

# 19th century americas affect on native americans

[History](#)



19th Century America's Affect on Native Americans The 1800's were a tumultuous period in United s history. The population of the United States was increasing. Citizens were looking towards expansion. Portions of the West and Southwest were controlled by Spain and England and the government wanted to hamper any eastward expansion by other nations. The United States government supported the expansion westward. The push was on to the west. The face of Native America would soon be changed forever.

Concern over the possibility of European expansion propelled the United States Government to create a buffer to stem a possible encroachment. " Between 1816 and 1840, tribes located between the original states and the Mississippi River, including Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles, signed more than 40 treaties ceding their lands to the U. S." (National Historical Trail, n. p.) The Federal Removal Act signed into law did not call for the actual removal of Indians from their homeland; it gave the authority to negotiate for exchange of their land for land in the western territories. However, pressure to obtain native land soon resulted in the forcible removal of Native Americans from the eastern United States. Probably the most well known forced move became known as the 'Trail of Tears' where thousands died on the forced marches.

There was no consideration given for the vast cultural differences of various tribes. Uprooted from their way of life and relocated to areas home to other tribes resulted in cultural upheavals and clashes amongst various Native American tribes. Additionally, settlers began pushing westward. As the demand for more land by settlers west of the Mississippi River increased, hostility grew between the settlers and the American Indians. The US

<https://assignbuster.com/19th-century-americas-affect-on-native-americans/>

government then began a systematic relocation of the Indian population to reservations. If tribes tried to avoid relocation bloody wars would erupt. One of the most notable 'Custer's Last Stand', resulted from the Cheyenne and Sioux Indians refusing to leave the Black Hills when the area was opened up by the government to gold miners. Custer and his men attacked an Indian village killing women and children. During the battle that ensued Custer himself was killed, spurring the government to forcibly relocate the remainder of the American Indians to reservations. By the late 1800's, most of the surviving Indians were on reservations. Their way of life had been decimated. " Five hundred years of disease and conquest, removal and reservation, reduced the native population of the continental United States from a conservatively estimated 2 to 5 million people to only 228, 000 survivors by 1890." (Lewis, 215)

Another tragedy of the Plains Indians inflicted by white settlers was the destruction of their primary source of food, the American Bison. While the Indians used almost every part of the bison, whites drove the Bison to near extinction for the mere 'sport' of hunting or for greed. Buffalo tongue was a delicacy and almost the entire population was systematically slaughtered for white man's profit. The government did nothing to stem this. The rationale was a lack of food would further dehumanize the Indian population and force them to the reservation.

Despair abounded for the Native American people that had survived. Their homeland was gone. Their way of life was no more. Wovoka and Tavibo were two Indian medicine men who brought hope to the American Indians. After the near decimation, both men, had similar visions from the 'Great Spirit' that their lands would be restored. The Ghost Dance became part of the <https://assignbuster.com/19th-century-americas-affect-on-native-americans/>

ritual that would lead to their emancipation. It is easy to see how the promise of deliverance would be embraced. The visions described by both men spoke of the downfall of the white man. Wovoka preached that although such a down fall was inevitable, it could not be accomplished by violent means and strongly encouraged non-violence. As word of the Ghost Dance spread, fear among whites increased. Eventually, it leads to more death and destruction. Confined, stripped of all human dignity and subjected to years of degradation, it is easy to perceive how the Native Americans, once a proud and a free race, would reach out and embrace hope - the only remnant left from the white man's exploits.

#### Bibliography

Bodiford, James R., " The Ghost Dance Movement." Ghostdance. Undated. Michigan State University. 9 Nov. 2005 .

" A Brief History of Bison." Bison Basics. 13 Jul 2003. Bison Basics. 9 Nov. 2005

.

" Custer's Last Stand . Aftermath." Immigration Native America. 2 May 2003. Library of Congress. 9 Nov. 2005 .

" Federal Indian Removal Policy." Rosecity. 28 Apr. 2005. Trail of Tears Association. 9 Nov. 2005 .

Lewis, David R., Native: The Significance of Native Americans in the History of the Twentieth-Century American West In A New Significance: Re-Envisioning the History of the American West. Clyde A. Milner II, ed. Oxford University Press, 1996.