Two Political Communities

Trace how U.S. citizenship changed while tribal citizenship continued.

9-12.GOV.20 "Explain the history and significance of dual citizenship regarding American Indians."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show how U.S. citizenship changed, circle two details that show tribal and U.S. citizenship remain distinct, and write 1 beside a voting barrier that continued after 1924.

Citizenship in Two Governments

1. Imagine a citizen of the Cherokee Nation voting for a tribal leader, then casting a ballot in a U.S. election. These are not votes in the same government. A tribal nation governs its own affairs under its own laws, while the United States governs through federal and state institutions. Tribal nations existed before the United States, and their political relationships with the federal government developed through treaties, laws, and court decisions. Today, a person can be both a citizen of a tribal nation and a citizen of the United States. Tribal citizenship is determined by the nation, not by a person's ancestry alone.

2. For much of U.S. history, federal law did not recognize every American Indian born in the United States as a U.S. citizen. Some gained citizenship through treaties or specific laws, but others remained excluded. In 1884, the Supreme Court ruled in Elk v. Wilkins that leaving a tribe and living among non-Native people did not, by itself, make a Native man a U.S. citizen under the Fourteenth Amendment. Congress changed this uneven situation with the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924. It granted U.S. citizenship to all American Indians born within U.S. territorial limits who were not already citizens, without requiring them to give up tribal citizenship.

3. The 1924 law did not erase tribal governments or settle every question about equal rights. Some states still used state rules to prevent American Indian citizens from voting in state and federal elections. Court rulings and later changes to election law challenged these barriers, but obstacles to voting did not disappear at once. Dual citizenship matters because it recognizes a person's place in two political communities, not two racial categories. A tribal citizen may take part in tribal government under tribal law and, as a U.S. citizen, claim constitutional protections and vote in U.S. elections when eligible. Each government has distinct powers and responsibilities.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why was the 1924 law a major change in U.S. citizenship even though some American Indians were already U.S. citizens?

2. How did the 1924 law change the situation illustrated by the 1884 ruling in Elk v. Wilkins?

3. Why did the 1924 law not immediately secure voting access for every American Indian citizen?

4. Why does dual citizenship recognize two political communities rather than replace tribal government?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 65 to 85 word museum label for a display titled “Two Political Communities.” Explain one change over time in U.S. citizenship, one limit of the 1924 law, and why dual citizenship does not erase tribal self-government; include an example of how a citizen could participate in each government.

Two Political Communities

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show how U.S. citizenship changed, circle two details that show tribal and U.S. citizenship remain distinct, and write 1 beside a voting barrier that continued after 1924. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why was the 1924 law a major change in U.S. citizenship even though some American Indians were already U.S. citizens?	**Earlier treaties or laws had granted citizenship to some American Indians, but others remained excluded. The 1924 law granted citizenship to those born within U.S. territorial limits who were not already citizens.**
2	How did the 1924 law change the situation illustrated by the 1884 ruling in Elk v. Wilkins?	**The 1884 ruling said that leaving a tribe and living among non-Native people did not, by itself, give a Native man U.S. citizenship. The 1924 law granted U.S. citizenship to American Indians born within U.S. territorial limits who did not already have it.**
3	Why did the 1924 law not immediately secure voting access for every American Indian citizen?	**Some states continued to use state rules to prevent American Indian citizens from voting in state and federal elections.**
4	Why does dual citizenship recognize two political communities rather than replace tribal government?	**Tribal nations determine their own citizenship and govern under their own laws. Their citizens can also hold U.S. citizenship and participate in U.S. government when eligible.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A citizen of the Cherokee Nation can help choose tribal leaders and, when eligible, vote in U.S. elections. Those actions involve two governments with different powers. Before 1924, some American Indians already had U.S. citizenship, but many did not. The Indian Citizenship Act extended citizenship to those born within U.S. territorial limits who were not yet citizens. It did not immediately end state barriers to voting. Nor did it replace tribal citizenship, which each tribal nation determines under its own laws.

Accept other accurate examples of participation in tribal and U.S. government. Responses should distinguish the grant of U.S. citizenship from tribal citizenship and acknowledge that voting barriers continued after 1924.