

The Role of Federal Legislation in Perpetuating Structures of
Oppression Against Indigenous Peoples
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In this paper I speak to the importance of having and using knowledge about federal legislation in the United States to create lasting, bottom-up change that increases equity and equality. Within the last several decades there has been very little anthropological scholarship published that focuses on the impact of federal policies and regulations on Indigenous land or peoples. In this paper, I fill the existing gap by studying the intersection between policy and anthropology in the United States regarding the reallocation of Indigenous land, drawing attention to major pieces of legislation passed in the 1800s and 1900s: The Declaration of Independence, three Supreme Court cases, the General Allotment Act, the Dead Indian Act, the Burke Act, and the Indian Reorganization Act. Each of these Acts depicts ways the United States government implemented inequitable federal policy, which has significant long-term consequences, especially regarding land and its cultural significance. In analyzing the original pieces of legislation, along with contemporary ethnographies, scholarly articles, and texts written by Indigenous people, I evaluate the ways past policies have manifested into the present, with particular attention to the implications of government mandates on ideas of sovereignty, culture and the self-identity of Indigenous people. As a result of actions taken by the United States federal government to dismantle the sovereignty of Indigenous Nations, Indigenous people face various social, political, economic and environmental threats, such as increased cultural stress and historical trauma response. To address the pervasive impact of colonial ideology and recognize the inherent presence of such policies within contemporary society, I delve into the history of Alma College's land rights and address the need for a land acknowledgment statement from Alma while appealing to the general public. Issues of Indigenous land rights and reallocation are a responsibility shared by Indigenous people and white settlers to rectify injustices perpetuated by federal legislation.