Land and Power

Federal policies in Indian Territory before statehood

USH.C.1.3.E "Explain how federal policies such as allotment and assimilation contributed to the restructuring of Tribal governments and land ownership in Indian Territory prior to Oklahoma statehood."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each federal policy, circle each change in land ownership, and number each change in Tribal governments' authority to trace how the policies reshaped Indian Territory.

Who Held the Land? Who Made the Rules?

(1) In the late 1800s, many families in Indian Territory lived on land held by their Tribal nations. The Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee (Creek), and Seminole nations governed much of their own territory. Tribal governments made decisions about land use, while individuals did not generally hold separate deeds to pieces of Tribal land. Federal officials wanted a different system: individual land titles and institutions modeled on those of the United States. The Dawes Commission, created in 1893, made enrollment lists and worked to divide Tribal land among eligible citizens. A name on a roll could determine who received an allotment.

(2) Allotment changed both property and political power. After agreements and federal legislation, eligible Tribal citizens received individual parcels instead of relying on a shared Tribal land base. Titles for many parcels carried federal restrictions on sale, but restrictions could expire or be lifted. Some owners then sold their land to non-Native buyers. As allotted parcels changed hands, Tribal nations lost more control over land within their former shared territories. The 1898 Curtis Act also abolished Tribal courts in Indian Territory and shifted many legal matters to federal courts. Together, new deeds and new court rules reduced Tribal governments' authority before Oklahoma became a state in 1907.

(3) Assimilation policies pushed for changes in daily life as well as government. At federally supported boarding schools, Native children were often separated from their families and punished for speaking their languages. Officials hoped students would adopt English and non-Native customs, weakening the ties that helped Tribal nations pass on laws and leadership traditions. Federal pressure to replace Tribal institutions did not erase these nations. The 1906 Five Tribes Act continued their governments under federal limits, even as Oklahoma statehood approached. Thus, policies changed who held land titles and who exercised legal power, while Tribal communities continued to resist, adapt, and govern.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Dawes Commission's work help change land ownership from the earlier Tribal system?

2. How could restrictions on allotment sales affect whether land passed to non-Native buyers?

3. How did the Curtis Act change Tribal governments' authority, and how did allotment add to that change?

4. How could boarding schools affect future Tribal leadership? What shows that Tribal governments continued despite federal pressure?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence statement from a Tribal council member to younger citizens in 1906. Explain how allotment and assimilation could affect the community's land and leadership, then propose one realistic way the community could preserve its authority or cultural knowledge.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.1.3.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each federal policy, circle each change in land ownership, and number each change in Tribal governments' authority to trace how the policies reshaped Indian Territory. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Dawes Commission's work help change land ownership from the earlier Tribal system?	**The commission made enrollment lists and worked to divide land held by Tribal nations into parcels for eligible individual citizens.**
2	How could restrictions on allotment sales affect whether land passed to non-Native buyers?	**Restrictions limited sales of many parcels, but some owners sold their land to non-Native buyers after restrictions expired or were lifted.**
3	How did the Curtis Act change Tribal governments' authority, and how did allotment add to that change?	**The Curtis Act abolished Tribal courts and shifted many legal matters to federal courts. Allotment divided the shared Tribal land base into individual parcels, reducing Tribal control over land.**
4	How could boarding schools affect future Tribal leadership? What shows that Tribal governments continued despite federal pressure?	**Separating children from their families and discouraging their languages could weaken the passing on of laws and leadership traditions. The 1906 Five Tribes Act continued Tribal governments under federal limits.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our council still meets, but federal rules limit what we can decide. Allotment has replaced much of our shared land base with individual parcels, and some parcels could be sold when restrictions end. Boarding schools press children to use English and leave our customs behind, which threatens the knowledge future leaders need. We can teach our language at home and preserve records of our council's decisions. Our government has not disappeared, and our young people can help carry it forward.

Accept historically plausible preservation actions, such as teaching a Tribal language or keeping council records. Responses should not claim that all allotted land was freely sold or that Tribal governments had disappeared by 1906.