



SOCIAL SCIENCES

# The Termination Era

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- **Identity**
- **History**
- **Genocide, federal policy, and laws**

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand key events surrounding the termination of the Siletz Tribe.
- Examine informational and historical text and identify arguments both for and against the termination of the Siletz Tribe.
- Debate as either a member of a group representing the Siletz Tribe and opposing termination or as a member of a group representing the U.S. government and supporting termination.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- What is the connection between Tribal identity and a secure land base?

## LOGISTICS

- Where does the activity take place?  
*Classroom*
- How are the students organized?
  - Whole class     Teams: 2 – 4
  - Pairs             Individually

## TIME REQUIRED

3 to 4 hours of classroom time or three or four 60-minute class periods

## Overview

This lesson will give students an understanding of the U. S. government’s termination policy toward Native American Tribes during the mid-20th century and the resulting legal act terminating the Siletz Tribe’s federal recognition in 1954. Although the Tribe’s federal recognition was restored in 1977, termination had a devastating impact on the Siletz Tribal community. The content in this lesson is based on information contained in *The People Are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*.<sup>1</sup>

Three activities will support student learning. First, the teacher will lead students through a presentation that provides a brief history of federal Indian policy after the Indian Reorganization Act, a period often labeled the “Termination Era” by scholars of federal Indian policy. In the second activity, students will engage in a shadow reading of historical texts to compare the arguments that the government used to justify termination and its results on Siletz people. Finally, students will participate in a guided Socratic seminar to consider the legacy of termination in Western Oregon.

<sup>1</sup> Wilkinson, C. (2010). *The people are dancing again: The history of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*. University of Washington Press.



## Background for teachers<sup>2</sup>

In this lesson, students will study the U.S. government's termination policy toward Native American Tribes and the long-term effects of this policy on the Siletz Tribe. The belief that Indigenous people should abandon their traditional ways of knowing and living and assimilate to mainstream American culture has been the basis of the U.S. government's policy toward Native Americans for nearly two centuries.

This persistent idea, combined with concerns about reducing federal spending and liability for land illegally acquired by the United States, produced a push in Congress to completely withdraw the federal government from the affairs of multiple Native American Tribes, including the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. This "termination" of federally recognized Tribal status denied these Tribes their identity in the eyes of the federal government and ended the federal-Tribal trust relationship that had been established with the signing of the original treaties.

Termination policy reached its peak in the 1950s, with the passage of several laws terminating the federal recognition of Native American Tribes across the nation—particularly in timber rich regions like Oregon. By the time of termination most of the Siletz Tribal land base had been,

<sup>2</sup> Background information adapted from Wilkinson, C. (2010). *The people are dancing again: The history of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*. University of Washington Press.

<sup>3</sup> Oregon is in the process of revising its social sciences standards. This document references the draft 2018 standards for high school.

## STANDARDS

### Oregon social sciences standards<sup>3</sup>

**HS.5** - Evaluate the relationships among governments at the local, state, Tribal, national, and global levels. (*Civics*)

**HS.55** - Analyze the complexity of the interaction of multiple perspectives to investigate causes and effects of significant events in the development of world, U.S., and Oregon history. (*History*)

**HS.60** - Analyze the history, culture, Tribal sovereignty, and historical and current issues of the American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian in Oregon and the United States. (*History*)

**HS.62** - Identify historical and current events, issues, and problems when national and/or global interests have been in conflict and provide analysis from multiple perspectives. (*History*)

**HS.69** - Create and defend a historical argument utilizing primary and secondary sources as evidence.

liquidated (often illegally), but the government still targeted the Siletz Tribe for termination under the Western Oregon Indian Termination Act of 1954. Termination of federal recognition had a devastating impact on the Siletz Tribal community—ending social services to the Tribe and Tribal members, dissolving the few remaining acres of Tribal land (including important community gathering areas and cemeteries), and forcing many Tribal members to leave the area in search of jobs. Although the federal recognition of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians was restored in 1977, the legacy of termination continues to impact many Tribal members to this day.

### To prepare for this lesson, teachers should:

- Read chapter 13 of *The People Are Dancing Again* (included in the lesson materials).
- Review all handouts and worksheets for this lesson.
- Ensure students will have access to all materials (printed and/or electronic) needed to participate in this lesson (see “Materials” section above).
- Prepare classroom audiovisual technology to display the slides.
- Read the excerpt from Watkins (1957). “Termination of Federal Supervision: The Removal of Restrictions over Indian Property and Person,” *The Annals of the American*

<sup>4</sup> Copy of complete testimony is available at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-95shrg966370/pdf/CHRG-95shrg966370.pdf>

## MATERIALS

**The following instructional tools and materials will be needed to deliver this lesson. Unless otherwise indicated, copies of reading texts and handouts are provided as appendices or attachments to this lesson.**

- PowerPoint slide deck
- Shadow Reading Graphic Organizer
- Interview Brainstorm Sheet
- Excerpts from Senate Hearing on Siletz Restoration Act – 1976-03-30<sup>4</sup>
- Chapter 13 from, *The People Are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon* (Wilkinson, 2010).
- Print one copy per student of the excerpt from the article (see appendix): Arthur V. Watkins (1957), “Termination of Federal Supervision: The Removal of Restrictions over Indian Property and Person,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 311, 47-55. Used with permission. Full article available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1032353>
  - Arthur V. Watkins was a senator from Utah and former chairman of the Indian Subcommittee of the Senate Interior Committee. He was a strong proponent of the argument to end the U.S. government’s federal trust responsibility to Native American Tribes across the nation—a policy that subsequently came to be known as “termination.”

*Academy of Political and Social Science*, 311, 47-55. Used with permission. Full article available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1032353>.

## References

- Watkins, A. V. (1957). Termination of federal supervision: The removal of restrictions over Indian property and person. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 311, 47-55. Used with permission.
- Wilkinson, C. (2010). *The people are dancing again: The history of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*. University of Washington Press.

## Resources

*Interview with Siletz Tribal Elder Ed Ben and Tribal Council member Bud Lane about termination and restoration:* <https://ecotrust.org/project/indigenous-leadership-briefings/#terminationvideo>

Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians website: <http://ctsi.nsn.us/>

## Considerations for teachers

### Assessment

The formative assessment will be teacher observation of student participation in class discussions. The summative assessment will be teacher review of each student's completion of the "Shadow Reading Graphic Organizer," a tool to support

## VOCABULARY

**Termination** – The policy of ending all relationships between Native American tribes and the federal government.

**Assimilation** – The adoption of the language, culture, beliefs, and values of a dominant society. In Native American history, assimilation involved pressure and/or force such as removing Native children from their homes and teaching them in English-only schools, punishing students for speaking their languages, restricting community access to vital natural resources, first foods, traditional ways, and homelands.

**Self-determination** – The ability or power to make decisions for your own community; especially the power of a nation to decide how it will be governed.



close reading of historical texts. Students will identify multiple arguments and cite textual evidence to support each argument.

### Practices

- *Shadow reading strategy* – Teachers should be prepared to support the shadow reading strategy, which provides a structure for engaging students with multiple perspectives on a complex topic. This strategy also provides students with an opportunity to practice identifying textual evidence to support a point of view.
- *Socratic method* – Teachers should be familiar with how to use the Socratic method in the classroom to help students develop critical thinking skills. The Socratic method allows students to use reasoning to engage in a specific text by answering questions specific to law and legal topics.

### Learning targets

- I can place termination policy in a larger historical context of federal Indian policy
- I understand key events leading to the termination of the Siletz Tribe
- I can contrast the justifications for termination with the actual impact on the Siletz community

### ADAPTATIONS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING



**The lesson is primarily structured around group discussion and exploration, but much of it can be adapted for distance or independent learning purposes.**

**A suggested sequence follows.**

1. Using a web conferencing or online meeting platform and PowerPoint slides 1–9, provide a virtual lecture on the Termination Era. Provide students with an electronic or hard copy of the PowerPoint slides for notetaking. Make sure to review all key points as outlined in Activity 1.
2. Distribute one copy of the texts listed in Activity 2. Ask students to complete a first reading of each text outside of the classroom, as homework.
3. Next, distribute a copy of the “Shadow Reading Graphic Organizer” from Activity 2 and review the example(s) provided for how to complete the organizer.
4. Model for students how to do a second reading of text by going back into text by highlighting/underlining textual evidence that supports the different perspectives of the termination of the Siletz Tribe’s federal recognition. Students can complete the second reading as a homework assignment.
5. Review as a whole class key textual evidence found during the second reading. Ask students to add textual evidence to the “Shadow Reading Graphic Organizer.”

*(Continued on next page)*

## Reflection/closure

Teachers can use an exit ticket that asks students to write a response to one of the essential questions. For example: *What questions do you still have about termination: both at Siletz and across the nation?*

## Options/extensions

Have students view the following video and create a summary: *Interview with Siletz Tribal Elder Ed Ben and Tribal Council member Bud Lane about termination* (<https://ecotrust.org/termination-the-attempt-to-destroy-and-the-rebuilding-of-the-siletz-tribes/>). Alternatively, ask students to provide essential details from the video to a partner or small group.

## Appendix

Materials included in the electronic folder that support this lesson are:

- Slides\_The\_Termination\_Era.pptx
- Shadow Reading Graphic Organizer
- Interview Brainstorm Sheet
- Chapter 13 of *The People Are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon* (Wilkinson, 2010)
- Excerpts from Senate Hearing on Siletz Restoration Act – 1976-03-30
- Watkins, A. V. (1957). Termination of federal supervision: The removal of restrictions over Indian property and person. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 311, 47–55. Used with permission.

## ADAPTATIONS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING



(Continued)

- 6. (Class Discussion)** Modify Activity 4, by facilitating a whole class discussion using the chat or other online discussion tool. Pose the following questions one at a time and allow students time to think, and/or write their response before sharing with whole group. *Why did Watkins say that termination policy “concerns the freeing of the Indian from special federal restrictions on the property and the person?” What was his motive and purpose? What assumptions do Watkins and the BIA make about Native identity and American citizenship? What are the consequences of this assumption? How do these assumptions compare with the testimony of Siletz people? What goals of termination would federal officials consider a success, and the Siletz people consider a failure? What is the point of this question? Why do you think we are asking these questions?*
- 7. (Optional Extension Activity)** Have students independently view the following video and create a summary: *Interview with Siletz Tribal Elder Ed Ben and Tribal Council member Bud Lane about termination* (<https://ecotrust.org/termination-the-attempt-to-destroy-and-the-rebuilding-of-the-siletz-tribes/>)

---

## Activity 1

# Teacher presentation of the Termination Era

*Time: 30 minutes*

---

### Step 1

To begin the lesson, review with students a brief history of federal policies toward Native American tribes.

### Step 2

Show slides 1–2.

#### Say:

*Assimilation is the belief that Indigenous people should abandon their traditional ways of knowing and being “civilized” by adapting American cultural, political, economic, and religious norms. This has been the basis of U.S. government policy toward Native Americans for centuries.*

*Federal officials often tied the push for assimilation to the desire to break up Tribal land holdings. For example, in the late 1890s Congress passed the General Allotment Act (Dawes Act)—directing federal officials to break up reservations by issuing each Tribal member a small parcel of land and declaring the remaining “excess lands” to be taken out of Tribal control. We’ll learn more about the Dawes Act in other lessons (see Siletz History: Allotment) but the big thing to understand for this lesson is that lawmakers justified taking land from Native people by claiming that it would help them assimilate to an American way of living. They argued that having individual ownership of land would force Native people to abandon Tribal bonds by separating them into discrete family units.*

**NOTE:** For more background on allotment at Siletz, teachers can review “Siletz History: Allotment” and/or present the lesson to students.

---

## Activity 1 (Continued)

### Step 3

Show slides 3–4.

#### Say:

*Allotment (the Dawes Act) wasn't very successful at assimilating Indigenous people, but it was extremely effective at wiping out the land base of Tribes and impoverishing Native people. In just a few short decades, allotment reduced the overall land holdings of Tribes across the nation from 138 million acres to 48 million acres! By the 1930s, the harmful effects of allotment were so obvious that they forced the federal government to briefly detour from its single-minded focus on assimilation.*

*In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA). Pushed by prominent reformer John Collier, the IRA was designed to reverse some of the negative results of the Dawes Act by supporting the reorganization of Tribal governments, ending allotment, and giving Native Americans the opportunity to take advantage of federal "New Deal" jobs programs, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps. Although Siletz chose not to reorganize its government under the IRA, Tribal members took advantage of this change in federal Indian policy to pursue compensation for their unceded lands in federal court.*

### Step 4

Show slide 5.

#### Say:

*This change in policy was short lived. Beginning in the mid-1940s, U.S. lawmakers and federal officials began to reject the policies represented by the IRA. Instead, they proposed an extreme new form of assimilation called termination.*

*The idea of termination was to end all relationships with Native American Tribes including "an end of all reservations, federal obligations, and Tribal sovereign rights, including those promised by treaties (Wilkinson, p. 278)." In effect, the policy*

---

## Activity 1 (Continued)

*denied the Tribe's sovereign status by no longer recognizing Tribal governments or individual Siletz people as Native peoples.*

### Step 5

Show slide 6.

#### Say:

*Like the Indian Reorganization Act, calls for termination grew from the failures of past policies. In 1943, the U.S. Senate commissioned a survey of the living conditions on Native American reservations. It found that living conditions were punishing, with widespread poverty on reservations throughout the country. The report placed most of the blame on the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and its bureaucracy—highlighting extreme mismanagement as the basis for the problems plaguing Native people. However, instead of seeking to address this mismanagement and social discrimination against Native people, Congress concluded that the real problem was that Tribes had become too dependent on the U.S. government. Proponents of termination argued that it would be better if the federal trust relationship ended, which would leave Native people no choice but to assimilate into the general U.S. population.*

*As with allotment, federal officials and lawmakers were motivated by self-interest. Some senators were looking to reduce federal spending and saw a chance to slash the budget of the BIA, while others had grown tired of authorizing payments for land claims in response to lawsuits brought by Tribes for the millions of acres unlawfully taken from Tribal people nationwide. Other lawmakers made no attempt to hide their desire to remove Tribal rights to reservation lands and to sell that land to non-Native people. Though most of the Siletz (Coast) Reservation had already been dismantled before the 1950s, it should come as no surprise that in general the BIA targeted Tribes with large timber reserves for termination. Just like with allotment, the self-interest of the federal government and the ideology of assimilation aligned to create an insurmountable political force.*

---

## Activity 1 (Continued)

### Step 6

Show slide 7.

#### Say:

*Within a decade termination had gained favor in both Congress and within the BIA. In August 1954, Congress passed a flurry of laws terminating several Tribes across the nation—including the Western Oregon Termination Act, which authorized ending the federal relationship with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and Grand Ronde. Though implementation of the act didn't occur at Siletz until 1956 many Siletz families still remember 1954 as one of the darkest years in the history of the Tribe.*

### Step 7

Show slide 8.

#### Say:

*Let's look more closely at what happened at Siletz leading up to termination. Like much of Siletz history, the decision to terminate the Tribe was shrouded in secrecy and misunderstanding. Before the passage of the termination bill, BIA officials claimed to have received the agreement of Siletz Tribal members authorizing termination. And they certainly worked hard to manufacture consent, waging a multi-year campaign that promised Siletz people freedom and independence from federal meddling while also implying that desperately needed payouts won in court cases over land claims would be withheld until the Tribe accepted termination.*

*Some of the BIA arguments made sense to the Siletz community. Many Siletz people were tired of the BIA, especially after a century of mismanagement and unwillingness to protect the reservation land base and thought that they could perhaps do a better job managing their affairs on their own. Others chafed under*

---

## Activity 1 (Continued)

*state laws that prohibited Indians from marrying white people and both federal and state policies that barred Indians from purchasing alcohol or even setting foot in a restaurant serving alcohol. Soldiers returning from World War II had a new disdain for race-based restrictions and saw termination as a possible escape from unfair discrimination based on their status as Indian peoples. At the time, some stores on the Oregon Coast still proudly hung signs warning “No Dogs, No Indians” in their windows.*

*Federal policy in the decades leading up to termination was perhaps even more telling. Even before the push for termination, the BIA had functionally abandoned the reservation—relocating the office in charge of administering Siletz, first to Salem and then to Portland. Having liquidated almost all Tribal land holdings, the BIA didn’t have much interest in the obligations that it had made to Siletz Tribal people and made only passing efforts to help people secure health care or education. To many Siletz people, termination seemed inevitable—the BIA had already made up its mind. Additionally, in all of its presentations to Siletz leaders the BIA made no mention of the larger consequences of termination—neglecting to mention that the “freedom” from BIA supervision would be linked to the loss of land, federal services, Tribal community, and Tribal identity.*

*Despite all their efforts, federal officials found no widespread support for termination at Siletz. The “vote” that federal officials ultimately pointed to as Tribal “consent” to termination was held at a sparsely attended general council meeting, which many attendees left thinking was nothing more than a vote to continue negotiations with the government. With such a huge decision on the line, the BIA accepted a vote in which only 13 yes votes stood in for the consensus of a Tribe of nearly 1,000 people—less than 3 percent of all adults. For Siletz people, in the years that followed, the push for termination became just another example of how the BIA had failed in its duties to look out for the best interest of the Siletz Tribe.*



---

## Activity 1 (Continued)

### Step 8

Show slide 9.

#### Say:

*The impact of termination policy on the Siletz people was devastating. What remained of the Tribal land was liquidated and sold. Economic conditions worsened, forcing many Siletz people to move away from the reservation in search of jobs and undermining Tribal identity.*

*For the rest of this lesson, we are going to take a more in-depth look at the arguments that proponents of termination used to justify termination and compare those to the experience of the Siletz Tribe after termination, as related by Tribal leaders during hearings on a bill to restore the Siletz Tribe in the mid-1970s. We will begin by reading information and historical text to identify arguments used by the U.S. government in support of termination and then take a closer look at the actual impact of termination as told by Siletz people.*

---

## Activity 2

# Shadow reading<sup>5</sup>

Time: 90 minutes

---

### Step 1 (First reading)

Distribute one copy of the following texts to each student. Ask students to complete a first reading of each text outside of the classroom—as homework or an in-class extension activity. Instruct students to think about the following focus question as they read each text: “What were the results of termination?”

- Chapter 13 of *The People Are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*. (See appendix)
- Excerpts from Senate Hearing on Siletz Restoration Act - 1976-03-30
- Watkins, A. V. (1957). Termination of federal supervision: The removal of restrictions over Indian property and person. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 311, 47–55. Used with permission. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1032353>

### Step 2

After students have independently completed one reading of each text, distribute a copy of the “Shadow Reading Graphic Organizer” and review the example(s) provided for how to complete the organizer.

### Step 3 (Second reading)

Next, instruct students to go back into each text for a second reading and highlight/underline textual evidence that supports the different perspectives of the termination of the Siletz Tribe’s federal recognition.

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Facing History and Ourselves. Retrieved on September 23, 2019, from <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/shadow-reading>

---

## Activity 2 *(Continued)*

**NOTE:** Remind students to be specific about their textual evidence by pointing to the exact page number and paragraph. If they use a direct quote, they must use quotation marks.

### Step 4

Once students have completed a second reading, allow students to work independently or in small groups to record two to three pieces of textual evidence on their “Shadow Reading Graphic Organizer.”

### Step 5

Walk the room to answer questions and provide support.

### Step 6 (Whole class discussion)

Gather the whole class and ask students to share textual evidence. Record responses using an overhead projector or whiteboard.

---

### Activity 3

## Interview activity (Optional)

*Time: 60 minutes*

---

### Step 1

Ask students to imagine that they could interview Arthur V. Watkins and the BIA officials who administered termination at Siletz.

### Step 2

Ask students to work in pairs or in a small group to create a set of interview questions that would have helped Siletz people more effectively resist termination.

### Step 3

Distribute the “Interview Brainstorm Sheet” and post it on an overhead projector to model the activity for the whole class.

### Step 4

Ask students to begin by making a list of information they would like to learn during the interview.

Guide students with the following questions:

- What information would Siletz leaders have wanted from the U.S. government in order to inform their decision about termination?
- What were the results of termination and how aware were federal officials of those possible results? How predictable were the results of termination? Did federal officials consider the implications of these results before promoting termination?
- What emotions would Senator Watkins or the federal official feel during the interview? Would they be embarrassed or ashamed of their actions?

---

### Activity 3 *(Continued)*

Why or why not? Remember, BIA officials were supposed to be looking out for the best interest of Siletz people.

#### Step 5

Once students have created a list of information they want to learn during the interview, ask students to develop questions for 3–5 items on their list.

#### Step 6

Give students a few tips on writing strong interview questions. Strong interview questions are:

- Clear
- Open-ended
- Applicable to the topic
- Include who, what, where, when, why, and how

#### Step 7

After students have drafted two or three interview questions, invite volunteers to act out an interview with Senator Watkins or a BIA official. After a few volunteers have taken their turn, students should discuss what the interviews have in common.

#### Step 8

Facilitate a classroom discussion. Ask students to consider how they might present the information learned to Tribal leaders to help them resist the push for termination. How would students recommend advocating against the general policy of termination on a national level?

---

## Activity 4

### Socratic seminar

*Time: 60 minutes*

---

#### Step 1

Explain to the students that they will participate in a Socratic seminar in which they will help one another understand the key ideas from the text they read and analyzed during Activity 2 (above).

#### Step 2

If possible, arrange the room so students are sitting in a circle. Tell students that the purpose of a Socratic seminar is not to debate but to understand the text more deeply.

#### Step 3

Share with students the following discussion questions (one at a time). Provide students with a few minutes to review notes from the “Shadow Reading Graphic Organizer” prior to responding to each question.

#### Socratic discussion questions

- Why did Watkins say that termination policy “concerns the freeing of the Indian from special federal restrictions on the property and the person?” What was his motive and purpose?
- What assumptions do Watkins and the BIA make about Native identity and American citizenship? What are the consequences of this assumption? How do these assumptions compare with the testimony of Siletz people?
- What goals of termination would federal officials consider a success, and the Siletz people consider a failure?
- What is the point of these questions? Why do you think we’re asking them?

---

## Activity 4 *(Continued)*

### Step 4

Encourage all students to share their ideas and to ask each other questions. Remind students those questions should be open-ended and supportive, such as the following:

1. What part of the text inspired your idea(s)?
2. Can you say more about your idea?
3. Can you clarify your thoughts?

### Step 5

The instructor should debrief the activity at the end.