

# **Native American Terms & Concepts**

# Video

*Where Did The First  
Americans Come From?*  
(4:05)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EBknU7D1OI>

# Pre-Colonial Times

**Paleo-Americans (Paleo-Indians)- First people to inhabit North America during the Ice Age**

**Beringia- Land Bridge between Siberia & Alaska that was exposed during last Ice Age**

**Archeologists believe people migrated across this bridge into North America or via boats**

**Groups were nomadic hunter-gathers, but some began to build urban civilizations**

**Descendants are Native Americans & Indigenous populations today**



# Independence Period (1492-1775)

**Tribe-** Group of people who share a common ancestry, language, customs, culture, etc

**Nation-** Large group of people united by common characteristics such as ethnicity, history, language, or religion

**1492-** Tribal nation in the Caribbean come into contact with Columbus

**1607-** British colonists settle in present day Virginia & seize land

**After the Revolutionary War** the seizure of land increased

# Sovereignty & Treaties: 1776-1829

**Country or State-** Nation with a government that has sovereignty over a territory with borders & a population

**Sovereignty-** Authority to self-govern; the legitimate & ultimate authority over a political unit

**Treaty-** Formal, legally binding written agreement between nations or countries

# 1790-1829 (continued)

1790- **Non-Intercourse Act** said sales of Native land could not be made without U.S. government authorization- widely violated

**Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)**- created in 1824 to implement federal laws & policies related to Native Americans

1832- **Worcester V. Georgia**- established tribal sovereignty for Native Nations

Currently, there are 574 tribal nations in the United States



# Video

*Why Treaties Matter |  
NPR (5:20)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bexvE4lZRG0>



The United States government signed some 374 treaties saying it would provide funding for Native American needs.

“In exchange for land and peace, the U.S. government had promised Native people protection for eternity, or, to use the government's words ‘as long as water flows, or grass grows upon the earth.’ The U.S. government's so-called ‘**trust responsibility**’ for Native Americans is a legal obligation that has been upheld by the Supreme Court numerous times.”

—From “Uprooted: The 1950s plan to erase Indian country”  
by Max Nesterak in APM Reports



# Removal & Reservations: 1830-1886

**Removal-** U.S. government policy of forced displacement of self-governing Native American tribes to lands west of Mississippi

**Due to the increased size of the U.S. military, they no longer needed to avoid conflicts with Natives**

**The removal of the tribes became the dominant policy**

**1830- Indian Removal Act led to treaties that forced most eastern tribes to the west**

# 1830-1886 (continued)

**Reservation-** An area of land designated for a tribe/tribes. Government holds title to the land in trust of the tribe

Discovery of gold led to more expansion & bison were slaughtered for game rather than just food

1851- **Indian Appropriations Act-** Created the reservation system & provided funds to move tribes

1871- Law passed that ended treaty making





# The Invasion of America

# Allotment & Assimilation 1887-1933

**Assimilation-** To blend into a different culture, in this case European-American ways of life

This became the new federal policy & education was primary method for acculturation

BIA agents assisted in kidnapping children & enrolling them into boarding schools

This caused a significant loss of Native languages & traditions

# Allotment (continued)

**Allotment-** Piece of land deemed by the government to the head of each Native American family

**1887 General Allotment Act (Dawes Act)** provided land to Native families

**Goal was to assimilate Native Americans by breaking up reservations. Communal life & tribal life destroyed**

**Best land was sold/leased to non-Natives & Congress controlled funds. Native Americans lost over 90 million acres**

# Video

*How the US stole  
thousands of Native  
American children  
(13:41)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGqWRyBCHhw>

# Reorganization 1934-1952

**Reorganization-** Decreasing federal control of Native American affairs & increasing Indian self-government & responsibility

**1934-** Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) created, called Indian New Deal

Goals were to conserve Indian lands, extend rights to form business, to create credit system, rights of home rule, & provide education

It has been criticized as it was white-imposed that did not have wide Native support



“The IRA [Indian Reorganization Act] was the last great drive to assimilate the American Indian. It was also a program to colonize the tribes. All else had failed to liberate the Indians from their land: genocide, treaty-making and treaty-breaking, sub-standard education, disruption of Indian religion and culture, and the last and most oppressive of such measures, the Dawes Allotment Act. Assimilation into the dominant society, if by assimilation we mean the adoption of certain technologies and techniques, had already been underway for some hundred years. After all, the Indians were not and are not fools; we are always ready to improve our condition. But assimilation, meaning fading into the general society with a complete loss of our identity and our culture, was another thing entirely, and we had fought against this from the first coming of the white man.”

—Indian historian, publisher and journalist, Rupert Costo, Cahuilla Tribe, 1983

# Termination & Relocation 1953-1967

**Termination-** Federal Policy in which Native tribes were disbanded & land sold. Natives were to become citizens subject to tax & law

This destroyed “trust relationships” with tribes & assimilation again was policy

1953- **House Concurrent Resolution 108-** declared it should be federal policy to end supervision over tribes

Congress decided to dissolve treaties, abolish sovereignty, disband tribal governments, eradicate reservations

# Relocation Continued

**Relocation-** Companion policy of termination of BIA to move Natives to cities to assimilate into culture

**1956- Indian Relocation Act** provide job training & housing assistance for Natives who would leave reservations

While this didn't wipe out tribes, today more than 2/3 of Native Americans live in cities, not within tribal communities



# Uprooted: The 1950s plan to erase Indian Country

# Self-Determination: 1968-1987

**Self-determination-** Restoration of tribal community, cultural renewal, reservation development, & educational control

1968- **Indian Civil Rights Act-** granted Natives the rights in the Bill of Rights

1975- **Indian Self-Determination & Education Assistance Act-** tribes can manage own affairs

**Self-Determination-** Right to freely determine the political status & freedom to pursue own economic, social, & cultural development

# Self-Governance: 1988-Present

**Self-governance-** Tribal government assert their right to self-rule by assuming control & decision-making authority

**1988- Indian Self Determination & Education Assistance Act** created self-governance project

Legislation proposed that tribes can provide better governments to members rather than federal bureaucracies

Currently over 50% of all federal programs are carried out by tribes rather than federal agencies

# Impact of Gaming

**1988 Indian Gaming Regulatory Act defined how tribal governments could develop gaming facilities & how they could invest**

**Gaming Revenues have dramatically increased the economic resources of many tribal governments**

**Although only 58% of the tribes have gaming operations & many organizations have high rates of poverty, unemployment, & disease than other ethnic groups in the U.S.**