Whose Land, Whose Laws?

Tribal citizens' concerns as Oklahoma became a state

OKH.C.8.3.B "Describe concerns expressed by Tribal citizens during the transition to statehood, including the loss of land, self-government and legal jurisdiction."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline evidence about land, circle phrases about who makes decisions, and put a star beside evidence about who hears legal cases. Use your marks to trace three concerns Tribal citizens raised during the transition to statehood.

Questions at Statehood

1. In 1905, delegates from Indian Territory met to propose a state called Sequoyah. Many were citizens of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek), and Seminole Nations, often called the Five Tribes. Their proposal would give people in Indian Territory a stronger voice in shaping a new government. Congress did not approve Sequoyah. Instead, Indian Territory joined Oklahoma Territory to form Oklahoma in 1907. Tribal citizens did not all agree about the best path to statehood, but many worried that decisions made far away would weaken rights their nations had defended through treaties.

2. Federal allotment policies had already divided much of the Five Tribes' communally held land into individual parcels. Land that was not allotted could be sold, and some families faced fraud or pressure to sell their parcels. Statehood did not begin allotment, but it brought a new state government into a region where land rules were rapidly changing. Tribal citizens feared that more land would pass out of Native hands and that state taxes and laws could make it harder to keep what remained. For many families, land meant a home, a livelihood, and a link to their nation.

3. Congress limited the Five Tribes' governments before statehood. The 1898 Curtis Act abolished their tribal courts, and a 1906 law continued their governments under federal limits. As Oklahoma approached statehood, citizens asked who would make rules for their communities and hear legal disputes. Many feared that state officials would replace tribal leaders or that state courts would claim authority over matters involving Tribal citizens. These concerns involved self-government, the power to make community decisions, and legal jurisdiction, the authority to apply laws and hear cases. Tribal governments survived statehood, even as arguments over their powers continued.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did allotment and pressure to sell create a concern about land loss?

2. What concern about shaping a new government did the Sequoyah proposal address?

3. How could federal actions before statehood add to concerns about Tribal self-government?

4. What change in legal jurisdiction did some Tribal citizens fear as Oklahoma became a state?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a short statement a Tribal citizen might make at a 1907 public meeting. Connect concerns about land loss, self-government, and legal jurisdiction, then propose one action the new state should take.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.8.3.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline evidence about land, circle phrases about who makes decisions, and put a star beside evidence about who hears legal cases. Use your marks to trace three concerns Tribal citizens raised during the transition to statehood. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did allotment and pressure to sell create a concern about land loss?	**Allotment divided communally held land into individual parcels. Unallotted land could be sold, and fraud or pressure to sell could move more land out of Native hands.**
2	What concern about shaping a new government did the Sequoyah proposal address?	**It addressed the concern that people in Indian Territory would have too little voice in the government formed at statehood.**
3	How could federal actions before statehood add to concerns about Tribal self-government?	**Congress had limited the Five Tribes' governments and abolished their courts. Citizens feared state officials would further replace Tribal leaders in making decisions.**
4	What change in legal jurisdiction did some Tribal citizens fear as Oklahoma became a state?	**They feared state courts would claim authority over matters involving Tribal citizens, reducing Tribal control over legal decisions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our nations have already seen communally held land divided into individual parcels, and families have faced pressure to sell. We need fair rules that help us keep our homes. Congress ended our tribal courts, but our governments still exist. If state officials make every decision for us and state courts claim every case, we lose more than a place to live. We lose the power to protect our communities. I ask the new state to respect tribal governments and work with them when decisions affect our land and legal authority.

Accept responses that accurately connect all three concerns and propose a relevant action. Students should not claim that all Tribal citizens held the same views or that Tribal governments ended at statehood.