Defending Tribal Lands

How Tribal leaders responded to settlement pressure in Indian Territory

OKH.C.3.3.C "Examine Tribal responses to increased emigration, featured by calls for unified action through intertribal councils, lobbying efforts, and court challenges."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one pressure on Tribal land or political control in each paragraph, then circle a Tribal response to it. Number the circled responses 1, 2, and 3 so you can compare their methods.

Three Routes to a Voice

(1) In the late 1800s, more non-Native settlers moved toward Indian Territory, and federal officials pressed Tribes to give up land held in common. Tribal leaders did not all agree on a single response, but some sought strength across national boundaries. At an 1870 council in Okmulgee, delegates from several Tribes discussed a shared government for Indian Territory. They drafted a constitution that would give Tribal representatives a voice in making laws. Congress did not establish that government. Still, the council showed how leaders could organize across Tribes to defend political control as settlement pressure grew.

(2) By 1905, settlers and federal lawmakers were pushing to combine Indian Territory with Oklahoma Territory in one state. Leaders of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek), and Seminole nations backed a different plan. Their Sequoyah Constitutional Convention proposed a separate state made from Indian Territory. Delegates wrote a constitution, submitted it to Congress, and urged lawmakers to approve it. Congress did not approve Sequoyah statehood. Instead, Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory entered the Union together as Oklahoma in 1907. The lobbying failed to win a separate state, but it put a Tribal-led alternative before national lawmakers.

(3) A court challenge offered another route. After Congress approved the opening of Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache reservation lands to non-Native settlement, Kiowa leader Lone Wolf sued. He argued that the government had not secured the consent required by the 1867 Medicine Lodge Treaty before changing control of the land. In 1903, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against him, holding that Congress could act even when its actions conflicted with treaty promises. The ruling did not protect the reservation from the opening, but the case brought the dispute over treaty rights before a national court. Councils, lobbying, and lawsuits pursued different kinds of power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the 1870 Okmulgee council respond to pressure on Tribal political control?

2. How was the Sequoyah Convention's response different from the Okmulgee council's response?

3. What federal action did Lone Wolf challenge, and what was the court's decision?

4. What problem connected all three responses, and what different sources of power did Tribal leaders seek to use?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise a Tribal coalition in 1905 facing a new federal bill that would open more Tribal land to settlers. In 80 to 110 words, propose two coordinated responses based on methods in the passage, and explain one obstacle each response might face.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.3.3.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one pressure on Tribal land or political control in each paragraph, then circle a Tribal response to it. Number the circled responses 1, 2, and 3 so you can compare their methods. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the 1870 Okmulgee council respond to pressure on Tribal political control?	**Delegates from several Tribes drafted a constitution for a shared government that would give Tribal representatives a voice in making laws.**
2	How was the Sequoyah Convention's response different from the Okmulgee council's response?	**Both proposed a constitution, but Sequoyah delegates lobbied Congress to make Indian Territory a separate state rather than seeking a shared territorial government.**
3	What federal action did Lone Wolf challenge, and what was the court's decision?	**He challenged the opening of Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache reservation lands without the consent he said the Medicine Lodge Treaty required. The Supreme Court ruled that Congress could act despite the treaty promise.**
4	What problem connected all three responses, and what different sources of power did Tribal leaders seek to use?	**All responded to threats to Tribal land or political control as settlement increased. Leaders sought power through intertribal organization, congressional approval, or a court ruling on treaty rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would ask leaders from the affected Tribes to meet in a council and agree on a shared statement opposing the bill. Speaking together could show lawmakers that the plan threatens more than one nation, though the leaders might disagree about what changes to demand. Next, the coalition could send delegates to Congress with the statement and ask lawmakers to reject the bill. The delegates could explain how opening the land would weaken Tribal control. This effort might fail if lawmakers favor settlement despite the coalition's objections. The council would shape a common position, and lobbying would carry it to the people voting on the bill.

Accept responses that connect each method to a specific pressure or goal, even if students describe the methods in different words. For Part 3, look for two coordinated methods and a plausible obstacle for each.