

# The impact of european influence on the sioux and iroquois nations

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The Impact of European Influence on the Sioux and Iroquois Nations Prior to the discovery of the " New World" by European explorers, Native Americans of many different tribes and nations inhabited the land. Each tribe had their own unique culture largely dependent upon their geographic location and the available resources. Examining several tribes gives us an understanding of how the encroachment of European explorers changed forever their way of life.

The Northeastern portion of what is now the United States is home to the Iroquois Nation made up of five individual tribes: Mohawk, Onondaga, Seneca, Onieda and Cayuga. They had an intricate democratic system of government within the confederacy. The Iroquois were divided into 3 different clans: the bear, the wolf and the turtle. These clans were not segregated from one another; rather, they were a support network to others within the same clan providing lodging and food for one another while on hunting trips. This support system allowed the trade patterns of the Iroquois to encompass hundreds of miles. The Iroquois society was closely tied to the natural environment. Villages were primarily located near waterways as the canoe was a primary mode of transportation. The women were responsible for planting and harvesting of their staple vegetables: corn, beans and squash. The men hunted deer and bear and fished, providing meat for the family. The land of the Iroquois was rich in a variety of natural resources which were traded within the Nation as well as to the Plains Indians to the west and the tribes to the south. Some of the more important trade items included quartzite, copper, jasper and flint.

The Northern Plains was home to the Sioux Nation (Oceti Sakowin). Their

land was vast, mostly consisting of open plains. Family was central to the Sioux. Mutual respect between the sexes was evident in their daily lives. Unlike the Iroquois to the east, the Sioux tribe was nomadic, following buffalo herds which were their primary source of meat. Wild rice, herbs and fish were the main trade commodities of the Sioux's in the northern areas. Pipestone was gathered from their southern territory and traded just as the western territory buffalo, fruits and vegetables. The Sioux Indians heavily depended on each other for the trading of these various goods. The primary mode of transportation of this nomadic tribe was by foot, utilizing dogs to haul their possessions.

Europeans loved fur and the Iroquois land was rich with beaver. Trapping and trading beaver became the major trade commodity of the Iroquois causing a near extinction of the beaver population. Rivalry for the guns and alcohol traded by Europeans caused fighting within the Nation itself. The Sioux Indians suffered the same fate. Pelts became a trade commodity for guns and alcohol, but more notably was the introduction of the horse. These nomads became expert equestrians. Horses brought an easier way of life for them in terms of movement, hunting, fighting and economically. Along with the encounter with the European explorers, the way of life of the American Indians changed; they brought with them diseases such as small pox which almost decimated entire tribes and alcohol that destabilized the integrity of their communitarian existence. As more and more Europeans entered Native American territories and set up towns pushing the western boundaries, they evacuated the Indians from their homeland forcing them onto reservations. This breach was felt by every tribe at an individual level. Sadly the trade

partnership established between all the tribes and the settlers ultimately resulted in the loss of their land and the way of life they had known for centuries.

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