

The native american struggle

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



The Native American Struggle The way of life for the Native Americans changed greatly when the settlers arrived but they fought strongly to hold onto their sacred beliefs. No amount of influence or interference from the Europeans could change what the American Indians believed in. The natives fought long and hard to try to preserve their heritage and their lifestyles. While they are still given a small portion of land to live on, the plight of the Native American people has been going on since the settlers first set foot upon this land and continues to this day. Largest Tribes

Although they are all considered Native Americas or American Indians, there are over 550 different tribes in the United States. According to Time For Kids (2008), " Nearly 1 out of every 100 people in the U. S. is a Native American. Most live in areas west of the Mississippi. Native Americans belong to 561 tribes. The Cherokee tribe of Oklahoma is the largest. " (para. 1). The five largest tribes are; 1. Cherokee 308, 000 2. Navajo 219, 000 3. Chippewa 104, 000 4. Sioux 103, 000 5. Choctaw 82, 000 Figure 1. The above shows the top five largest American Indian tribes in the Untied States.

As one can see, the populations are large, yet still the American Indians do not have enough land to sustain their tribes and heritage. Note: From Time For Kids (2008). The Cherokee tribe or rather Cherokee Nation is the largest tribe, often referred to as the most advanced tribe among the American Indians. As stated on Cherokee Nation (2009), " Since earliest contact with European explorers in the 1500's, the Cherokee Nation has been identified as one of the most advanced among Native American tribes. Cherokee culture thrived for thousands of years in the southeastern United States before European contact.

After contact, Cherokee society and culture continued to develop, progressing with acquisitions from European settlers. Soon, we had shaped a bicultural government and a society that matched the most 'civilized' of the time" (para. 1). The Navajo Nation, most known for their language, is the second largest Native American tribe, located mostly in Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico. The language of the Navajo people was often considered a mystical language. According to Navajo Nation (2005), "Visitors from around the world are intrigued and mystified when they hear the Navajo language - so, too, were the enemy during World War II.

Unknown to many, the Navajo language was used to create a secret code to battle the Japanese. Navajo men were selected to create codes and serve on the front line to overcome and deceive those on the other side of the battlefield. Today, these men are recognized as the famous Navajo Code Talkers, who exemplify the unequalled bravery and patriotism of the Navajo people" (para. 2). During World War II the Navajo men who used that secret code were known as Wind Talkers. The third largest tribe in the United States and probably the least known, are the Chippewa Indians.

In Access Genealogy (2009), "One of the largest tribes North of Mexico, whose range was formerly along both shores of Lake Huron and Superior, extending across Minnesota Turtle Mountains, North Dakota. Although strong in numbers and occupying an extensive territory, the Chippewa were never prominent in history, owing to their remoteness from the frontier during the period of the colonial wars" (para. 1). The last two tribes in the top five are the Sioux Indians and the Choctaw Indians. The Sioux people were among the most powerful within the Native American tribes.

The Sioux was also home to one of the most popular Indian chiefs, Sioux Chief Sitting Bull. The Choctaw Indians are located mostly in Oklahoma. According to Choctaw (2008), " The Choctaws were one of the largest and most advanced tribes in all of North America" (para. 1). Early Life Before the arrival of the settlers, Native Americans lived a peaceful life, hunting and living off the land. They were dependant on the resources of the land. The plains Indians in the west were around for many centuries before the settlers arrived. Most American Indians are a deep spiritual people.

According to _ (2003), " The natural environment helped to shape the people's thinking and cultures as they viewed the world and the Universe in a native perspective of a physical and metaphysical reality" (para. 2). Believing in the deep powers of the land, the plains Indians were very loyal to the environment. As stated on _ (2003), " The natural environment of the Great West provided life to American Indians. It also took life! People learned that working together, and hunting together, was extremely important! Living alone on the plains meant certain death.

It was a hard life, taught by Nature"(para. 3). They survived by depends and respecting the land, and together as a people. Oftentimes the men of the tribes would leave for days at time to hunt and gather food, leaving the women to farm and care for the children and elders of the tribe. The Settlers Life for the Native Americans change dramatically once the settlers landed. At first Indians greeted the settlers in Jamestown with hostility just based on the treatment they received from the Spanish, but soon after they started sharing their food.

According to The Library of Congress (2003), “ At first, Powhatan, leader of a confederation of tribes around the Chesapeake Bay, hoped to absorb the newcomers through hospitality and his offerings of food. As the colonists searched for instant wealth, they neglected planting corn and other work necessary to make their colony self-sufficient. They therefore grew more and more dependent on the Indians for food” (para. 1). With Captain John Smith leading the settlers in Jamestown, trade relations did not always work with the Indians.

The Library of Congress (2003) states, “ Unfortunately for the Indians, Smith believed that the English should treat Indians as the Spanish had: to compel them to ‘ drudgery, work, and slavery,’ so English colonists could live ‘ like Soldiers upon the fruit of their labor. ’ Thus, when his negotiations with Indians for food occasionally failed, Smith took what he wanted by force” (para. 2). After the Native Americans knew the English settlers were here to stay, they began to attack. Powhatan was disappointed that the settlers were not as friendly and forthcoming as the Indians were.

As stated in The Library of Congress (2003), “ He knew that the English “ invade my people, possess my country. ” Indians thus began attacking settlers, killing their livestock, and burning such crops as they planted. All the while, Powhatan claimed he simply could not control the young men who were committing these acts without his knowledge or permission” (para. 3). Soon the settlers began fighting the American Indians, forcing them off their land and more west. Once the Indians started moving west, the English and French settlers laid stake to the land. Present Day

Even today the tribes struggle to maintain their heritage. They remain a highly spiritual people. Most tribes however are plagued by poverty, high rates of teen suicide, and alcoholism. Under constant scrutiny for their beliefs and religious practices, up until 1978 they were forced to either convert to Christianity or be jailed (Wikipedia 2009). Even still, as recent as 1993 the Peyote Indians were denied certain parts of their religious practices. According to Wikipedia (2009), " However, despite the passing of the Freedom of Religion Act in 1973, several practices of Native American religion were still being stifled.

For example, the Peyote Indians named their tribe after the peyote cactus, which is central to their religious practices. The peyote cactus was banned by the government, however, due to its powerful hallucinogenic effects, and thus was still outlawed to be used by the Native Americans. It was not until the Native American Free Exercise of Religion Act of 1993 was passed that the Peyote Indians could lawfully use the peyote cactus in their religious celebrations" (para. 25). Figure 2. The pie chart illustrates the top five Native American tribes that had families living in poverty in 1989. Note: From U. S.

Bureau of the Census (1990). Even in recent memory the amount of Native American families that lived in poverty was very high. Native American families that live in poverty rates among the higher than any other American ethnic group in the nation. Still today, most Native American Indians face discrimination on a daily basis. According to About. com (2009), " In the U. S. , Native Americans are a " minority" racial group, and as such, they continue to face discrimination. In fact, prior to the civil rights laws, once

could find three separate drinking fountains labeled " Whites," " Colored" and " Indian" in certain states.

Movie theaters were similarly split into three separate sections" (para. 3). Even though most of the land that the Native American occupies is federally protected, the American Indians have a constant struggle with the government to protect their rights as a people. About. com (2009) states, " they continue to fight to protect their rights and religious freedoms, both of which have repeatedly been threatened over the years through denial of access to religious sites, prohibitions on the use or possession of sacred objects, and restrictions on their ability to worship through ceremonial and traditional means" (para.). In summary, even though the Native American Indians way of life has changed drastically, their beliefs and lifestyle remain the same. The European settlers made a large impact on the American Indians but it was the they that helped the early settlers truly settle in to the new land and survive the harsh weather conditions of their first few years on the new continent. Native American Indians are of strong will and deep beliefs, they still fight for their rights as a people.

Even in this new century of technological advances, the Native American Indians work hard every day, from their small Indian Reservations that they call home, to preserve their heritage and their way of life.

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