Whose Land Decision?

Examine how energy needs and Sámi cultural rights shape land decisions.

7.C.6.4 "Analyze issues related to Indigenous sovereignty, including the management of natural resources and the preservation of Indigenous cultures (e.g., Scandinavia's Saami, Rohingya of Myanmar, Uyghur of China, New Zealand's Māori)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways people use the land, circle two details that show how herding supports Sámi culture, and put a star beside a sentence about who should take part in land decisions.

Reindeer, Wind, and Rights

1. In northern Norway, some Sámi families herd reindeer across large areas of land. Herds need different pastures through the year, so herders guide them between grazing places. This work also carries knowledge passed through generations, including Sámi words for places, weather, and herding practices. The land is more than a source of food or income. When a route becomes hard to use, families may have fewer chances to teach young people how to herd on the land and use that knowledge together.

2. Wind farms can provide electricity without burning fossil fuels. But turbines, service roads, and noise may disrupt some reindeer grazing areas. On Norway's Fosen peninsula, Sámi herders argued that wind farms harmed the winter grazing their herds needed. In 2021, Norway's Supreme Court ruled that permits for two wind farms were invalid because they violated the herders' right to practice their culture. The ruling did not mean that every wind farm must close. It showed that producing electricity does not erase the duty to protect cultural rights.

3. Indigenous sovereignty includes having a meaningful say in decisions that affect a people's land and way of life. In Norway, officials must consult Sámi representatives about decisions that could directly affect Sámi interests. Consultation means hearing their views before choices are made, not simply announcing a finished plan. A fair decision about energy projects would examine where herds travel, consider other locations or designs, and weigh electricity needs alongside grazing rights. Sámi communities are not all alike, so officials must listen to the people whose land use is affected.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How can a wind farm meet one need while creating a problem for Sámi herders?

2. Why can the loss of a grazing route affect more than a herding family's income?

3. What does the Fosen court ruling show about the relationship between electricity projects and cultural rights?

4. Why should officials hear from the Sámi people who use the affected land before deciding where a project goes?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A new road to a clinic is proposed across winter grazing land in northern Norway. In four sentences, recommend how officials should make the decision and one change they could consider, then explain a cost of your change and how the passage supports your plan.

ANSWER KEY

Whose Land Decision?

GRADE 7 · 7.C.6.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways people use the land, circle two details that show how herding supports Sámi culture, and put a star beside a sentence about who should take part in land decisions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How can a wind farm meet one need while creating a problem for Sámi herders?	**It can provide electricity without burning fossil fuels, but its turbines, roads, and noise may disrupt reindeer grazing.**
2	Why can the loss of a grazing route affect more than a herding family's income?	**It can reduce chances to pass on herding knowledge, including Sámi words and practices, to young people.**
3	What does the Fosen court ruling show about the relationship between electricity projects and cultural rights?	**An electricity project must respect cultural rights. The ruling invalidated permits for two wind farms, not all wind farms.**
4	Why should officials hear from the Sámi people who use the affected land before deciding where a project goes?	**Those herders can explain where their reindeer travel and graze, helping officials consider designs or locations that protect grazing rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Officials should consult the Sámi herders who use the land before choosing the road's route. They could study winter grazing areas and move the road away from a route the herds use. A longer road might cost more, but it could still provide access to the clinic. The passage shows that blocked grazing routes can make it harder for families to pass on herding knowledge.

Accept other reasonable project changes if students explain how the change protects grazing while addressing the clinic's need. Do not require students to claim that Sámi representatives have the final say over every project.