is “landless,” but the tribe is currently seeking federal recognition to establish its own land base. These tribal nations govern seven reservations that constitute 9% of Montana’s land base. There are also many Indian people, from all of the tribes, who live off reservations in towns and cities across the state. Indian people contribute economically, culturally, socially, and politically to Montana’s landscape and history. Each tribe has its respective government that establishes services and asserts its sovereignty to create a better future for its members.

As I look toward the future, I see our state becoming even better because of Indian Education for All. When members of this next generation of students become state and tribal leaders, they will have a better understanding of one another and forge better relations to bring Montana into its next stage of development. When tribal voices are included in all curriculum areas, and all students graduate from our high schools understanding the rich histories and contemporary issues of tribal nations and Indian people, Montana can be acknowledged as the “last best place.”

LINDA McCULLOCH is serving her second term as Montana’s elected Superintendent of Public Instruction. She was an elementary school teacher and librarian for 20 years and served six years as a state legislator in the Montana House of Representatives.
As the governor of Montana, I’ve had the distinct honor of learning and experiencing some incredible things about Montana’s tribal cultures. Beginning with my very first day in office, I drummed with singers from each reservation as part of the inaugural ceremony and later that day received tribal flags now proudly displayed in the governor’s reception room as a sign of respect for the tribal nations of our state.

By executive order, I established the Governor’s American Indian Nation (GAIN) Council (http://gain.mt.gov) to ensure a government-to-government commitment between the state and the Indian Nations within its borders. The GAIN Council adopted the following guiding principles when formulating or implementing policies, agreements, cooperative grants, activities of any nature, or administrative rules that have direct implications for Indian nations:

- establish and preserve harmonious tribal/state relationships;
- strive for mutual understanding and respect for the sovereign tribal and state governments;
- share collective resources and services to achieve equal opportunity for all;
- work cooperatively when the rights of one government with regard to the other are unclear or would result in harm to either government’s citizens; and
- use the process established through the GAIN Council to address issues in a timely fashion and through the appropriate process.

We are serious about making American Indian heritage a part of state government. Tribes are well represented in my cabinet and as policy advisors. In addition, 10% of my appointments to boards and commissions represent Montana’s minorities.

But what is most important to me is that all Montanans, especially our children, have the chance to recognize the unique cultural heritage of American Indians. Our Montana Constitution declares that it should happen; I say we have a moral obligation to make it happen. Making Indian Education for All a reality in Montana means that such cultural awareness must be an integral part of all children’s lives, every day, in the classroom and beyond.

Since I have been in office, we in Montana have taken dramatic steps in that direction. We have appropriated more than $13 million in funding to the Montana Office of Public Instruction to enable K-12 school districts to implement Indian Education for All in all of Montana’s
Further, $1 million was appropriated to the tribal colleges to write the histories of their tribes for K-12 classrooms. We now see Montana teachers, schools, and communities embracing the full meaning and intention of our constitution by making sure that all students explore and expand their knowledge of the rich cultures that thrive among the tribes of Montana.

It is an exciting time for us in Montana. I challenge teachers, communities, and schools around the country to watch what happens in Montana when students learn about the histories and cultures of American’s first peoples and create classrooms in which all our citizens’ voices can be heard.

Gov. Brian Schweitzer and First Lady Nancy Schweitzer learn to round dance at the 2004 inauguration. For the first time in Montana’s history, flags of the eight sovereign nations fly in the governor’s conference room in the State Capitol. (Photo courtesy of Montana Office of Public Instruction.)
Indian Education for All: THROUGH OUR OWN EYES

Why IEFA?

BY DOROTHEA SUSAG

Education has the power to change the story of your life.

— Debra Magpie Earling, Bitterroot Salish novelist and essayist

If the experiences in our public schools have the power to change the stories of children’s lives, what happens to those who don’t hear the stories of their own people? And if children do learn stories about their lives, what happens when their teachers and texts regard those stories as inferior or obsolete, representing wrong values of property and government, and representing inadequate means for survival? What happens to children whose public education is rooted in an alien culture? How do the stories of their lives change?

What do they learn to value, what do they learn to reject, and what do they learn about survival when they don’t ever hear or read about the suffering, loss, and endurance of their own people? How do they establish positive identities for themselves when voices within their culture are ignored, twisted, and suppressed, and when voices outside their culture decide who these young people are and who they should become? What happens to the relationships among children from differing cultures within classrooms? Do the children from the dominant culture develop an understanding of and respect for the similarities that unite all peoples as well as the differences that distinguish them? Or do they learn to practice discrimination against cultures different from their own?

Essential questions such as these prompted the creation of the seven “Essential Understandings” (see the sidebar on page 189). In turn, that document shaped the fundamental nature of Indian Education for All in Montana.

IMPLEMENTATION of Indian Education for All (IEFA) is long overdue, and it must be a priority for Montana schools. In response to the ruling of the Montana Supreme Court, the Montana legislature provided the funding needed to initiate a full-scale implementation of the constitutional provision. The heritage of the American Indian is an essential part of Montana’s history, but students, parents, and teachers know little or nothing about the American Indian tribes and how Indian culture has influenced the history of our state. Indians and non-Indians live together in the same communities, yet many of us lack an understanding and appreciation of American Indian culture. The public schools must incorporate lessons and enriching programs to foster increased understanding and appreciation on the part of the entire school community. Students also need to appreciate how the future of Montana will embrace the unique contributions of American Indian beliefs, customs, and quality of life so that the lessons can be passed on to future generations.

Indian Education for All should be integrated into all content areas and grade levels in K-12 school systems. It should become an active part of learning in all classrooms across the state throughout the school year. Through effective curriculum integration, the essential learning outcomes associated with IEFA will be embedded into instruction along with the other Montana content standards. Age-appropriate lessons incorporating the heritage of

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American Indians will add relevance and value to instruction in the different content areas.

High-quality professional development for Montana educators must be one of the top priorities if we are to implement IEFA effectively. Teachers are eager to learn about American Indian history and culture so that they can incorporate the curricular expectations into their units of study. To oversee the implementation of the law in the Helena Public Schools district, we have formed an advisory committee that includes educators, representatives from the Helena Indian Alliance, and members of the Helena community. The advisory committee will take the lead in identifying culturally appropriate materials and instructional units that will be incorporated into the classrooms. Members of the advisory committee will actively solicit the input of individuals who have expertise and resource materials to help with the implementation strategies. The Helena Public Schools district was recently awarded a state grant from the Montana Office of Public Instruction to develop an integrated approach across multiple content areas for high school students. Once this approach has been implemented, Helena educators will share their experience with other Montana educators.

Another high priority is to supply classrooms and library media centers with high-quality instructional materials and resources related to IEFA. This educational venture provides a great opportunity to use different technologies to present information and experiences to students. Such technologies could include streaming audio and video presentations from American Indian tribal experts. The techniques of distance learning will help deliver lessons across the state. I serve on the board of directors for the Montana Schools E-Learning Consortium, and we are actively pursuing the possibility of offering professional development to Montana educators via the Internet. The training will be customized to target specific areas of need. To stretch scarce resources, the consortium will develop enrichment units for teachers to use in their classrooms.

Indian Education for All will benefit public school students and staff members, and the diffusion of information and increased understanding of American Indian culture will have a positive and lasting impact on communities large and small across the state. IEFA is an incredible opportunity to add meaningful historical context to the curriculum and build stronger relationships and a deeper understanding among all Montana citizens.
Indian Education for All: THROUGH OUR OWN EYES

The Promise of IEFA

BY WENDY HOPKINS

I am a member of the Little Shell Chippewa tribe of Montana. Our tribe is not federally recognized and does not have a reservation. We gained state recognition in 2001. Although I grew up on the Fort Belknap Reservation, I never really belonged because, as people there saw it, I wasn’t “really” Indian. But I also didn’t belong in the white world. When I was able to enroll in my tribe, it changed everything for me. I began to see myself as an Indian person, and that gave me a place to belong and a people I belonged to.

I think Indian Education for All (IEFA) will have a similar effect on many Indian children. It will help our children understand who they are, take pride in their identity, and see that they have possibilities and opportunities. When I was in school, we didn’t talk about being Indian. If we could, we kept it secret. That was a way to get along. But with IEFA, our children won’t have to do that. They will see themselves in school. They will know that their classmates are learning important things about them. They can begin to believe that, when they meet non-Indian people, those people will have knowledge about their history and culture. That will make our children stronger, more confident. They will know who they are, where they come from, and what they want to be — and that they are perfectly capable of becoming professionals and meeting a full range of life goals.

Indian people have had to live in a white world; some have learned how to adapt. But when Indian kids meet non-Indian people, they know non-Indian people have ideas about what it means to be Indian and that a lot of those ideas are not very good. With IEFA, Indian kids will have more confidence that the people they meet know about them, that they are good people, and that they can be like everyone else. They will set aside the belief that being from the reservation means they are somehow less.

As a teacher, I always remind myself that kids do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. If Indian students feel that their teachers care about them and believe in them, they will do well. I think IEFA will help teachers understand our kids and know them better. That fills IEFA with promise for Indian children — and for all of us.

WENDY HOPKINS (Little Shell Chippewa) is a science teacher at Dodson High School in Dodson, Mont.
Lewis & Clark Elementary School in Missoula, Montana, is an urban school located on the traditional homeland of the Salish and Pend d’Oreille tribes, near the current Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana. Though the majority of students are white, the number of Indian students has gradually increased over the years and now represents approximately 20% of our student population.

Lewis & Clark staff members and parents believe that Indian education is relevant to and beneficial for all students, both Indians and non-Indians. Our vision for Indian Education for All (IEFA) is a form of place-based multicultural education. Through learning about our local Indian tribes, all students are learning about a different cultural perspective and different world view. We have seen the curriculum come alive for children, their understanding of their own cultures deepen, and their ability to tap into the synergy of diversity sharpen.

At Lewis & Clark, more than 20 teachers are integrating perspectives of the Salish and Pend d’Oreille into all subject areas. For example, the story of the bitterroot is part of the first-grade unit on native plants, and the cultural significance of the buffalo is a science topic for a nonfiction writing project in the second grade. In addition, the third grade’s integrated curriculum revolves around the Salish seasons, powwow serves as one of the contexts for fourth-grade social studies, and the fifth-grade research project is partly based on conversations with tribal elders.

The power of this place-based approach is that the children do not have to learn everything from books. They can reach beyond the classroom to experience their community, in which diversity resides, and make face-to-face connections with local people who are different from them. At Lewis & Clark, teachers and students learn from five elders and eight tribal members who come to our classrooms regularly to share stories based on an indigenous world view, to teach us what they learned from their ancestors, to speak with us in their Native language, to bring us humor and wisdom, and to open their hearts for new relationships that heal old wounds and bridge current gaps between Indians and whites.

Through the voices and faces of the local Indian people, Indian children of different tribes have been able to connect personally with their learning, and non-Indian children have discovered a new cultural realm in which “my” perspective is only one of many, and “the others” are fascinating and enriching. Listening to Salish neighbors talk about how much they value their unique cultural practices, children have found “culture” a dynamic subject, and ethnic minorities have found it safe to explore and express their own search for cultural identities. IEFA has already proved to be a powerful form of multicultural education that is overdue in U.S. public schools.

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PHYLLIS NGAI and KAREN ALLEN are authors of the article "Indian Education for All: THROUGH OUR OWN EYES."
WITH THE return of Montana’s K-12 public school students to classrooms across the state this fall, teachers are presenting new and exciting instructional programs. Students are learning about American Indians, in particular those in Montana. Teachers from the smallest one-room schools to our largest urban schools will incorporate into all curriculum areas content about Montana’s 12 tribes — their history, government systems, fine arts, oral traditions, and contemporary issues.

It is an exciting time in Montana for everyone who has worked diligently for so many years to breathe life into the constitutional promise made in 1972. Indian Education for All (IEFA) has traveled a long and winding road. At times it has been a smooth trail filled with high expectations. At other points, there were unexpected corners and challenging hills to overcome. We even ran out of gas a few times or got stuck in some muddy ruts, where we spun our wheels. Most important, on several occasions, we had to carve out our own road and provide a new direction.

Indian people have understood for a great many years that it is only by educating our young people that we can reclaim our history and only through culturally responsive education that we will preserve our cultural integrity. Through IEFA, non-Indian children will also grow to understand and respect the significance of these issues in the lives of their Indian peers. When the law is fully implemented, K-12 students will learn an accurate and authentic history of our state from all perspectives.

Today, Indian people are again hopeful that their history and culture will be respected by our education systems so that Indian students in any K-12 school or college in Montana will see themselves reflected in textbooks. We are optimistic that non-Indian students will recognize diverse cultural heritages and know how Indians contribute to modern Montana. We are confident that all students will learn about the impact of Lewis and Clark on our state’s land and future; that Indian leaders will be respected when U.S. leaders are discussed; that treaties made with Indian nations will be recognized as being as valid as those made with foreign countries; that Native contributions to science, astronomy, and medicine will be included in science curricula; that Native music will be included in school concerts; that Native languages will be taught; and that all teachers, whether Indian or non-Indian, will be knowledgeable about American Indians.

This inclusion in the classroom validates the cultural integrity of Indian people. It assures Indian students that they belong and that their school system respects all facets of their learning. It will, I hope, also improve the future of Indian students, because all students in Montana will gain a true and accurate understanding of American Indian history and contemporary issues.

In 20 to 25 years, perhaps a new group of Montana legislators will come together and debate all sorts of issues with mutual respect. Perhaps they, too, will make knowledgeable decisions on behalf of all Montana citizens.

We have traveled far and wide across Montana to see IEFA become a reality in classrooms. Though it has been a difficult journey, we have endured the bumps and breakdowns for the most valuable reason — to grant our children a better, more promising life than our own.

CAROL JUNEAU (Mandan/Hidatsa) is the state representative for Montana’s House District 85.
Indian Education for All: THROUGH OUR OWN EYES

The Gift of IEFA

BY SHIRLEY INGRAM

I

HAVE taught elementary and middle school at Rocky Boy’s Reservation in north-central Montana for more than 20 years. And for all of those years, I’ve driven the 30 miles that separate my community from my students’ community. But my community and theirs are separated by more than miles. They are separated by generations of misunderstandings, deep mistrust, and harsh stereotypes. I’m excited about Indian Education for All because of the promise it has for the people of these two communities to gain new understandings of one another. I’m anxious for my neighbors to learn what my years of teaching have taught me about the strength and richness of the Chippewa-Cree, their culture, and their resiliency. And I’m hopeful that such awareness will help us to close the gap that separates our communities.

As hopeful as I am for all of Montana’s children, I’m even more excited about the impact I think IEFA will have on my Chippewa-Cree students. My students face serious challenges. Test scores tend to be low, and dropout rates are high. But I know my kids, and I know they are capable, so for years I have asked myself why they score lower and leave school earlier than their non-Native counterparts. I never found a satisfying answer to that question until I began to focus my instruction on meeting the requirements of the IEFA Act.

For most of my years at Rocky Boy, I taught in a conventional manner, using the same materials and textbooks that are used in schools throughout Montana and across the nation. Two years ago, though, things began to change when another teacher asked me to try out some reading, writing, and social studies materials she had developed to teach Montana standards using culturally based content. I admit I was surprised by the results. Right away I noticed that my students wanted to do work that they had previously found boring. I also realized that, when we used

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these materials, there were virtually no disruptions or discipline problems. And I was surprised to see that, when I used culturally based content to teach the same skills I had taught before, my students did much better on the unit tests. I was sold on IEFA.

As I learned more about IEFA and began to use the Essential Understandings (page 189) to guide my instruction, I became more aware of the absence of my students' voices and stories from almost every corner of my classroom. I knew I had to do better. My first step seemed like a small one, but in the eyes of my students and their families it was huge. I assessed my classroom environment, and as I looked around the room I saw a classroom full of generic posters, maps, and inspirational sayings. I began to ask myself what in the room reflected my students and their community and realized that my classroom could be located in almost any school in America. There was nothing that celebrated this place and these people. We began to fill our walls with student-made posters, photographs of past tribal leaders, photographs of the community, maps of the reservation, and words of wisdom from Native leaders. As we did, I noticed a change in how the children responded. I was pleased, and somewhat surprised, when community elders and family members began to thank me.

I also began to look at textbooks differently. For example, as I prepared to teach Montana history for the first time, I was surprised to find that there was almost nothing in the book that my students could relate to. Worse yet, it was almost as though Native people had no history in the state or in the nation. That's when I knew that I had to take more control over the materials I used in my classroom. IEFA and the Essential Understandings have given me direction in these efforts.

Now, more than ever before, I'm focused on teaching standards, but teaching them in ways that reap the highest rewards for my students. To me, that means making them relevant to my students' daily lives and making sure that my students see themselves and their people in their classroom — and in America's history, its present, and its future.

I know that there is a lot of research that says Indian kids learn more when their instruction is based in their culture. But I don't trust research. What I trust is what I've seen with my own eyes. My Chippewa-Cree students do better when they see themselves in the content and materials I use. They do better when the classroom reflects them and their cultures and communities. I believe that graduation rates and test scores will improve when we begin to give Indian kids more and more reason to come to school every day. I think that is the gift Indian Education for All will give to my students.