

Six Nations Lesson Plan – Land Claim

Objectives:

- Explain current important Native American issues
- Describe the opposing viewpoints in a current Native American land claim
- Defend a position, pro or con, about a land claim
- List changes that have occurred for Native nations since receiving land claim settlements
- Define what is meant by “inherent sovereignty”

Many Natives People in the United States believe that the Indian Wars are not over. Circumstances surrounding such issues as sovereignty, state and federal taxation, casinos and land claims occupy the same time and interest of contemporary Native leaders in all Indian communities. Yet few mainstream Americans are aware of the history and legalities behind these issues, paying little attention unless forced to confront them in the courts or in a financial crisis.

❖ CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Review contemporary Indian issues by checking the following web sites:

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) at
<http://www.ncai.org/Policy-Issues.6.0.html>

Native American Public Telecommunications (NAPT) at
<http://nativetelecom.org>

Indian Country (news from the nations) at
<http://www.indiancountrytoday.com/>

Which of the issues described are relevant to Native people in your community? Be sure to explore all sides of the relevant issues. Can you determine a compromise or peaceful settlement for a particular issue?

Today, the Haudenosaunee of New York State must deal with many of the issues described in the Web sites listed above. Within the past year, their legal battles for land claims have come before the courts. Like other Native nations across the United States, these claims go back to the 1800s when the federal government enacted policies associated with forced removal, often associated with the philosophy of Manifest Destiny.

During the nineteenth century, the United States government moved Native Americans to other, often less valuable lands; those lands were significantly reduced in later government programs. The Native American activist movement of the 1960s and 1970s inspired a quest to rebuild and reclaim lands and cultures. Tribes researched and documented their historical continuity to gain official recognition from the federal government. Land claims by recognized tribes have increased public awareness of Native

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Americans. Successful claims have financed cultural revitalization projects to rebuild communities, to continue to research tribal histories and to preserve language and customs.

❖ INDIAN NATIONS AS FOREIGN ENTITIES

Up until the time Congress passed the American Citizen Act in 1924, the federal government treated American Indian Nations as foreign nations, or as wards of the U.S. Read the American Constitution to find passages that relate to state and federal interaction with foreign nations. Do these apply to American Indian land claims today?

❖ CAYUGA AND ONEIDA CLAIMS

Review the information found on the Web sites listed below on Oneida and Cayuga land claims. Be sure to gather a variety of viewpoints. What are the valid claims of the Oneida or Cayuga Nations? What are the valid concerns of current property holders living in claimed territory? Debate the following question: How would you resolve this issue?

- ❖ A few American Indian nations have fought and won successful land claims. Through their land claims, the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot of Maine recovered thousands of acres of land and millions of dollars to purchase other lands. Search the Web or your library to find other Native American land claims that have been settled or look for information on the Maine tribes. What changes have occurred for the tribes since the settlement? Do you believe the settlements were equitable or complete?
- ❖ President George W. Bush was criticized by Native Americans for his statement that state, rather than federal governments should settle Native American land claims. Native Americans stated that Bush did not understand that Native American nations are sovereign. What jurisdiction does the state of New York have in the Oneida case? Review the sovereignty statement of the Oneida Nation and follow the link that defines “inherent sovereignty”. Based upon what you have read, how would you have explained to George W. Bush the relationships between Native American nations, the states, and the federal government?

ON-LINE RESOURCES

Introduction to land claims of Oneida and Cayuga nations

<http://www.syracuse.com/news/indianlandclaim/poststandard/index.ssf?/news/indianlandclaim/empire1.html>

Land claim negotiation website for Oneida Nation

<http://www.oneidanationtrust.com/>

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Sovereignty Statements for Oneida Nation

<http://www.oneidaindiannation.com/about/sovereignty>

Opponents of the land claims

<http://www.upstate-citizens.org/>

Six Nations Land Claims lesson plan from pbs.org/warrior/indexf.html