

Plows on the Hunting Grounds

The Indian Allotment Act of 1887

Objective

Students will read about the Indian Allotment Act of 1887, which divided tribal land among individuals. Students will discuss the reading and answer comprehension questions. Students will conduct short research projects related to the reading.

Procedure

1. Write the words “communal” and “private” on the chalkboard.
 - Ask students to use prior knowledge to give definitions.
 - Explain that your classroom can serve as an example of communally-held property because every student in the class shares the resources. Lead a discussion based on the following questions:
 - What resources do you all share in the classroom (books, classroom space, chalkboard, the teacher)?
 - What resources in the classroom are private resources?
 - What are other examples of communally-held property (parks, schools, libraries, national forests).
2. Hand out the Reading Page, “Indian Allotment Act,” included with this lesson.
 - Students will read the information about the Indian Allotment Act and outline the passage.
 - Discuss unfamiliar words.
 - Lead a class discussion about the passage, based on the following questions:
 - What was the problem the government was trying to solve with the Indian Allotment Act?
 - How did supporters of the Act think Indians would respond?
 - How did Indians respond? Why?
 - Divide the class into groups for and against allotment of native lands. Students will research to find arguments for their assigned positions and write opinion papers. Students will present their arguments in a class debate.
3. Write the word “assimilate” on the chalkboard and discuss its meaning in relation to Oklahoma’s tribes.
 - Ask: Why was the Indian Allotment Act helpful for some tribes but not for others? (Some tribes were traditionally agricultural; others were not. Most tribes traditionally held land in common and objected to individual ownership. Much tribal land was lost through sales to non-Indians.)
4. Students will select one of the Oklahoma tribes on the list included with this lesson and research the tribe’s constitution. Compare with the Oklahoma constitution.
5. Students will use online or library resources to research some Native American farming methods as compared with those of European homesteaders.

Oklahoma Academic Standards

HIGH SCHOOL

Oklahoma History: 1.1,4;
2.7; 3.1; 4.1
Speaking and Listening:
R.1,2,3; W.1,2. Critical
Reading and Writing:
R.1,2,5; W.4,5.
Vocabulary: 1,3,5.
Research: R.1,2,3;
W.1,2,3,4

Name _____

The Indian Allotment Act

Oklahoma's Native American population is the largest in the United States. Up to 67 different tribes are represented here. At least three tribes, the Caddo, Wichita, and Osage, were growing corn, beans and squash along Oklahoma's river bottoms as many as 400 years ago. The people who populated the area around the ancient Spiro Mounds were also farmers. Other groups of people started migrating here on horseback about 200 years later to hunt bison. Many of the tribes were moved here forcibly from their ancestral homes east of the Mississippi River to make room for European settlers who were moving west.

After the Civil War, returning soldiers were looking for land to farm. By the end of the war, most of the land in the east had been settled, and people began looking for land in areas the government had promised to the Indians. Many felt the Indians had more land than they needed. In addition, some of the tribes had taken the side of the Confederacy during the war, so the government punished them by taking away some of their land. Non-Indian settlers put pressure on the government to open some of that land for non-Indians.

The 1880s in American history saw the end of the American frontier. By then, all the best farm land had already been taken by homesteaders. Prospective settlers, left with no land, looked around and saw what looked to them like unused land in Indian Territory. What they were seeing had for many years been hunting grounds for several tribes. Tribes from all over the continent had been migrating to this area for many years to hunt the bison herds. These tribes had developed traditions around the bison hunt. Their homes (tipis) were made from bison hides. The food they were accustomed to eating came from the bison.

Most of the tribes had no idea what it meant to own land. They believed the land belonged to everyone. Most had long histories of moving from place to place, all over the continent. Some had permanent homes along river bottoms where they grew crops when they weren't hunting bison. Others had homes they could easily pack up and move as they followed the herds.

By the 1880s, there were very few bison left to hunt. The US government decided it would be best for the Indians to be assimilated into the culture that was steadily surrounding them. They hoped the Indians would learn to farm by watching their new neighbors, the settlers, who were allowed to move in after the land had been divided among tribal members.

In 1887, Senator Henry Laurens Dawes introduced the Indian Allotment Act, or Dawes Act, in Congress. This law divided tribal lands into allotments of 40-160 acres for individual tribal members. All land remaining after the allotment would be opened to homesteaders.

Some of the people supporting this Act felt it would encourage the Indians to become farmers. Some of the tribes had been farming for several generations and didn't need encouragement. However, they had their own ways of farming communally. Individual land ownership was not part of that custom, and they objected to dividing the land in that way.

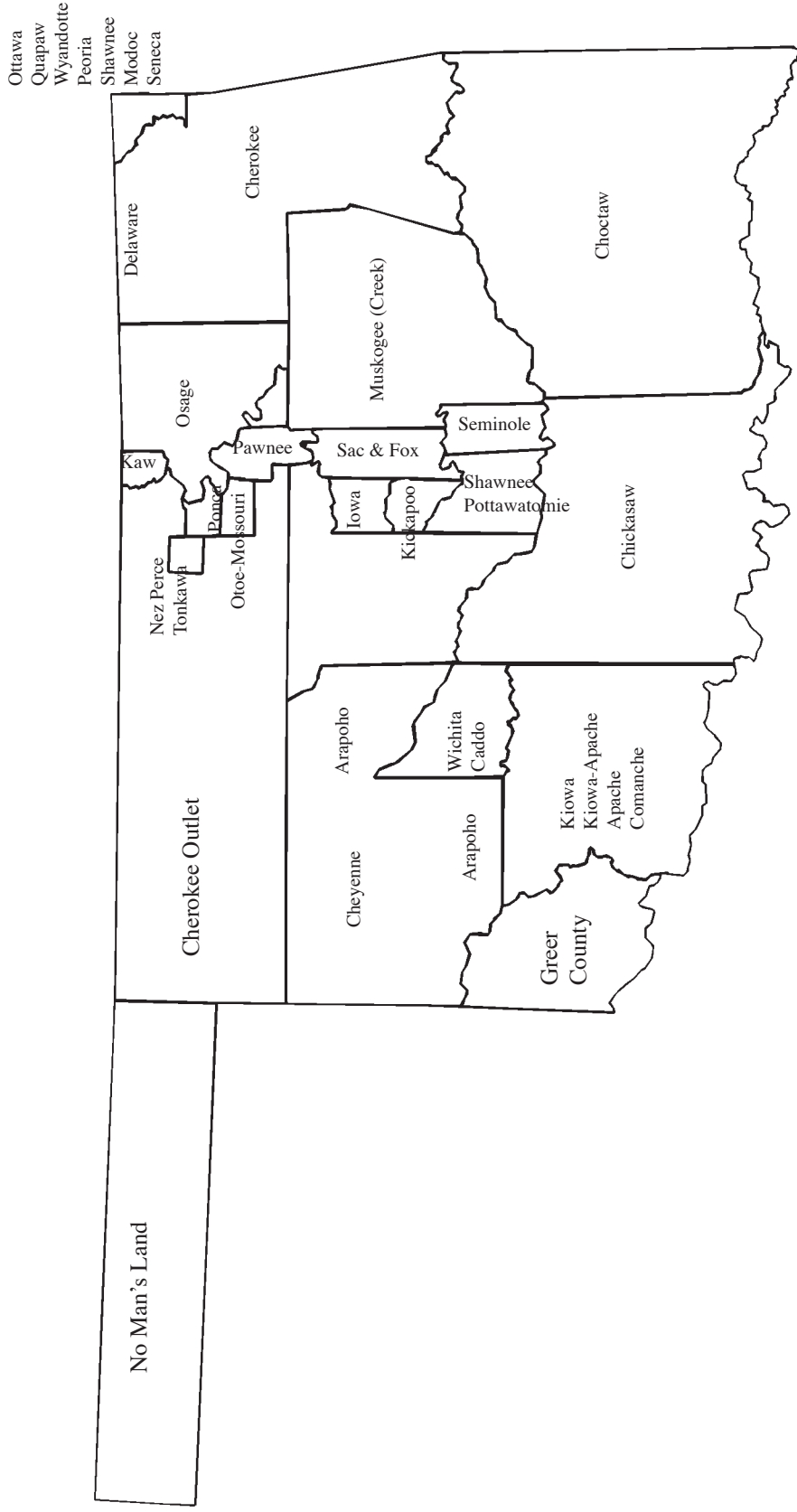
Other tribes came from hunting traditions. They lived by moving from place to place, following the bison herds. They did not know how to farm and saw no reason to learn. To make things worse, they soon discovered the land where the bison had flourished was not very good farmland. The government tried to solve this problem by providing tribal members with cattle and encouraging them to be ranchers. Some were successful at this and became prosperous ranchers. Others lost their land by selling it to non-Indians.

Allotment of the Indian lands in Indian Territory began on April 1, 1899, and was not completed until 1910. In the next few years, many Indians sold their allotments to non-Indians. Within 50 years after the passage of the Dawes Act, the amount of land owned by Indians dropped from about 155 million acres to about 47 million acres. In 1934, Congress passed another Act which gave land back to the tribes if it had not been sold or allotted. After that, any Indian wanting to sell his or her land had to sell it back to the tribe.

Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom is a program of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry and the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Name _____

Indian Lands, Indian Territory, 1889



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Oklahoma's Indian Tribes

Absentee Shawnee Tribe

2025 S. Gordon Cooper Dr.
Shawnee, OK 74801
<http://www.astribe.com/>

Apache Tribe of Oklahoma

PO Box 1330
Anadarko, OK 73005
<http://www.apachetribe.org/>

Caddo Nation

PO Box 487
Binger, OK 73009
<http://caddonation-nsn.gov/>

Cherokee Nation

PO Box 948
Tahlequah, OK 74465
<http://www.cherokee.org/>

Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes

PO Box 38
Concho, OK 73022
<http://www.c-a-tribes.org/>

Chickasaw Nation

1201 W. 9th St.
Sulphur, OK 73086
<https://www.chickasaw.net/>

Choctaw Nation

PO Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702
<http://www.choctawnation.com/>

Citizen Potawatomie Nation

1601 S. Gordon Cooper Cr.
Shawnee, OK 74801
<http://www.potawatomi.org/>

Comanche Nation of Oklahoma

584 NW Bingo Rd.
Lawton, OK 73507
<http://www.comanchenation.com/>

Delaware (Lenape) Tribe of Indians

170 N. Barbara
Bartlesville, OK 740036
<http://delawaretribe.org/>

Delaware Nation

PO Box 825
Anadarko, OK 73005
<http://www.delawarenation.com/>

Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma

PO Box 350
Seneca, MO 64865
<http://www.estoo-nsn.gov/>

Fort Sill Apache

43187 US Hwy 281
Apache, OK 73006
<http://www.fortsillapache-nsn.gov/>

Iowa Tribe

335588 E. 750 Rd.
Perkins, OK 74059
<http://www.iowanation.org/>

Kaw Nation

698 Grandview Dr.
Kaw City, OK 74641
<http://kawnation.com/>

Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma

105673 Oklahoma 102
McCloud, OK 74851
<http://www.kickapootribeofoklahoma.com/>

Kiowa Tribe

PO Box 369
Carnegie, OK 73015
<http://www.kiowatribe.org/>

Miami Nation

202 Eight Tribes Trail
Miami, OK 74354
<http://www.miamination.com/>

Modoc Tribe

418 G Street SE
Miami, OK 74354
<http://modoctribe.net/>

Muscogee (Creek) Nation

PO Box 579
Okmulgee, OK 74447
<http://www.muscogeenation-nsn.gov/index.html>

Osage Nation

813 Grandview
Pawhuska, OK 74056
<http://osagenation.co/>

Ottawa Tribe

PO Box 110
Miami, OK 74354
<http://www.ottawatribes.org/>

Otoe-Missouria Tribe

8151 Hwy 177
Red Rock, OK 74651
<http://www.omtribe.org/>

Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma

861 Little D Street
Pawnee, OK 74058
<http://www.pawneenation.org/>

Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma

118 S. Eight Tribes Trail
Miami, OK 74355
<http://www.peoriatribe.com/>

Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma

20 White Eagle Dr.
Ponca City, OK 74601
<http://www.ponca.com/>

Quapaw Tribe of OK

5681 South 630 Rd
Quapaw, OK 74363
<http://www.quapawtribe.com/>

Sac and Fox Nation

920883 S. Hwy 99 Bldg A
Stroud, OK 74079
<http://www.sacandfoxnation-nsn.gov/>

Seminole Nation of Oklahoma

PO Box 1498
Wewoka, OK 74884
<http://www.seminolenation.com/>

Seneca-Cayuga Tribes

24701 S. 655 Rd.
Grove, OK 74344
<http://www.sctribe.com/>

Shawnee Tribe

29 S Hwy 69A
Miami, OK 74355
<http://www.shawnee-tribe.com/>

Tonkawa Tribe

10951 Allen Dr.
Tonkawa, OK 74653
<http://www.tonkawatribe.com/>

United Keetoowah Band of Cherokees

PO Box 746
Tahlequah, OK 74465
<http://www.keetoowahcherokee.org/>

Wichita and Affiliated Tribes

PO Box 729
Anadarko, OK 73005
<http://www.wichitatribes.com/>

Wyandotte Nation

64700 E. Highway 60
Wyandotte, OK 74370
<http://www.wyandotte-nation.org/>

Euchee (Yuchi) Tribe

804 E. Taft Ste H
Sapulpa, OK 74066
<http://www.euchee-tribe.com/>