

Milestones in Native American History



Pre-Columbian Societies



Arrival in North America

- ☞ Most scholars believe that the first Native Americans reached North America by traveling across a land bridge connecting eastern Siberia and Alaska.

Key Advances



- Pre-Columbian peoples developed all of the following:
 - A mathematically based calendar
 - Irrigation systems
 - Domesticated cereal crops such as maize
 - Multifamily dwellings
 - Herbal medical treatments
 - Large cities such as the Aztec capital

Key Failures



- ❧ Pre-Columbian peoples did not develop
 - ❧ Wheeled vehicles
 - ❧ Gunpowder
 - ❧ Waterwheels

First European Contacts with Native Americans



Columbian Exchange



- ❧ Refers to the exchange of plants and animals between the New World and Europe following the discovery of America in 1492
- ❧ New World crops such as corn, tomatoes, and potatoes had a dramatic effect on the European diet.
- ❧ Old World domesticated animals such as horses, cows, and pigs had a dramatic effect on life in the New World

Disease and Population Collapse

- ❧ Old World diseases caused epidemics among the Native American inhabitants of the New World
- ❧ Native Americans suffered severe population declines because they lacked immunity to smallpox and other European diseases

English and Indians



Differences

- ❧ Lived in village communities
 - ❧ Shared a strong sense of spirituality
 - ❧ Divided labor by gender
 - ❧ Depended on agricultural economies
 - ❧ Both domesticated corn and other vegetables
- ❧ Radically different conceptions of property
 - ❧ English had precise concepts of private property
 - ❧ Native Americans had no concept of private property

Interaction between Native Americans and English Settlers



- ❧ The more Native Americans interacted with the English colonists, the more dependent they became on the fur trade
- ❧ Political and linguistic differences among Native Americans hindered united opposition to the English

The Iroquois Confederacy



- ❧ The most important and powerful Native American alliance
- ❧ The tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy formed the most important Native American political organization to confront the colonists
- ❧ During the 18th century, the Iroquois lived in permanent settlements

Forced Removal of the
Americans Indians to the
Trans-Mississippi West



Worcester v. Georgia (1831)

- ❧ The Cherokee differed from other Native American tribes in that the Cherokee tried to mount a court challenge to a removal order
- ❧ The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the rights of the Cherokee tribe to their tribal lands

Andrew Jackson and the Cherokees

- ❧ President Jackson refused to recognize the Court's decision
 - ❧ "John Marshall has made his decision: now let him enforce it."
- ❧ Jackson's antipathy toward Native Americans was well known
 - ❧ "I have long viewed treaties with American Indians as an absurdity not to be reconciled to the principles of our government."

The Trail of Tears



- ❧ Jackson's Native American policy resulted in the removal of the Cherokee from their homeland to settlements across the Mississippi River
- ❧ Refers to the relocation of Native Americans to settlements in what is now Oklahoma
- ❧ Approximately one-quarter of the Cherokee people died

Government Policy Toward American Indians in the Second Half of the 19th Century



Decline of the Plains Indians

- ❧ All of the following factors contributed to the decline of the Plains Indians
 - ❧ The slaughter of 70 million buffalo
 - ❧ The spread of epidemic diseases
 - ❧ Construction of the railroads

Publication of *Century of Dishonor* (1881)

- ❧ Book written by Helen Hunt Jackson
- ❧ Aroused public awareness of the wrongs that the federal government had inflicted on Native Americans

Dawes Act of 1887



- ❧ A misguided attempt to reform the government's Native American policy
- ❧ The legislation's goal was to assimilate Native Americans into the mainstream of American life.
- ❧ Attempted to accomplish assimilation by:
 - ❧ Dissolving many tribes as legal entities
 - ❧ Eliminating tribal ownership of land
 - ❧ Granting 160 acres to individual family heads

Consequences of the Dawes Act

- ❧ Ignored the inherent reliance of traditional Indian culture on tribally held land
- ❧ By 1900, Indians had lost 50% of the 156 million acres they had held just two decades earlier
- ❧ The forced assimilation doctrine of the Dawes Act remained the cornerstone of the government's official Indian policy for nearly a half a century
- ❧ The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (often called the Indian New Deal) partially reversed the individualistic approach of the Dawes Act by restoring the tribal basis of Indian life

The Ghost Dance



- ❧ The dance was a sacred ritual expressing a vision that the buffalo would return and all the elements of White civilization would disappear
- ❧ Fearing that the ceremony would trigger an uprising, the army attempted to stamp it out at the so-called Battle of Wounded Knee.
 - ❧ As many as two hundred Indian men, women, and children were killed.

Contributions During World War II

☞ The Homefront

- ☞ Native Americans volunteered to work in defense industries.

☞ The Navajo Code Talkers

- ☞ Fewer than 30 non-Navajos understood the Navajo's unwritten language
- ☞ Approximately 400 Navajos served as Code Talkers in the Pacific Theater.
 - ☞ Primary job was to transmit vital battlefield information via telegraphs and radios in their native dialect.
 - ☞ Saved countless lives and played a key role in the Battle of Iwo Jima