Land and Leadership

Tracing a change in federal policy toward Tribal nations

USH.C.4.3.F "Explain how the Indian Reorganization Act intended to reverse federal policy by restoring lands to Tribal trust status and endorsing Tribal constitutions, which affected the thirty-nine Tribes of Oklahoma."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two earlier federal actions and circle two later tools meant to counter them. Write matching numbers beside each action and tool to show the policy reversals.

A Change in Direction

1. A family holds a deed to a small farm, while land once used by its Tribal nation has passed to outsiders. This was one result of allotment, a federal policy that divided some Tribes' shared lands into individual parcels. In Oklahoma, federal policies also broke up Tribal landholdings and weakened Tribal governments, though each nation's history was different. Land declared "surplus" or lost through later sales could leave a nation with less territory to govern. When the Indian Reorganization Act passed in 1934, its authors proposed a change in direction: stop dividing Tribal land and support collective Tribal control.

2. The act allowed the federal government to acquire land and hold its legal title **in trust** for a Tribe. That land could again form part of a Tribal land base, rather than become another individual allotment. Trust status offered federal protection against unauthorized sale, but it did not automatically return every acre taken earlier. The act also endorsed written Tribal constitutions as a way to organize Tribal governments. Tribal citizens could vote on a constitution, which could state how leaders would be chosen and what powers a council would exercise. Federal approval still played a role, so this was not complete independence.

3. Oklahoma's thirty-nine Tribes did not all receive the 1934 act's land provisions directly. Congress passed the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act in 1936 to make similar tools available there. Under that law, Oklahoma Tribes could organize governments, adopt constitutions, and seek land held in trust. These options pushed against earlier policies that had divided land and constrained Tribal decision-making. Yet a new law could not undo every loss, and nations made their own choices about organization. To explain the reversal, connect each earlier federal action to a later tool and note both the change and its limits in Oklahoma.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How was holding land in trust meant to reverse the effects of allotment?

2. Why did trust status not fully undo earlier land losses?

3. How could a written Tribal constitution counter earlier federal policies toward Tribal governments?

4. How did the 1936 law carry the policy change to Oklahoma, and what limit remained?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise an Oklahoma Tribal council in 1936. Write a five- or six-sentence recommendation that proposes how to use both trust land and a written constitution, explains which earlier policy each choice counters, and names one limit.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.4.3.F

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two earlier federal actions and circle two later tools meant to counter them. Write matching numbers beside each action and tool to show the policy reversals. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How was holding land in trust meant to reverse the effects of allotment?	**Allotment divided shared Tribal land into individual parcels. Trust land could rebuild a protected Tribal land base instead of creating more individual allotments.**
2	Why did trust status not fully undo earlier land losses?	**It protected land acquired for a Tribe but did not automatically return every acre previously lost.**
3	How could a written Tribal constitution counter earlier federal policies toward Tribal governments?	**Earlier policies weakened Tribal governments. A constitution could set rules for choosing leaders and define a council's powers, strengthening Tribal decision-making.**
4	How did the 1936 law carry the policy change to Oklahoma, and what limit remained?	**It made similar tools available to Oklahoma Tribes, including trust land and constitutions. It could not undo every loss, and federal approval still played a role.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I recommend that the council seek to place newly acquired land in federal trust for the Tribe. This would rebuild a shared land base after federal policies divided Tribal lands into individual parcels. The council could also ask Tribal citizens to vote on a written constitution setting rules for selecting leaders. That choice would strengthen Tribal decision-making after earlier policies weakened Tribal governments. Neither step would return all lost land, and federal approval would still limit independence.

Accept recommendations that connect trust land to reversing land division and a constitution to strengthening Tribal government. Students may identify incomplete land recovery or continued federal approval as a limit.