Grades: 6th - 8th Grade
Lesson: 4
Unit: 2: American Indian land tenure history
Subject: History/Social Studies
Achievement Goal: Learn about and research a tribe’s land tenure history, focusing on the allotment and assimilation era in American Indian federal policy.
Time: Two class periods

Lesson Description:
Students learn about three eras of American Indian history and reconstruct the basic tribal land history of a regional tribe using Internet resources.

Teacher Background:
Vine Deloria and Clifford M. Lytle, two scholars of American Indian history, have described federal Indian policy as occurring in six periods: Discovery, Conquest, and Treaty-Making (1532-1828); Removal and Relocation (1828-1887); Allotment and Assimilation (1887-1928); Reorganization and Self-Government (1928-1945); Termination (1945-1961); and Self-Determination (1961-Present).

Lessons one and two in this unit explore the Discovery, Conquest, and Treaty-making period of federal Indian policy. This lesson will introduce students to the next three periods of American Indian history.

Knowledge of these periods of history is essential to a complete understanding of modern Indian land tenure issues. While it is common knowledge that tribes made treaties with the federal government and that these treaties were routinely broken in the western expansion of U.S. government, the period of and Allotment Assimilation is less known despite the fact that two-thirds of reservation lands were lost to non-Natives during this time.

While this lesson will introduce the defining characteristics of these eras of American Indian history, the best way for students to explore this era is to study their own tribe, or the land history of other tribes during these eras, as a case study. In doing so, they will be taught how to perform basic tribal land history research.

Standards:
This lesson aligns with Common Core standards RH1, RH2, RH4, RH7.

6th Grade
RH1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
RH2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
RH4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
RH7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Teacher Preparation Resources:
- There are three visuals that will be very useful to explain the three eras of land tenure history studied in this lesson. They are all found in Imre Sutton’s book Indian Land Tenure and attached in the Lesson Resources section for the educator’s convenience. These maps are “Indian Redistributions,” “Land Tenure Changes,” and “Samples of Reservation Tenure.” These should be made available for students to examine in class. For online versions:
  - Go to OU Law Center, Indian Land Titles. See bullet four, American Indian Territoriality.

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an Online Research Guide by Imre Sutton. Then, see preface page 4 for the Map, “Land Tenure Changes (hypothetical example).” Or see preface page 5 for the Map, “Samples of Reservation Tenure.”

- For teaching students about the allotment and assimilation era of federal Indian policy, the Indian Land Tenure Foundation website has a relatively clear and straightforward introduction to the history and affects of the allotment act on Indian reservations. Review this introduction. This page also summarizes the Indian Reorganization Act.
- The resources for the students’ case study research will, of course, depend on which tribes are studied. However, there are several online sources that will help the students reconstruct a tribal land tenure history of the tribe. You will want to review them yourself before the class period in order to make sure information pertinent to the selected tribe is available on the site and to help the students navigate the information there.
  - Kappler’s Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties. For this lesson, you will want to direct students to Volume II for treaty research.
  - The Library of Congress, Indian Cessions in the U.S.: 1784-1894. Direct the students to perform the search by tribe name.
  - The Indian Land Tenure Foundation, Tribe/Reservation Allotment Information.
  - The United States Geological Survey has online maps of Indian reservations of tribes currently recognized by the federal government.
- In speaking to your class about U.S. expansion into the west, you may find the Exploration and Settlement maps at the University of Texas online map library helpful.
- You will also want to review the series of “Indian Reservation” maps found at Ancestry.com for years 1840, 1875, 1900, and 1930 to see how vast reservations were either eliminated completely or whittled away to the present day sizes. These maps can be found in the “All Maps” drop-down box. These should be made available for students to examine in class. Other maps available through Ancestry.com, that may be helpful in this lesson, include the “Indian Battles” maps 1701-1800, 1801-1845, and 1846-1890.

**Student Activity:**

**PART 1**

1. Begin the lesson by discussing U.S. expansion into the western parts of the North America. Explain that in the late 1700s, treaties began to be used to draw boundaries between Indian country and U.S. territory. Treaties were also made to secure “rights of way” and land for forts and trading posts. Since France, England, and Spain were abandoning their colonizing efforts in the U.S., tribes could no longer make strategic alliances with those European states which weakened their position with respect to the growing military and economic power of the United States government. Beginning around 1828, the U.S. government began to adopt the policy of removing Indians to other lands to make way for non-Native settlement.
  - To illustrate the effects of this policy, show the students Sutton’s map, “Indian Redistributions”. Emphasize that this period of time in Indian history has been called the “Removal and Relocation” era, in which many tribes were forced to cede their lands in exchange for vastly smaller areas that were, in many cases, hundreds of miles away from their tribal territory.
If students ask about the resistance of tribes to this, you may want to show them the “Indian Battles” maps. You may also want to point out that federal Indian affairs were the responsibility of the U.S. War Department until 1849. See Felix Cohen’s *Handbook of Federal Indian Law*, page 10, for further reading.

2. Explain that, even if tribes ceded their lands for reservations, many reservations were diminished further in size. Show the students the “Indian Reservations” map series at Ancestry.com to illustrate this.

3. Transition to introducing the allotment and assimilation era of American Indian history by showing the students Imre Sutton’s “Land Tenure Changes” map found in the Lesson Resources section. Point out to the students that this is a hypothetical map. Review the changes in Indian land tenure by pointing out and distinguishing between aboriginal territory, ceded territory, and reservation boundaries. Point out the graphic representing land allotments on the reservation. Introduce the concept of allotment to the students.

4. Have the students access and read, in class, the introduction to the Indian Land Tenure Foundation’s allotment section. Ask them the following questions: What does allotment mean? How many acres were usually given to Indian individuals? Why did advocates of allotment believe the Dawes Act would help civilize Indians? How did land allotted to Indians often become owned by non-Natives? What are “surplus lands”? How and when did the policy of allotment end? Why is the Allotment Act considered a failure?

5. Divide the class into small groups and assign each group to read and report on one of the main effects of allotment (fractionation, checkerboarding, etc.) based on the Indian Land Tenure Foundation's website. You may have to help out the fractionation groups due to the complexity of the subject. After they have read their assigned pages, have the groups combine into larger groups in which each allotment effect will be described and explained by at least one student. Have the students present to each other in the small groups what they found out about the effects of allotment. They should not be reading directly from the website, but describing what they read and understand in their own words or using drawings.

6. After these discussions are complete, ask the students what they found interesting or confusing in a full-class discussion.

7. Remind students that allotment ended in 1934 with the passing of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA). This act began another era in Indian land tenure history that emphasized the reorganization of Indian governments and the power of Indian tribes to govern themselves. Briefly go over the sections of the IRA as summarized on the Indian Land Tenure Foundation
Allotment and Assimilation
Published on Lessons of Our Land (http://www.lessonsofourland.org)

PART 2

1. Write the three eras of federal Indian policy covered in Part One on the board: Removal and Relocation (1828-1887); Allotment and Assimilation (1887-1928); and Reorganization and Self-Government (1928-1945). Ask the students to list the defining characteristics of these eras on the board.

2. The students will be researching the tribal land tenure history of their tribe or of other tribes. They may be interested in using the resources mentioned in the Teacher Preparation Resources section. After their research is completed, the students should be able to describe: the tribe’s aboriginal territory; the date of their treaty (or treaties) and land cession, if any; the size and location of the original reservation and any changes to reservation borders; if the tribe was allotted, when and how this occurred; and the location of the tribe’s reservation today. For extra credit, see if the students can find out the size of the modern day reservation and how much of the reservation is tribally owned.

3. After the students research their tribe, ask them to write a two-page report on their tribe’s land tenure history. Encourage them to use maps, illustrations, or timelines to help organize and present their findings.

Evaluation:

1. One goal of this lesson is to teach students about three eras in American Indian history (removal and relocation, allotment and assimilation, and reorganization and self-government) and the affects on Indian land tenure. Through the in-class discussions, assess the students’ understanding of the three different periods of federal policy. In particular, students should be able to describe the allotment of Indian reservations in their own words and describe major effects of allotment (see Indian Land Tenure Foundation’s web page on land issues). They should also be able to explain why the Dawes act was so destructive to Indian country. Assess this understanding by observing the small group discussions and the larger, in-class discussion.

2. Another goal of this lesson is for students to reconstruct the basic tribal land history of a regional tribe using internet resources. In part, this will also allow you to assess their understanding of the themes described above. In reviewing the students’ brief two-page reports, assess the students’ ability to perform basic research on their tribe using treaties, maps, and other online resources.

Lesson Resources:

- Kappler’s Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties.
- The Indian Land Tenure Foundation website: Land Tenure History and History of Allotment webpages.
- OU Law Center Indian Land Titles, “American Indian Territoriality, an Online Research Guide” by Imre Sutton, Preface section in PDF format.
- A Brief Historical Overview of the Relationship between the Federal Government and American
Indians: From Colonial Times to the Present. The American Indian Civics Project, Center for Indian Community Development at Humboldt State University.

- University of Texas, maps of Exploration and Settlement.
- Felix Cohen’s Handbook of Federal Indian Law.
- OU Law Center Indian Land Titles.

Source URL: http://www.lessonsofourland.org/lessons/allotment-and-assimilation

Links:
[16] http://www.lessonsofourland.org/subjects/history/social-studies
[21] https://www.iltf.org/resources/land-tenure-history