

A Brief History of Federal Indian Policy

As a Young Political Scientist, I will be able to...

- Examine current statistics Indian Peoples Face
- Discuss different eras of Government policy
- Analyze Congressional degrees for Indian rights
- Discuss what the future might bring

Statistics Today

Where does the word “Indian” come from?

We are using the term “Indian” in this course because most Native American organizations use Indian in their names, scholars use the term, and most laws & treaties use the term



Most Indians live west of the Mississippi, but 25% live in the Northeast

5 Largest states (in order)- California, Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico, and Washington



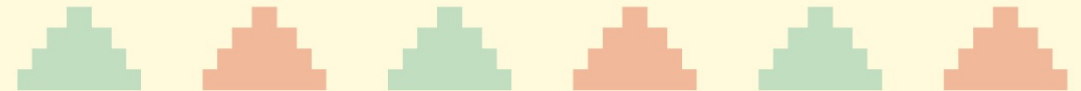
More Statistics

Alaska has the highest percentage of population of Indians at 20% of states population.

Currently, there are 565 federally recognized tribes.

As a group, Indians are recognized as the most disadvantaged group in the U.S.

Unemployment rate on some reservations is 80%



More Stats? Why not!

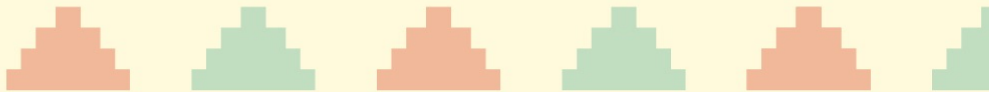
¼ of population lives in poverty, 14% do not have electricity, 12% do not have access to safe water

Half of the adult population does not have a high school diploma & 14% have a college degree

Many reservations have constructed casinos to help improve living conditions

Why do people continue to live on reservations if, sometimes, the quality of life is bad? Discuss!

Ask yourself this, would you leave your family behind if they lost their home or someone became sick?



1492-1787 Tribal Independence

**1492- Columbus “discovered” the new world.
Leading to European nations to explore**

**1607- Jamestown is founded in North America, Indian
tribes first welcoming the new settlers**

**Example: Settlers would have died if not for
the first Thanksgiving.**

**Settlers promised they would honor tribal
sovereignty, lands, & promised peace...**



They Lied.

Many Europeans viewed the tribes as heathens & savages. Christians were gifted the land by God

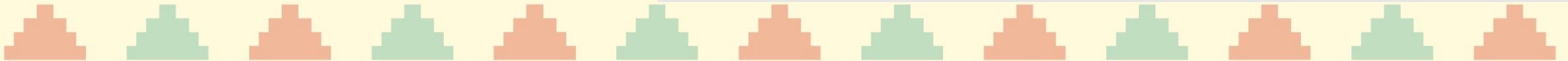
Pequot War- (1634-38) English join forces with eastern tribes to remove Pequot from region



King Phillips War (1675-76)- Settlers go to war with Metacom of the Wampanoag tribe



Destroyed entire towns & killed over 4,000 people






Colonization Increases

European populations doubled every 25 years after 1700, bringing diseases that were killing tribes



French & Indian War (1754-1763)- Iroquois League sides with the British to remove the French



American Revolution (1775-1783)- Americans decide to bring war into Indian territory to discourage British & Indian relations

After the war, America adopted a view of a future without Indians



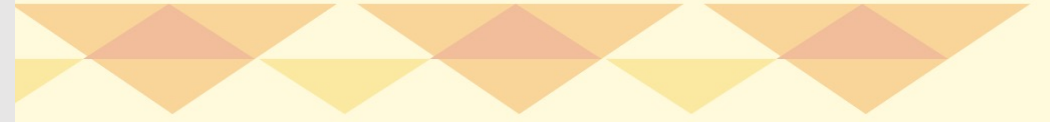
1787-1828 Agreements Between Equals

While not regarded as citizens, tribes were allowed sovereign nations, the ability to make treaties, & could declare war

The first treaty signed in the U.S. was with the Delaware Indians. Congress supported Indian rights

Northwest Ordinance of 1789- Indians could keep land & it would not be taken without consent.

However, many laws were not upheld & settlers took land. Jefferson encouraged westward expansion





1828-1887 Relocation

Andrew Jackson created policy to remove eastern tribes to the West

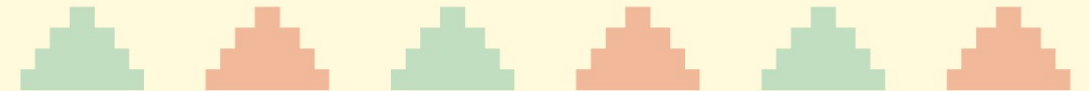


Indian Removal Act (1830)- President could “negotiate” with eastern tribes to move them west of Mississippi



Trail of Tears- Forced removal of the Cherokees to Oklahoma, 15,000 died

The U.S. wrote dozens of treaties of relocations of tribe, almost all of them were broken



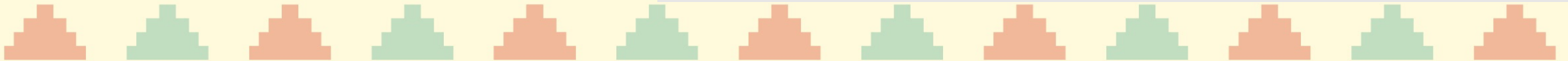
Relocation & Bison

Gold discovered in the Black Hills leads to the Indian Wars & events such as Custers Last Stand

U.S. Government tries to contain tribes by eradicating bison.

During the mid 1800s there were 30-40 million bison in the U.S.

By 1893, there were less than 400 left.





Assimilation

The **Dawes Act** regulated land rights of tribes to U.S. & sought to force Indians to assimilate



Assimilation- The process of removing your culture in favor of joining another



Boarding schools were opened to force children to reject tribal customs & become “American”

1871- Congress passed a law that forbid federal government to make treaties



1887-1934 Allotment & Assimilation

As the nation grew, more settlers set their eyes on Indian lands. Congress began to draft new Indian Policy

Assimilation became the predominant strategy to remove the reservation system



Part of the Dawes Act authorized president to divide tribal lands into parcels or allotments

Expected tribes to accept idea of private ownership & begin farming



Allotment Fails

Much of the land Indians gained in allotment was unfarmable & most did not want to leave communal society

Many Indians were forced to sell lands to help make up for poverty dropping lands from 150 million acres to just 50 million

1924 Congress passed a law that all Indians were citizens of the United States



1934-1953 Indian Reorganization

When the Great Depression devalued land & it was clear that Indians would not assimilate, Congress took a more humane approach.

Meriam Report- Study that showed the severe conditions of the reservations, such as disease & poverty

Indian Reorganization Act- Sought to rehabilitate Indian Nation's economic lives

Created new land, restored tribal governments, created funding for loans



1953-1968 Termination

Hoover changed course & ordered the complete integration of Indians into American Society.



Eisenhower administration ordered **Termination- Ending of Federal government's trust relationship with Indian tribes. Ended federal benefits**



Between 1953-1966 Congress terminates relationship with 109 tribes & takes control of land

Public Law 83-280- Gave states criminal jurisdiction over Indian reservations



Relocation

Program that offered job training & housing assistance to Indians who moved to urban areas outside the reservation

Most of the program did not supply decent housing & jobs

Many reservations were abolished, regardless of size or success





1968-Present: Tribal Self-Determination

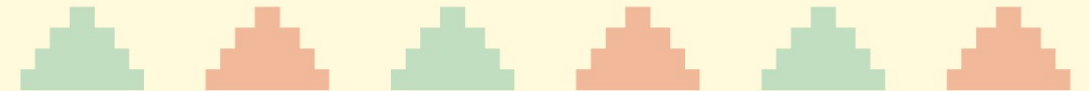
President Johnson began policy to recognize Indians as American citizens who also had the right of freedom as Indians

Nixon also believed in a new national policy to restore tribal governments



Since 1960s Congress has promoted tribal sovereignty & self-determination. They have created programs to enhance welfare

Indian Business Development Fund-
Congressional program to stimulate Indian business & employment



Congressional Acts

Indian Financing Act & Native American Programs Act-
Development of Indian commercial opportunities
& programs

**Indian Self-Determination & Education Assistance Act
of 1975-** Allows tribes to administer various
federal programs on reservation such as medical,
education, & law enforcement.

Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978- Gave tribes &
families protections against the removal of
children by state agencies & courts

Indian Tribal Government Tax Status Act- Tribes
may take tax advantages enjoyed by the
states

More Acts

Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988- Tribes can open casinos to promote local economy

Indian Arts & Crafts Act- Goods must be made by Indian to be labeled as such & Indians can seek damages against those who violate law

1994 President Clinton requires federal agencies to work with tribes on a “government-to-government” basis

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples- Recognized world wide rights of Indigenous Peoples

Supreme Court Views

Since 1970s, Supreme Court has decided against 80% of Indian cases brought forward



Has sought to limit tribal authority through judicial decree



The Future

Due to changes overtime, there is a fear that self-determination could become termination again in the future

2011- Many Tea Party activists called for the elimination of the Bureau of Indian Affairs & cutting budgets to reservation services

Indian populations need to work within politics to garner support for self-government & self-determination

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