

# THE INDIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT AND THE MEANING OF AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

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## GUIDING QUESTION:

How have American Indians and the U.S. government debated the meaning of American citizenship?

## OVERVIEW

Using primary and secondary source analysis, students will examine the viewpoints from the U.S. government and American Indian nations over American citizenship as it relates to the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924.

## OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

- > Analyze different perspectives of citizenship for American Indians;
- > Examine the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 to determine the conditions in which citizenship was granted to American Indians;
- > Analyze primary and secondary sources related to the perspectives of the Indian Citizenship Act; and
- > Evaluate how American Indians have been included in or excluded from discussions surrounding American citizenship.

## STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- > CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

### CONNECTIONS TO C3 FRAMEWORK

- > D2.Civ.2.9-12. Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.
- > D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.
- > D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.
- > D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.

## DOCUMENTS USED

### PRIMARY SOURCES

Arthur C. Parker, "The Editor's Viewpoint: The Road to Competent Citizenship," *The Quarterly Journal for the Society of American Indians*, July–September, 1914 (excerpt)  
New York Public Library  
[https://www.google.com/books/edition/\\_/\\_/WMARAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1](https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/_/WMARAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1)

Indian Citizenship Act 1924 (Snyder Act), June 2, 1924  
National Archives and Records Administration  
<https://www.archives.gov/files/historical-docs/doc-content/images/indian-citizenship-act-1924.pdf>

Letter from the Onondaga Nation to President Calvin Coolidge, December 30, 1924  
Onondaga Nation  
<https://www.onodaganation.org/news/2018/the-citizenship-act-of-1924/>

Photograph, Harris and Ewing, *[Calvin Coolidge and Native American group at White House, Washington, D.C.]*, 1925  
Library of Congress (2016894067)  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2016894067/>

## SECONDARY SOURCE

Paul C. Rosier, *Serving Their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, 2010 (excerpt)  
[https://www.google.com/books/edition/\\_/\\_/s9X7MWwmOSIC?hl=en&gbpv=1](https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/_/s9X7MWwmOSIC?hl=en&gbpv=1)

## TEACHER-CREATED MATERIALS

- › Student Activity Packet
- › Perspectives Table

## ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- › Organize students into groups of four or five students each.
- › Make one copy of the Student Activity Packet for each student.
- › Make one copy of the Perspectives Table for each group.
- › Write on the board (or project) the question: *What does it mean to be a citizen of the United States?* before students come to class.
- › Gather enough dictionaries for each group.
- › List words from the Student Activity Packet that you may need to discuss with your students.

## PROCEDURE

### ACTIVITY ONE (15 MINUTES)

- › Lead a discussion based on the question on the board. Expand the discussion with the following questions:
  - › *What are some of the privileges or rights that come with citizenship?*
  - › *What are some of the responsibilities that come with citizenship?*
    - › **Teacher Tip:** Make sure that students understand the significance of government representation, human rights, civil rights, and voting rights.
  - › *Are you automatically a citizen of the United States just because you were born in the United States? Has this always been the case?*
  - › *Were American Indians considered citizens of the United States? Do you think American Indians wanted to be citizens of the United States? Why would American Indians not want to be citizens of the United States?*

### ACTIVITY TWO (75 MINUTES)

- › Arrange students into groups of four or five students each. Distribute one Student Activity Packet to each student and one Perspectives Table to each group.
- › Direct each group member to read and analyze one of the five sources in the Student Activity Packet.
  - › **Teacher Tip:** Remind students to underline or circle words they do not know and look them up to clarify as they read their documents. Keep a dictionary on hand for students to use.
- › Encourage each member of the group to discuss the content of their source. Synthesize the perspectives as a group in the Perspectives Table.
- › Bring the students together for a classroom discussion about the following questions:
  - › *What do the documents reveal about those who supported and opposed citizenship for American Indians?*
  - › *Why do you think the U.S. government wanted citizenship for the American Indians?*
  - › *Why do you think the author of the article in The Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians wanted citizenship?*
    - › Make sure students understand that some American Indians wanted the right to vote, access to an education, and the ability to compete economically. Other more conservative American Indians were hesitant to accept this citizenship, fearful of the impact on their sovereign nations.
  - › *Why do you think that the Onondaga and others did not want American Indians to have citizenship?*
    - › Help students understand that they want to keep control over their lands, affairs, and sovereignty.
- › Allow students time to research some of the questions posed in their group discussion to complete the assessment.

## CONNECTIONS

There are two lessons in this book that explore ways Native Americans have been involved in the quest to create a more perfect union. Based around the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 and the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968, both use changes in the law to explore the various perspectives of people at two key moments in history.

## ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- > Have students write a brief article, letter, or speech explaining citizenship and what it means to different groups in relation to American Indians. Students should give a brief explanation of all perspectives or you may have them do this in a persuasive style to try and get one perspective across.
- > Have students use Flipgrid, or other recording technology, to record a persuasive speech from the perspective of one of the groups involved. They should argue whether or not they agree with the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, using historical evidence.
- > Students can pursue the questions they developed around American Indian citizenship as it relates to an issue: voting, land ownership, employment, education, or some other topic.

## STUDENTS INTERESTED IN THIS TOPIC MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN RESEARCHING THE FOLLOWING FOR AN NHD PROJECT

- > Wilma Mankiller
- > Survival Schools
- > Trail of Broken Treaties (1972)
- > Floyd Red Crow Westerman
- > Anna Mae Aquash

**To access a PDF containing all of the sources and materials to complete this lesson plan, go to:**

**[WWW.NHD.ORG/250](http://WWW.NHD.ORG/250)**

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### RELATED RESOURCES

Closer Readings Commentary: What Does it Mean to Be American?

<https://edsitement.neh.gov/closer-readings/what-does-it-mean-be-american>

*Humanities* Blog: Exploring the Great Plains Indian Wars and Military Forts in Kansas

<https://www.neh.gov/divisions/fedstate/in-the-field/exploring-the-great-plains-indian-wars-and-military-forts-in-kansas>

*Humanities* Statement: A Nation of Treaties

<https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2011/novemberdecember/statement/nation-treaties>

Teacher's Guide: American Indian History and Heritage

<https://edsitement.neh.gov/teachers-guides/american-indian-history-and-heritage>

# STUDENT ACTIVITY PACKET

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## THE INDIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT OF 1924 AND THE MEANING OF AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

### Historical Context:

Since the 1600s, European settlers entered into treaties with Native Nations and recognized their inherent sovereignty. Many of these early treaties established peace and friendship between Native Nations and European settlers, and later, the U.S. government. This continued as the U.S. embraced Manifest Destiny and expanded westward. American Indians often found themselves in a troubling position. They were their own sovereign nations, and not American citizens.

In 1830, the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, requiring American Indians in the southeast to relocate to territory west of the Mississippi River. The Cherokee and Muscogee fought removal, but they had little legal recourse. The government did not recognize them as citizens, limiting the ability to challenge legal inequities. Members of the Cherokee, Muscogee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole nations were forcibly relocated. By the end of the process, the government relocated an estimated 60,000 American Indians to Indian Territory. Thousands died in the process.

American Indians had to establish new lives on reservations, negotiate treaties which were often violated, and defend themselves in encounters with U.S. military forces. Some American Indians actively tried to assimilate into American culture. Others were forced to assimilate in boarding schools.

American Indians fought for the U.S. in every major war from the Revolutionary War to the present day. After World War I, the Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs discussed the role American Indians played during the war and began to push for the recognition of American Indians as United States citizens.

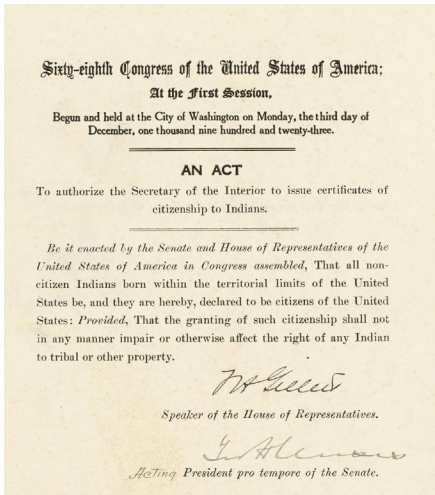
Not all American Indian nations agreed with the United States or with each other. More liberal American Indians saw citizenship as an opportunity to participate in the government, access higher education, and compete economically. More conservative American Indians feared that citizenship would lead to a loss of sovereignty, or control over their own lands and affairs.

# STUDENT ACTIVITY PACKET, DOCUMENT A

Indian Citizenship Act 1924 (Snyder Act), June 2, 1924

National Archives and Records Administration

<https://www.archives.gov/files/historical-docs/doc-content/images/indian-citizenship-act-1924.pdf>



## AN ACT

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to issue certificates of Citizenship to Indians.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all non-citizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States be, and they are hereby, declared to be citizens of the United States: Provided, That the granting of such citizenship shall not in any manner impair or otherwise affect the right of any Indian to tribal or other property.*

Surface-level Questions	Deeper-level Questions
Who is the author of this document?	Why was this document written? What purpose does it serve?
Who is the audience?	
When was it written?	How does this change citizenship for certain groups?
Who does it affect?	What does this document help you to understand?
<b>Lingering Questions</b>	

What questions do you still have after reviewing this document?

What new questions do you have about American Indian history and citizenship rights?

# STUDENT ACTIVITY PACKET, DOCUMENT B

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Arthur C. Parker, "The Editor's Viewpoint: The Road to Competent Citizenship," *The Quarterly Journal for the Society of American Indians*, July-September, 1914, page 182 (excerpt)  
 New York Public Library  
[https://www.google.com/books/edition/\\_/WMARAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1](https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/WMARAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1)

"The only Indians who really succeed are those who as voters or potential citizens compete in civilization as producers. The measure of their success depends upon their intellect and training, and, may we add, character.

"Only one thing remains, therefore. The Indians as individuals must gradually take their places as other citizens of the United States, equipping themselves by a thorough schooling in all the principles of American Life."

Surface-level Questions	Deeper-level Questions
Who is the author of this document?	Does this document address any political views toward American Indians? Provide evidence.
Who is the audience?	
What is the purpose of this document?	
What is the author's opinion on how an American Indian can succeed?	
What is standing in the way of American Indians "equipping themselves"?	
How are American Indians viewed in this document?	
Lingering Questions	
What questions do you still have after reviewing this document?	

What new questions do you have about American Indian history and citizenship rights?

# STUDENT ACTIVITY PACKET, DOCUMENT C

Paul C. Rosier, *Serving Their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, 2010, pages 49–50 (excerpt)  
[https://www.google.com/books/edition/\\_/s9X7MWwmOSIC?hl=en&gbpv=1](https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/s9X7MWwmOSIC?hl=en&gbpv=1)

“Although most draft-age Native Americans registered for the draft or volunteered for service, it is important to note that some objected to army service and thus resisted conscription. Not surprisingly, given the history of Indian-White relations, not all Native Americans jumped at the chance to die overseas for freedoms they believed were denied them at home. Resistance took multiple forms and derived from various influences, including Native Americans’ correct assessment that the government had no right to induct non-citizens. Another major factor was increased pressure on Native Americans’ land base, the product of both wartime demand for agricultural and industrial production and of government policies that expanded the allotment policy to increase that production. In April 1917 Commissioner Sells unveiled his so-called Liberal Policy, which liberalized rules in the granting allotments to ‘competent’ Indians, identified as such by roving bands of white commissioners eager to expand the number of Indians eligible to sell their land during the boom years of the war. Repeating a familiar BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs] mantra, Sells argued that the Liberal Policy ‘means the ultimate absorption of the Indian race into the body politic of the Nation. It means, in short, the beginning of the end of the Indian problem.’ What it really meant, however, was the exacerbation of the Indian problem of losing land to white speculators and settlers at below market rates because of BIA corruption or indifference. The effects of the policy as well as wartime pressures to conform to the state, and the inability of many Indians to vote in state and federal elections, led to draft resistance among Native Americans from New York to New Mexico who linked the federal government’s effort to integrate them into the war machine to the integration of their land into the American economy. Both processes diminished their sovereignty.”

Surface-level Questions	Deeper-level Questions (Con’t)
What does this secondary source help us to understand about American Indians’ place in American society?	Why was the United States Army drafting people and looking for land for wartime production?
	List the reasons that Native Americans resisted military service.
Deeper-level Questions	
What do you derive as the main goal of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)?	How is citizenship being redefined for Native Americans?
Lingering Questions	

What questions do you still have after reviewing this document?

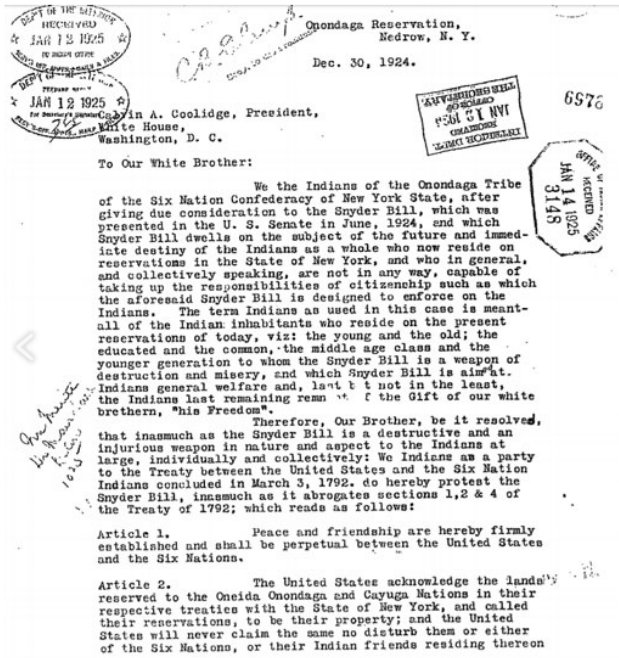
What new questions do you have about American Indian history and citizenship rights?

# STUDENT ACTIVITY PACKET, DOCUMENT D

Letter from the Onondaga Nation to President Calvin Coolidge, December 30, 1924

Onondaga Nation

<https://www.onondagation.org/news/2018/the-citizenship-act-of-1924/>



and united with them, in the free use and enjoyment thereof; but the said reservations shall remain theirs until they choose to sell the same to the people of the United States, who have the right to purchase.

Article 4. The United States having thus described and acknowledged what lands belong to the Oneidas, Onondaga, Cayuga and Senecas, and engaged never to claim the same nor to disturb them, or any of their Indian friends residing thereon and united with them, in the free use and enjoyment thereof, now, the Six Nations, and each of them, hereby engage that they will never claim any other lands within the boundaries of the United States nor ever disturb the people of the United States in the free use and enjoyment thereof.

Therefore be it resolved, that we, the Indians, of the Onondaga Tribe of the Six Nations, duly depose and sternly protest the principal and object of the aforesaid Snyder Bill, in the fact that we collectively speaking, have not as yet attained the required understanding essentials necessary to carry the responsibilities of such as the Snyder Bill dictates.

We, the Indians have not as yet tired of the free use and enjoyment of our rights as Indians living on reservations. For the reason of safeguarding the Indians: as a whole against the unscrupulous advances of any element to the detriment of our welfare, present and future, we again and further protest the principal and aim of the Snyder Bill as regards Indians of New York State at large, Individually or collectively.

Wherefore, we as undersigned counselling Chiefs of the Onondaga Nation, recommend the abandonment and repeal of the Snyder Bill.

*Andrew Gibson* *William Johnson Jr*  
*Joshua Jones* *William Johnson Sr*  
*Emmett Ryan* *Leubert Jones*  
*Cecilia Cannon* *Albert Kennedy*  
*James Gibson*  
*John White*  
*Ellis Samuels*

Surface-level Questions	Deeper-level Questions
What is the purpose of this letter? To whom is it written?	Why did the Onondaga Nation resist the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924? Explain their reasoning.
Who are the authors of this letter?	
When was it written?	
Where was it written?	
<b>Lingering Questions</b>	
What questions do you still have after reviewing this document?	
What new questions do you have about American Indian history and citizenship rights?	



# STUDENT ACTIVITY PACKET, DOCUMENT E

Photograph, Harris and Ewing, *[Calvin Coolidge and Native American group at White House, Washington, D.C.], 1925*  
Library of Congress (2016894067)  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2016894067/>



Surface-level Questions	Deeper-level Questions	
Who is in the picture?	What story about American Indian history is being shown in this photograph?	
When was it taken?		
Where was it taken?		How does this photograph help us understand the relationship between American Indians and the United States?
How are they dressed?		
What is the purpose of this photograph?		How might that be different from the other sources you reviewed?

## Lingering Questions

What questions do you still have after reviewing this source?

What new questions do you have about American Indian history and citizenship rights?

# PERSPECTIVES TABLE

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Now that you have reviewed your source in the document packet and answered the accompanying questions, evaluate the perspectives involved in the discussion of American Indian citizenship with your group members.

<b>U.S. government</b>	<b>Native Americans who resisted change and full citizenship</b>	<b>Native Americans who wanted change and full citizenship</b>



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