Who Holds Authority?

Federal policy goals and their effects on tribal authority

9-12.US2.1 "Analyze how federal policies established the relationship between the United States government and American Indian tribes, and the intended and unintended outcomes..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline federal policies, circle their stated goals, and number unintended outcomes that affected tribes. Use your marks to track how the federal government's relationship with tribes changed.

Changing Federal Policies

1. In 1887, the Dawes Act divided land held by tribes into parcels assigned to individual American Indian households. Federal officials hoped to turn tribal citizens into individual farmers and encourage assimilation into white society. Officials sold much land left over after allotment to non-Native buyers. The policy weakened tribal control and contributed to a major loss of tribal land. Beginning with the Carlisle school in 1879, federal boarding schools separated many children from their families and tried to replace their languages and cultures.

2. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 ended further allotment and supported tribal governments and land recovery. It aimed to strengthen tribal self-government, but its model constitutions did not fit every tribe's traditions. In 1953, Congress adopted House Concurrent Resolution 108, calling for an end to federal supervision of tribes. Termination laws later ended federal recognition of some tribes, including the Menominee. The stated goal was independence, but the loss of federal services and protections brought hardship and threatened tribal authority.

3. During the same era, federal relocation programs offered job training and transportation to American Indians who moved to cities. Officials expected urban jobs to ease poverty and speed assimilation, but many arrivals faced discrimination and struggled to find work or housing. Some also built strong urban Native communities. By the late 1960s, a different approach gained ground: self-determination. Under a 1975 law, tribes could contract to run programs once managed by federal agencies. This expanded tribal control, although funding and federal oversight remained sources of tension.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did allotment change tribal control of land, and how did that result differ from its stated goal?

2. How did the 1934 law change federal policy toward tribal governments? What limit did its approach have?

3. Why did termination threaten tribal authority even though its stated goal was independence?

4. How did the outcome of relocation differ from officials' expectations? How did the later 1975 law take a different approach?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise a tribal council in 1975. In four sentences, recommend whether to contract to run a federal program, using two earlier policy eras as evidence and explaining one possible benefit and one risk.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.US2.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline federal policies, circle their stated goals, and number unintended outcomes that affected tribes. Use your marks to track how the federal government's relationship with tribes changed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did allotment change tribal control of land, and how did that result differ from its stated goal?	**Officials intended to encourage individual farming and assimilation, but allotment weakened tribal control and contributed to a major loss of tribal land.**
2	How did the 1934 law change federal policy toward tribal governments? What limit did its approach have?	**It ended further allotment and supported tribal governments, but its model constitutions did not fit every tribe's traditions.**
3	Why did termination threaten tribal authority even though its stated goal was independence?	**Termination ended federal recognition of some tribes. The resulting loss of federal services and protections brought hardship and threatened tribal authority.**
4	How did the outcome of relocation differ from officials' expectations? How did the later 1975 law take a different approach?	**Officials expected city jobs to ease poverty and speed assimilation, but many people faced discrimination and difficulty finding work or housing. The 1975 law instead let tribes contract to run programs previously managed by federal agencies.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I recommend that the council contract to run the program because the 1975 law would give the tribe more control over its services. The 1934 law supported tribal government, but its model constitutions show why the council should protect its own decision-making traditions. Termination showed that losing federal protections could cause hardship, so a contract should not mean giving up federal support. The council should accept only if the funding and oversight terms protect tribal authority.

Accept either recommendation if the response uses two earlier policy eras accurately and explains a plausible benefit and risk of contracting. Students may cite continued federal oversight or funding as a risk.