

Fort Belknap Indian Community



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Fort Belknap Indian Community
Tribal Seal
Fort Belknap Indian Community
Elected to administer the affairs of the community and
to represent the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre
tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation.

A MESSAGE TO THE FORT BELKNAP COMMUNITY

August 19, 2026

Dear Fort Belknap Community Members:

The Fort Belknap Indian Community Tribal Council is reviewing Article III of the Fort Belknap Constitution, which establishes the requirements for Membership in the Fort Belknap Indian Community. Questions and concerns have been raised regarding how the current enrollment requirements may affect Fort Belknap families and future generations. In particular, the current Constitution generally counts only Assiniboine and Gros Ventre blood when determining whether a descendant satisfies the constitutional one-eighth (1/8) Indian blood requirement.

The Tribal Council has decided that before determining whether any Constitutional Amendment should move forward, it is important to hear directly from the Fort Belknap membership. **No constitutional amendment has been approved.**

The purposes of the Community Meetings are to: explain how FBIC Constitution Article III currently works; present two possible options for discussion; answer questions; hear concerns and recommendations from tribal members; identify other options the Community believes should be considered; and provide the Tribal Council with meaningful community input before any final decision is made.

The two options contained in this packet are discussion options only. The Council may ultimately decide to advance one of the options, revise an option, consider another approach, conduct additional study, or make no change to Article III.

We encourage every member to review this packet, participate in a community meeting, ask questions, and provide comments.

Respectfully,

Randall Werk, FBIC President

cc: FBIC Tribal Council

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COMMUNITY PACKET

1. Letter from the Tribal Council explaining the purpose of the meetings.
2. Current Article III of the Fort Belknap Constitution.
3. How Membership & Enrollment Works Today.
4. Explanation of Option 1.
5. Explanation of Option 2.
6. Side-by-side comparison of Current Law, Option 1, and Option 2.
7. Explanation of the constitutional amendment process under Article IX.
8. Community outreach and amendment timeline.
9. Frequently Asked Questions.
10. Community Comment Form.

AGENDA

Community Meeting Agenda

1. Opening Prayer
2. Welcome and Introductions
3. Purpose of the Meeting/Presentation of Packet Information
4. Community Input
5. Closing

HOW MEMBERSHIP & ENROLLMENT WORKS TODAY

Article III of the Fort Belknap Constitution establishes the requirements for membership in the Fort Belknap Indian Community.

There are different provisions within Article III addressing membership.

Original Members – Section 1

Article III, Section 1 recognizes as members every living person whose name appeared on the Allotment Roll of the Fort Belknap Reservation prepared and approved pursuant to the Act of March 3, 1921.

Automatic Enrollment of Descendants – Section 2

Section 2 provides that a qualifying descendant is automatically entitled to membership if the person meets the constitutional requirements.

The current Constitution requires the person to:

- 1) possess at least one-eighth (1/8) Indian blood; and
- 2) be born to a member or descendant of a member whose name was or is on the Fort Belknap Allotment Roll prepared pursuant to the Act of March 3, 1921.

What Does “Indian Blood” Currently Mean?

Article III, Section 5 currently provides:

“Wherever the term ‘Indian blood’ is used in this Article it shall be determined to mean the blood of either or both the Assiniboine or the Gros Ventre Tribe of the Fort Belknap Reservation.”

Therefore, under the current Constitution, blood from another federally recognized Indian Tribe does not count toward the one-eighth (1/8) Indian blood requirement.

ENROLLMENT BY ADOPTION

Article III also provides a separate pathway to membership called adoption.

“Adoption” in this context does not mean the legal adoption of a child. It is a process through which an otherwise qualified person may be admitted as a member of the Fort Belknap Indian Community by a vote of the Community.

Article III, Section 3 requires an applicant for adoption to:

- * possess at least one-eighth (1/8) Indian blood;
- * be a descendant of a Fort Belknap member and/or allottee;
- * have resided on the Fort Belknap Reservation for at least three consecutive years; and
- * not have received membership in another Indian Tribe.

If the person qualifies, the Enrollment Ordinance provides that the applicant is listed and voted upon individually at either a general election or a duly called special election.

The applicant must receive a majority of the votes cast to become a member.

Does adoption make someone 4/4 or “full blood”?

No provision in the current Constitution or 2007 Enrollment Ordinance states that a person admitted through adoption becomes 4/4, 100%, or “full blood.”

Adoption provides a pathway to membership. The governing documents reviewed do not provide that adoption changes the person’s blood quantum.

WHY IS THE TRIBAL COUNCIL REVIEWING ARTICLE III?

Fort Belknap families have changed over generations. Many families include parents, children, and grandchildren with ancestry from other federally recognized Indian Tribes.

Under the current Constitution, however, only Assiniboiné and Gros Ventre blood of the Fort Belknap Reservation is counted as “Indian blood” for purposes of Article III.

As generations continue, some descendants of Fort Belknap families may not satisfy the existing one-eighth requirement even though they remain descendants of Fort Belknap members.

The Council is therefore asking the Community to consider:

How should Fort Belknap preserve tribal citizenship for future generations while protecting the identity, history, and sovereignty of the Fort Belknap Indian Community?

Two possible approaches are currently being discussed.

OPTION 1: COUNT INDIAN BLOOD FROM ANY FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED INDIAN TRIBE

What is the idea?

Option 1 would maintain the existing one-eighth (1/8) Indian blood requirement.

The change would be to what Indian blood may be counted toward that requirement.

Proposed Constitutional Language:

Article III, Section 5 could be amended to provide:

“Wherever the term ‘Indian blood’ is used in this Article it shall be determined to mean the blood of either or both the Assiniboiné or the Gros Ventre Tribe of the Fort Belknap Reservation and shall include Indian blood derived from any other federally recognized Indian tribe.”

What would stay the same?

The constitutional 1/8 minimum blood requirement would remain.

The existing Fort Belknap ancestry requirement under Section 2 would remain.

What would change?

Indian blood from another federally recognized Indian Tribe could be counted toward satisfying the 1/8 requirement.

Example: A Fort Belknap descendant possesses: 1/16 Assiniboiné or Gros Ventre blood + 1/16 blood from another federally recognized Indian Tribe. Together, those amounts equal 1/8 Indian blood.

Under the current Section 5 definition, the other federally recognized Tribe’s blood does not count toward the 1/8 requirement.

Under Option 1, it would.

Important Question for the Community

Should Indian blood from other federally recognized Indian Tribes count toward Fort Belknap’s existing one-eighth enrollment requirement?

OPTION 2: TREAT AN ENROLLED FORT BELKNAP MEMBER AS 100% INDIAN BLOOD FOR ENROLLMENT PURPOSES

Option 2 takes a different approach.

Rather than expanding what tribal blood may be counted, this proposal would change how the Indian blood of an enrolled Fort Belknap member is treated for purposes of determining the enrollment eligibility of descendants.

Proposed Constitutional Language

"For purposes of determining eligibility for enrollment under this Article, each person enrolled as a member of the Fort Belknap Indian Community shall be deemed to possess one hundred percent (100%) Indian blood, and the Indian blood of that member shall be transmitted to his or her descendants for enrollment purposes in accordance with this Constitution."

What would this mean?

For purposes of determining future enrollment eligibility, an enrolled Fort Belknap member would be treated as possessing 100% Indian blood.

That enrollment status would then be used when determining the eligibility of the member's descendants.

Would this change someone's actual ancestry?

No.

The proposal would not change anyone's genealogy, ancestry, family history, or cultural identity.

The 100% designation would be a constitutional rule for enrollment purposes.

Is this what happens today when someone is adopted into membership?

No.

Nothing identified in the current Constitution or 2007 Enrollment Ordinance provides that a person admitted through adoption becomes 4/4, 100%, or "full blood."

Option 2 would therefore establish a new constitutional rule rather than simply continue the existing adoption process.

Important Question for the Community

Should enrollment as a Fort Belknap member determine the Indian blood transmitted to that Member's descendants for future enrollment purposes?

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

Question

Does Article III use blood quantum?

<u>Current Constitution</u>	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>
Yes	Yes	Yes, but calculation would change

Question

Is there a 1/8 requirement?

<u>Current Constitution</u>	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>
Yes	Yes	The existing requirement remains unless separately amended

Question

Does Assiniboine/Gros Ventre blood count?

<u>Current Constitution</u>	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>
Yes	Yes	Yes

Question

Does blood from another federally recognized Tribe count toward 1/8?

<u>Current Constitution</u>	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>
No	Yes	Not the central approach

Is an enrolled FBIC member deemed 100% for enrollment purposes?

<u>Current Constitution</u>	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>
No	No	Yes

Question

Does adoption automatically make someone 4/4?

<u>Current Constitution</u>	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>
No provision says so	No	Option 2 would expressly establish 100% treatment for enrolled members

Question

Does the proposal change actual ancestry?

<u>Current Constitution</u>	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>
No	No	No

Question

Has Council finally approved this option?

<u>Current Constitution</u>	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>
Current law	No	No

The Basic Difference:

Option 1 changes what Indian blood may be counted.

Option 2 changes how an enrolled Fort Belknap member's Indian blood is treated for future enrollment purposes.

THESE ARE NOT THE ONLY POSSIBLE OPTIONS

The Community is not limited to choosing between Option 1 and Option 2.

The Council wants to hear whether Members believe:

- 1) the current Constitution should remain unchanged;
- 2) Option 1 should be considered;
- 3) Option 2 should be considered;
- 4) either option should be revised;
- 5) parts of the two approaches should be combined; or
- 6) another approach should be developed.

The purpose of community outreach is to help shape the Council's next steps.

HOW IS THE CONSTITUTION AMENDED?

The Community Meetings themselves do not amend the Constitution.

FBIC Constitution Article IX establishes the formal process for amending the Fort Belknap Constitution and Bylaws.

Under the current Article IX, a constitutional amendment requires:

1. a proposed constitutional amendment;
2. an election called for that purpose by the Secretary of the Interior;
3. participation by at least 30% of those entitled to vote;
4. approval by a majority of qualified voters who vote in the election; and
5. approval by the Secretary of the Interior before the amendment becomes effective.

Where are we now?

The Community is at the outreach and discussion stage.

The process currently contemplated is:

Community Education & Input

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Council Reviews Community Comments

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Council Determines Whether Any Proposal Should Move Forward

↓

Final Constitutional Language Developed, If Directed

↓

Formal Article IX Amendment Process

↓

Vote of the Fort Belknap Membership

No final constitutional amendment has been approved for submission to the voters.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH TIMELINE

August 2026

- * Tribal Council review and development of community materials.
- * Island Mountain Community Meeting – August 19, 2026.

September 2026

Additional community meetings anticipated for Hays, Lodge Pole, Agency, Dodson, and Off-Reservation members through a virtual meeting.

Following the Community Meetings:

Community members will have an opportunity to submit additional written comments.

Comments from all meetings will be compiled and provided to the Tribal Council.

Council Follow-Up:

Council will review the comments, questions, concerns, and recommendations received from the membership.

Council may then decide to:

- * make no constitutional change;
- * conduct additional study or outreach;
- * revise an option;
- * develop another option; or
- * prepare final constitutional language for consideration under Article IX.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Has the Tribal Council already decided to amend Article III?

No. Council has decided to conduct community outreach. Neither Option 1 nor Option 2 has been finally approved.

Is Council reviewing the entire Constitution?

No. The current project is focused on Article III – Membership.

Is Council eliminating the 1/8 requirement?

No decision has been made to eliminate the 1/8 requirement. Option 1 specifically retains it. Option 2 proposes a different method of determining the Indian blood transmitted by enrolled members for enrollment purposes.

Does Option 1 allow anyone with 1/8 Indian blood to enroll?

No. Option 1 would change the definition of Indian blood. It would not eliminate the other constitutional requirements for membership.

Does Option 1 require some Fort Belknap ancestry?

Yes. The existing ancestry requirement in Article III, Section 2 would remain unless separately amended.

Does Option 2 mean everyone becomes genetically 100% Indian?

No. It would establish a legal rule for Fort Belknap enrollment purposes only. It would not change anyone's ancestry or genealogy.

Can the Community already adopt people into membership?

Yes. Article III, Section 3 provides an enrollment-by-adoption process for persons who satisfy its eligibility requirements.

Can the Community simply vote to adopt everyone at once?

Under the current Enrollment Ordinance, qualified applicants for adoption are required to be listed and voted upon individually.

Does a person become 4/4 or full blood when adopted?

Nothing identified in the current Constitution or 2007 Enrollment Ordinance states that adoption changes an individual's blood quantum to 4/4, 100%, or full blood.

Is an adoption vote the same as a constitutional amendment election?

No. They are separate processes. Adoption concerns an individual applicant for membership. Article IX governs amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws.

Are Option 1 and Option 2 the only choices?

No. Members are encouraged to suggest other approaches.

Will currently enrolled members lose their membership under either proposal?

Neither proposal presently under discussion is intended to disenroll existing members.

Who ultimately decides whether the Constitution changes?

The Tribal Council determines whether to advance proposed constitutional language. If an amendment proceeds under Article IX, the qualified voters of the Fort Belknap Indian Community vote on the proposed amendment through the constitutional election process.

What happens to my comments?

Comments from the community meetings and written comment period will be compiled and provided to the Tribal Council before Council determines whether any proposal should move forward.

QUESTIONS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

As you consider the future of Article III, the Tribal Council would like your thoughts on the following:

1. What values should guide Fort Belknap's membership laws?
2. What concerns do you have about the current enrollment requirements?
3. What should never change about Fort Belknap membership?
4. How should Fort Belknap address the enrollment of future generations?
5. What are the strengths or concerns you see with Option 1?
6. What are the strengths or concerns you see with Option 2?
7. Is there another approach the Tribal Council should consider?
8. What additional information would you like before any constitutional amendment is presented for a vote?

COMMUNITY COMMENT FORM

FORT BELKNAP INDIAN COMMUNITY ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP REVIEW

Meeting/Community: _____

Date: _____

Name (Optional): _____

Are you an enrolled Fort Belknap member?
Yes / No / Prefer not to answer

1. What values should guide Fort Belknap's membership laws?
2. What concerns, if any, do you have about the current enrollment requirements?
3. What are your thoughts or concerns regarding Option 1 – counting Indian blood from other federally recognized Indian Tribes?
4. What are your thoughts or concerns regarding Option 2 – treating enrolled Fort Belknap members as 100% Indian blood for enrollment purposes?
5. Is there another approach you believe the Tribal Council should consider?
6. What should not change about Fort Belknap membership?
7. What additional information would you like the Council to consider?

Additional Comments:

Thank you for participating in the Fort Belknap Article III community review.

Your comments will be included with the community input presented to the Tribal Council before Council determines whether any proposed constitutional amendment should move forward.