

Native-American Periodization

Contact

Acculturation

Assimilation

Removal and

Indian Wars,

Reservations

Dawes Allotment

A New Deal

Termination to

now

Notes

CONTACT: Contact refers to the period from the 15th through the 17th Centuries when Native-American tribes encountered European explorers and settlers for the first time. During this period of initial contact, Natives and Europeans influenced each other greatly, understanding each other through the lens of their own cultural perceptions.

ACCULTURATION: Acculturation occurs when two cultures borrow material goods, beliefs or ways of life from each other. Native-American and European cultures affected each other profoundly. Most notably, Indians crops such as corn, tomatoes and potatoes were introduced to Europe, dramatically changing the diet of millions. Europe influenced Native culture through exposure to manufactured goods, metal and alcohol.

ASSIMILATION: In the early 19th Century a growing American nation tried to blend Native-American tribes east of the Mississippi into American society. Many members of the Cherokee and Creek tribes assimilated by becoming small farmers.

REMOVAL: During the Presidency of Andrew Jackson, tribes in the Southeast were forcibly transplanted to lands west of the Mississippi. This marked the end of assimilation and is symbolized by the forced march of the Cherokee from Georgia to Oklahoma, also known as the Trail of Tears.

WAR: After the Civil War, the United States continued to expand to the West and clashed with Plains tribes such as the Sioux and Apache who refused to give up their ancestral land. This was the period of Indian Wars.

RESERVATIONS: In the late 19th Century, defeated tribes or those who did not wish to fight were placed on parcels of land and, in theory, cared for with food and protection by the US government. These were the reservations.

DAWES ALLOTMENT: In 1887 Congress passed the Dawes Allotment Act, which took land away from reservations. The stated purpose was to turn more Indians into independent farmers. Native-Americans lost a great deal of reservation land, which dropped from 138 million acres of holdings in 1887 to 48 million acres in 1934.

A NEW DEAL: In the 1930's President Franklin Roosevelt tried to restore the territorial and cultural integrity of Indian reservations. In FDR's Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, John Collier, Native-Americans had an advocate in the federal government.

TERMINATION: In the 1950's the federal government cut back support for Native-Americans sharply and reservations declined. There was a dramatic rise in poverty and alcoholism.

NOW: There are new economic opportunities for Native-Americans with casinos and through the development of natural resources available on Indian land. Many challenges remain in the areas of poverty, education and the fight against discrimination.

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