

Native americans' fate earlier and today

Sociology



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What was your score? Why do you think you did—or did not—do well on this quiz? My score was 5 - I got half of the questions correct. I did well on those questions which required greater historical knowledge, but on the later questions dealing with the living conditions of contemporary Native Americans, I was more likely to choose a wrong answer. I think this was partly because the figures given were so surprising. For example, I suggested that 1 in 20 Native American young people might have tried to commit suicide by the end of High School, which I considered to be an incredibly high, and worrying statistic. The correct answer was even more worrying. The fact that I chose the incorrect answer to half of the questions on the quiz shows that my knowledge of Native American history, culture and contemporary living conditions could be much better. This might reflect something of ignorance about these issues in society generally.

2. Which of the answers and explanations on the test surprised you the most? Why?

The figures for suicide attempts among young people were shocking. However, perhaps more surprising still was the fact that within a century of Columbus' landing in the Americas, over 95% of the Native American population had been wiped out, both through violence and infectious diseases. The inhumane treatment of the existing American population by the first European settlers was quite obviously a terrible and dark period at the beginning of modern American history. That Columbus ordered all those on Haiti who failed to provide sufficient quantities of gold to be killed, and the enslavement of many Native Americans, demonstrates a perception on the part of those early settlers that the Native Americans were inferior

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beings - a perception which we, living in the 21st century, quite rightly find disturbing and incomprehensible.

3. As an individual and as a business person, what did you learn about yourself while completing this quiz?

Perhaps the main thing I learned is that, while terrible injustices were committed against the Native American populations in past centuries, in many ways the deplorable living conditions in which many of their successors live today means that the period of oppression has not yet been brought to an end. It is sobering to consider that this painful era in our nation's history continues in some sense. Completing this quiz, and reading the historical and social information it provided, makes me consider myself fortunate to live in an America where all Americans really are citizens.