Allotment Effects
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Grades: 6th - 8th Grade
Lesson: 2
Unit: 3: Contemporary American Indian land issues
Subject: English Language Arts
Additional Subject(s): History/Social Studies; Science
Achievement Goal: Study the effects of allotment fractionation on tribes and tribal land.
Time: One class period

Lesson Description:
Continue the examination of the Dawes Act and the effect it had on Indian lands by exploring further how allotment continues to affect the Indian land base today. Students will understand the relevance of the Dawes Act and allotment today on many American Indian lands and why it is important for tribes to consolidate their landbases.

Teacher Background:
Due to colonization, there has been a dramatic decline in Native land holdings. In California, treaties negotiated in 1851 and 1852 by United States government agents were never ratified by the United States Senate. Small reservations were later established by presidential order. Under the provisions of the Dawes Act, in many areas of California where reservations were not established, the United States government allotted land from the public domain (such as national forests) to Native American individuals or families. In the early twentieth century, so-called “landless Indians” received small plots of land called rancherias.

Grades 6-8, Unit Two, Lesson Four introduced students to the Dawes Act and the effect it had on Indian lands. This lesson will continue the examination of this important part of Indian land tenure history by exploring further how allotment continues to affect the Indian land base today. This lesson will provide the outlines of an in-class lecture that seeks to explain to students the relevance of the Dawes Act to tribal sovereignty and Indian community well-being today. The goal of this lesson is for the students to understand the relevance of the Dawes Act and allotment today on many American Indian lands and why it is important for tribes to consolidate their landbases.

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

6th Grade

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.

Associated California State Academic Content Standards:
For general guidelines for aligning discussions, writing, and research activities with English Language Arts Standards, see Using Lessons of Our California Land to Help Students Meet California State Content Standards.

Teacher Preparation Resources:

- Prepare a copy of the tribal lands map provided below for projection.
- Create a land ownership vocabulary list using the terms you will introduce in the lesson, such as trust land, individual trust land, allotment, fractionation, fractionated interest and jurisdiction. There is a glossary found on the Indian Land Tenure Foundation’s Allotment pages (see Lesson Resources section), but you may want to make up your own definitions to better engage the students.
Student Activity:

1. Begin the lecture with a basic history using maps to illustrate traditional homelands and modern day trust lands. Because the treaties negotiated in 1851 and 1852 by United States government agents were never ratified by the United States Senate, in many areas of California where reservations were not established the United States government allotted land from the public domain (such as national forests) to Native American individuals or families. Later, so-called “landless Indians” received small plots of land called rancherias.

2. While the Dawes Act was the main vehicle for allotting Indian lands nationally, many tribes were allotted according to tribe- or reservation-specific legislation. In telling the students about the allotment act, the instructor should focus on results: significant land loss, checkerboarding, and fractionation. The instructor should also review the terms on the vocabulary list so students are able to follow the remainder of the lecture.
   - Land loss: Display the tribal trust lands map, emphasizing the differences between the original territories of the tribes and their current trust lands.
   - Checkerboarding: One noticeable characteristic of the trust lands pattern is that most tribal trust parcels are not consolidated or contiguous. Ask the students to brainstorm about what challenges this poses to the tribe in terms of jurisdiction, access to cultural resources and wildlife, and tribal housing.
   - Fractionation: Fractionation is a difficult concept to explain, but begin by pointing out one of the individual trust parcels on the map and explain to students that one of these single allotments can have dozens of owners. Ask them to imagine how they would come to a decision about how to use the land with more than 100 other people! Explain that this problem is a result of a process called fractionation, whereby ownership of a parcel of land is divided between people (“heirs”) once an owner of interests in the parcel passes on. The chart at the Indian Land Tenure Foundation website depicting fractionation may help you illustrate this for the students. Explain to the students that highly fractionated lands are nearly unusable because it is so difficult for interest owners to decide how to use the land because there are so many of them. During the lecture, ask students to think about why fractionation is detrimental to Indian communities.

3. At the end of the lecture, give the students time to indicate their understanding of this issue through a class discussion. You may begin by asking about the students’ personal experiences with allotment in their family, or whether they live on an allotment. Or, you may ask the students to imagine what life may be like if all land within the tribe’s traditional homelands were tribal trust land. The goal of this discussion is to have the students relate the allotment of lands to their own life and have them think about what they can do about this issue to improve the future of their tribe.

Evaluation:

1. At the end of this lecture, students should be able to name and describe the different types of Indian trust lands, a few major effects of allotment, and how allotment affects tribal well-being today.

Lesson Resources:

- [Indian Land Tenure Foundation](http://www.indianlandtenurefoundation.org) resources:
  - [Allotment Information](http://www.indianlandtenurefoundation.org/allotment)
  - [Fractionated Ownership](http://www.indianlandtenurefoundation.org/fractionation)
  - [Glossary](http://www.indianlandtenurefoundation.org/glossary)
- [California Indian Tribal Homelands Map](http://www.indianlandtenurefoundation.org/california)
- [Map of the Homelands of the North Fork Mono Tribe](http://www.indianlandtenurefoundation.org/northforkmono)
- [Map of Tribal Territory, Reservations, Rancherias, and Allotments in South Central California](http://www.indianlandtenurefoundation.org/southcentral)