Who Decided?

Federal policy and Native cultural life

OKH.C.6.2 "Examine government policies impacting American Indian identity, culture, economy, Tribal government, and sovereignty. Analyze the effects of federal policy to forcibly assimilate Native children through the establishment of Indian boarding..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each policy's stated goal or rule. Circle one effect on Native culture or Tribal communities for each policy.

Policies and Their Effects

1. At Riverside Indian School in Oklahoma, federal boarding-school policies once shaped daily life far from many students' families. At Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, students learned English and job skills chosen by officials. Such schools often punished Native languages and discouraged Tribal customs. Officials claimed this training would help children fit into mainstream society. For many students, separation from relatives interrupted the passing of language and knowledge between generations. Yet Native families and former students also found ways to preserve and revive their traditions.

2. Federal officials also tried to change life beyond school. The 1883 Code of Indian Offenses treated certain Tribal ceremonies, including the Sun Dance, as punishable offenses. Federal agents and Courts of Indian Offenses enforced these rules, limiting religious freedom and Tribal authority over community practices. This policy differed from boarding schools in where it operated, but both aimed to replace Native ways of life with government-approved behavior. Tribal people continued cultural practices despite these restrictions, and the federal government later ended many such prohibitions.

3. In 1956, Congress passed the Indian Relocation Act, which funded job training and encouraged Native people to move from reservations to cities. Federal officials promised opportunities, but many people faced discrimination, low wages, or weak support after moving. Leaving home could make it harder to participate in Tribal government and share language or ceremonies with relatives. Others built urban Native organizations and maintained connections to their nations. Across these policies, the key question is not only what officials promised, but who controlled choices about Native identity and community life.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could boarding-school rules turn officials' goal into a loss for Native families?

2. How did the 1883 Code limit Tribal authority, not just individual religious practice?

3. Why might relocation weaken some people's Tribal ties even if they found work?

4. What purpose linked boarding-school policies and the 1883 Code, despite their different settings?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences proposing an action a Tribal education council could lead to strengthen language or cultural practices today. Explain how your action responds to two different policies in the passage and keeps decisions in Tribal hands.

ANSWER KEY

Who Decided?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each policy's stated goal or rule. Circle one effect on Native culture or Tribal communities for each policy. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could boarding-school rules turn officials' goal into a loss for Native families?	**Officials wanted children to fit into mainstream society, but schools punished Native languages and separated children from relatives, interrupting the passing of cultural knowledge.**
2	How did the 1883 Code limit Tribal authority, not just individual religious practice?	**Federal agents and courts enforced rules against ceremonies instead of leaving decisions about community practices to Tribes.**
3	Why might relocation weaken some people's Tribal ties even if they found work?	**Moving to a city could make it harder to participate in Tribal government and share language or ceremonies with relatives.**
4	What purpose linked boarding-school policies and the 1883 Code, despite their different settings?	**Both sought to replace Native cultural practices with behavior approved by federal officials.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A Tribal education council could organize language classes taught by Tribal speakers. These classes would help rebuild knowledge interrupted when boarding schools punished Native languages and separated children from families. The council could also ask cultural leaders whether to offer gatherings, responding to the 1883 Code's restrictions on ceremonies. Tribal leaders would decide what to teach and what to keep within their community.

Accept proposals that connect an action to two distinct policies and give Tribal leaders control over cultural decisions. Students may cite relocation instead of either policy used in the sample.