Promises and Costs

Examine the intent and effects of a federal relocation policy.

OKH.C.6.2.E "Identify the intent of the Indian Relocation Act as it relates to vocational training and assimilation policies, as well as its effect on Tribal communities."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one statement of the federal government's goal, circle two details about training or moving support, and number two effects on Tribal communities. Use your marks to separate the policy's intent from its results.

A Job Offer Far from Home

1 Imagine an offer arriving at a reservation household in the 1950s: learn a trade and get help finding a city job. The Indian Relocation Act of 1956 authorized federal vocational training for eligible Native adults and assistance with expenses such as travel and living costs. It strengthened a relocation effort the Bureau of Indian Affairs had already begun. Officials pointed to limited jobs on many reservations and presented city employment as a path to economic opportunity. Moving was not legally required, but the offer came at a time when federal policies often failed to support reservation economies.

2 The program was about more than individual paychecks. During the same era, federal officials promoted assimilation, the idea that Native people should enter mainstream U.S. society rather than sustain distinct Tribal ways of life. Training for occupations in cities fit that aim: it prepared people for jobs away from reservations and encouraged permanent residence in urban neighborhoods. Some officials also expected that fewer people living on reservations would reduce federal responsibilities to Tribal nations. The act did not itself abolish Tribal governments, and Native families made their own decisions about whether to move.

3 For some participants, training opened doors to steady wages, new skills, and wider opportunities. Others arrived to find scarce jobs, expensive housing, or discrimination, while distance made it harder to visit relatives and take part in language and cultural practices at home. When members moved away, some Tribal communities lost residents who might have worked locally or helped sustain community activities. Yet Native people in cities also built organizations and networks that kept cultural ties alive and connected people from different Tribal nations. These varied outcomes show why a federal promise of opportunity must be weighed against its effects on communities.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What economic result did federal officials hope vocational training and relocation would produce?

2. How did preparing people for city jobs fit the federal government's aim of assimilation?

3. Describe one way relocation could weaken a Tribal community and one way Native people in cities maintained connections.

4. Why does calling relocation voluntary not fully describe its effects on Tribal communities?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A Tribal council is considering a new job-training program that would pay for moves to cities. Write a five-sentence recommendation explaining one possible benefit, one risk to the community, and one condition the council should require to protect people's choices and ties to home.

ANSWER KEY

Promises and Costs

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.6.2.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one statement of the federal government's goal, circle two details about training or moving support, and number two effects on Tribal communities. Use your marks to separate the policy's intent from its results. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What economic result did federal officials hope vocational training and relocation would produce?	**Officials hoped training would prepare Native adults for city jobs and provide economic opportunity where reservation jobs were limited.**
2	How did preparing people for city jobs fit the federal government's aim of assimilation?	**It encouraged Native people to work and live in mainstream urban society rather than remain in distinct Tribal communities.**
3	Describe one way relocation could weaken a Tribal community and one way Native people in cities maintained connections.	**A community could lose residents who might work or participate locally. Native people in cities built organizations and networks that kept cultural ties alive.**
4	Why does calling relocation voluntary not fully describe its effects on Tribal communities?	**Families chose whether to move, but limited reservation jobs and weak federal support shaped that choice. Moves could also separate people from relatives and community activities.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I recommend that the council consider the program only if families can choose whether to move without losing access to services at home. Paid training could help members gain skills and find better-paying work. However, moves could leave fewer people to support local businesses and community events. The council should require funding for visits home and for training that can also lead to jobs on Tribal land. That condition would give members more ways to pursue work while staying connected to the community.

Accept answers that distinguish the federal intent to promote employment and assimilation from the varied effects on Tribal communities. Students should not claim that the act required relocation or abolished Tribal governments.