

American Indian Movement

OBJECTIVES:

- Describe the background to the American Indian Movement.
- Explain the ways American Indians confronted their unique problems.

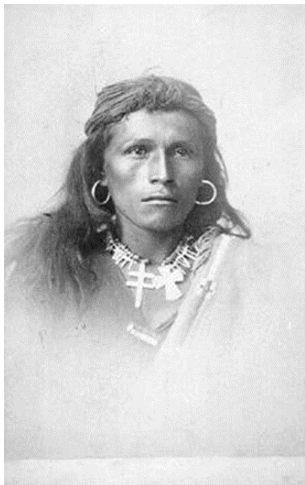
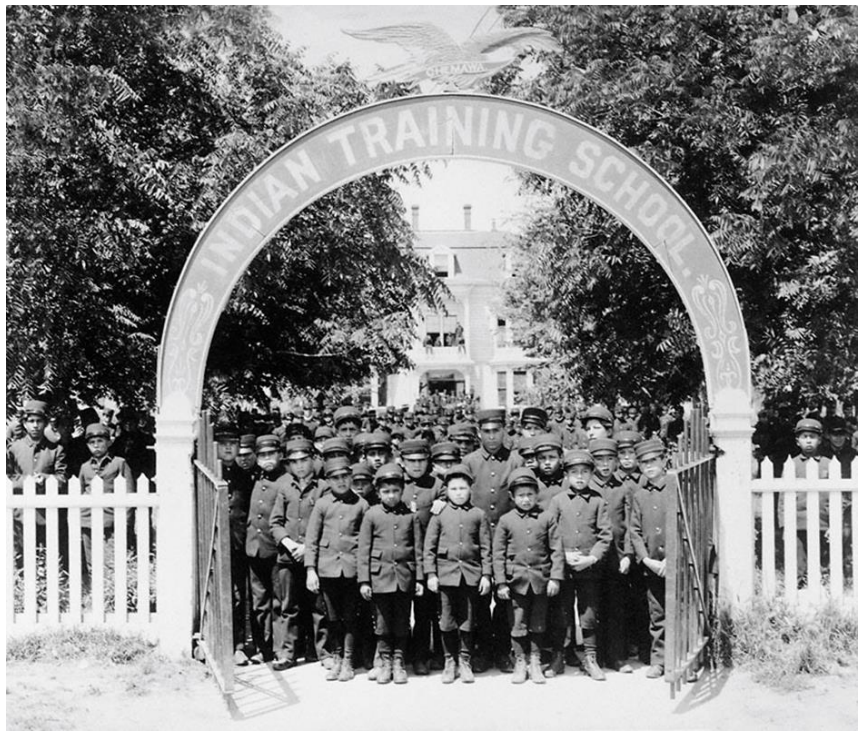


Background

- Native Americans have always occupied a unique social and legal position in the U.S.
 - White American society viewed “Indians” as one group – In reality, there are MANY different tribes, peoples, and cultures
- How does the U.S. government interact with tribes and Indian Nations?
 - Westward expansion of U.S. territory (1790’s – 1900’s) – led to the occupation and overtaking of American Indian tribal land.
 - Forced removal from tribal lands.
- 1871 – U.S. government no longer recognized Indian nations as independent powers.
- State and federal agencies were placed in charge of American Indian tribes and reservations.
 - Limited self-government for American Indians
 - Often worked to destroy their traditional lifestyles and culture - Assimilation

- What is the “Legacy” of U.S. government interaction with Native Americans

- Land - Taken by U.S. Government with tribes placed on reservations – (Indian Removal Act)
- They were denied equal opportunity
 - Were granted U.S. citizenship with Snyder Act (1924) – Still not allowed to vote in many states – (1948 – Arizona and New Mexico)
- The impact of reservations
 - Federal agencies were often corrupt
 - High poverty & poor living conditions
 - “Rez Poor”
 - Higher rates of alcoholism, drug use, suicide, and unemployment
 - Shorter life expectancy
- Centuries of negative stereotypes reinforced in media (“savages,” etc...)
- Treaties made between Native tribes and U.S. government were often broken
- Assimilation – 1879, U.S. government decided to begin “killing the Indian to save the man”
 - Children taken away to turn them “white” – Indian Boarding Schools



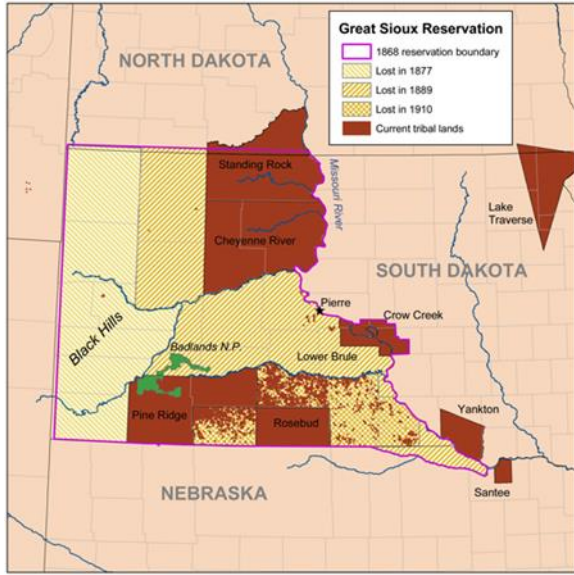
Land Claims

“Everything is tied to our homeland.”

- D’Arcy McNickle

- Traditional lands are a major part of Native American culture
 - Native tribes still had their land stripped away from them many years after Westward expansion
- 1946 – Congress created Indian Claims Commission to investigate land claims by Native Americans

- Paid some tribes for some lost land – many tribes simply wanted their lost land back, NOT the money
 - 1971 – Taos Pueblo, New Mexico
 - Tribal land returned (refused \$)
 - Blue Lake = 68,000 acres
- Not all tribes received land when they rejected the money
 - Example: Lakota Sioux tribe with the Black Hills region (South Dakota)
 - Sioux lost the land via treaty in 1877
 - This land was sacred to the Sioux and became the scene for American Indian protests



American Indian Movement

- Dennis Banks, Russell Means & Clyde Bellecourt—Chippewa activists – 1968 (Minnesota)
 - Created the American Indian Movement
- “A new coalition that will fight for Indian treaty rights and better conditions and opportunities for our people.”*
- Dennis Banks
- Fought for:
 - Autonomy (self-government) – sovereignty
 - Control of natural resources on Native tribal lands
 - Restoration of lands illegally taken from them
 - Native American legal rights
 - Many people criticized AIM for their openness to aggression and militant approach





Protests

- 1969 – more than 75 Native protestors took over Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay
 - Claimed the land under the terms of the Fort Laramie treaty of 1868 (allowed Native Americans to file homestead claims on federal lands)
 - Federal officials removed the protestors after a year and a half – brought national attention to grievances
- 1972 – Demonstrators traveled to Washington D.C. to protest violations of treaties
 - Occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs offices' for six days
- February 27, 1973, about 300 Oglala Lakota and AIM activists took over the village at Wounded Knee and refused to leave until the U.S. investigated the treatment of Native Americans and the poor conditions they lived with
 - FBI agents arrested around 300 people
 - Protestors finally agreed to surrender and leave if the government relooked at the treaties
 - Two AIM members were killed, about a dozen people hurt



“We support the Oglala Sioux Nation or any Indian Nation that will fight for its sovereignty...The issue here at Wounded Knee is the recognition of the treaties between the United States Government and the sovereign nations that were here before.”

- Onondaga Chief Oren Lyons

- Indian Education Act of 1972
 - gave parents and tribal councils more control over schools and programs
- Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975
 - Native American autonomy was enforced and allowed leaders to give federally supported social programs for housing and education
- Won legal battles to regain land and control of natural resources



Wounded Knee – Video Questions

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Opbxnuw0Dw0>

1. Wounded Knee is located in the state of _____
_____.
2. The caravan enters Wounded Knee in _____ 19____.
3. The protestors hold off the government for _____ days.
4. Wounded Knee is on the _____ Reservation.
5. The chairman of Pine Ridge is _____.
6. Protestors disliked Dick Wilson for the following reasons:
_____, _____, _____,
_____, _____, and
_____.
7. When a white man killed an Indian man near Pine Ridge,
people responded by _____
_____.