

Native-American

Introduction

Native American, also called American Indian, Amerindian, Amerind, Indian, aboriginal American, or First Nation person, member of any of the aboriginal peoples of the [Western Hemisphere](#), although the term often connotes only those groups whose original territories were in present-day [Canada](#) and the [United States](#).

Pre-Columbian Americans used technology and material culture that included fire and the fire drill; the domesticated dog; stone implements of many kinds; the [spear-thrower](#) (atlatl), harpoon, and bow and arrow; and cordage, netting, basketry, and, in some places, pottery. Many indigenous American groups were [hunting-and-gathering cultures](#), while others were agricultural peoples. American Indians domesticated a variety of plants and animals, including corn (maize), beans, squash, potatoes and other tubers, turkeys, llamas, and alpacas, as well as a variety of semidomesticated species of nut- and seed-bearing plants. These and other resources were used to support communities ranging from small hamlets to cities such as [Cahokia](#), with an estimated population of 10,000 to 20,000 individuals, and [Teotihuacán](#), with some 125,000 to 200,000 residents.

At the dawn of the 16th century ce, as the European conquest of the Americas began, indigenous peoples resided throughout the Western Hemisphere. They were soon decimated by the effects of epidemic disease, military conquest, and enslavement, and, as with other colonized peoples, they were subject to discriminatory political and legal policies well into the 20th, and even the 21st, century. Nonetheless, they have been among the most active and successful native peoples in effecting political change and regaining their autonomy in areas such as education, land ownership, religious freedom, the law, and the revitalization of traditional culture.

Culturally, the indigenous peoples of the Americas are usually recognized as constituting two broad groupings, American Indians and Arctic peoples. American Indians are often further grouped by area of residence: Northern America (present-day United States and Canada), Middle America (present-day Mexico and Central America; sometimes called Mesoamerica), and South America. This article is a survey of the culture areas, prehistories, histories, and recent developments of the indigenous peoples and cultures of the United States and Canada. Some of the terminology used in reference to indigenous Americans is explained in [Sidebar: Tribal Nomenclature: American Indian, Native American, and First Nation](#); [Sidebar: The Difference Between a Tribe and a Band](#); and [Sidebar: Native American Self-Names](#). An overview of all the indigenous peoples of the Americas is presented in [American Indian](#); discussions of various aspects of indigenous American cultures may also be found in the articles [pre-Columbian civilizations](#); [Middle American Indian](#); [South American Indian](#); [Arctic: The people](#); [American Indian languages](#); [Native American religions](#); and [Native American arts](#).

Native American culture areas

Comparative studies are an essential component of all scholarly analyses, whether the topic under study is human society, fine art, paleontology, or chemistry; the similarities and differences found in the entities under consideration help to organize and direct research programs and exegeses. The comparative study of cultures falls largely in the domain of [anthropology](#), which often uses a [typology](#) known as the [culture area](#) approach to organize comparisons across cultures.

The culture area approach was delineated at the turn of the 20th century and continued to frame discussions of peoples and cultures into the 21st century. A culture area is a geographic region where certain cultural traits have generally co-occurred; for instance, in North America between the 16th and 19th centuries, the Northwest Coast culture area was characterized by traits such as salmon fishing, woodworking, large villages or towns, and hierarchical social organization.

The specific number of culture areas delineated for Native America has been somewhat variable because regions are sometimes subdivided or conjoined. The 10 culture areas discussed below are among the most commonly used—the Arctic, the Subarctic, the Northeast, the Southeast, the Plains, the Southwest, the Great Basin, California, the Northwest Coast, and the Plateau. Notably, some scholars prefer to combine the Northeast and Southeast into one Eastern Woodlands culture area or the Plateau and Great Basin into a single Intermontane culture area. Each section below considers the location, climate, environment, languages, tribes, and common cultural characteristics of the area before it was heavily colonized. Prehistoric and post-Columbian Native American cultures are discussed in subsequent sections of this article. A discussion of the indigenous peoples of the Americas as a whole is found in [American Indian](#).

The Arctic

This region lies near and above the [Arctic Circle](#) and includes the northernmost parts of present-day Alaska and Canada. The topography is relatively flat, and the climate is characterized by very cold temperatures for most of the year. The region's extreme northerly location alters the diurnal cycle; on winter days the sun may peek above the horizon for only an hour or two, while the proportion of night to day is reversed during the summer months (see [midnight sun](#)).

The indigenous peoples of the North American Arctic include the [Eskimo](#) (Inuit and Yupik/Yupiit) and [Aleut](#); their traditional languages are in the [Eskimo-Aleut family](#). Many Alaskan groups prefer to be called Native Alaskans rather than Native Americans; Canada's Arctic peoples generally prefer the referent Inuit.

The Arctic peoples of North America relied upon [hunting and gathering](#). Winters were harsh, but the long hours of summer sunlight supported an explosion of vegetation that in turn drew large herds of caribou and other animals to the inland North. On the coasts, sea mammals and fish

formed the bulk of the diet. Small mobile [bands](#) were the predominant form of social organization; band membership was generally based on kinship and marriage (*see also* [Sidebar: The Difference Between a Tribe and a Band](#)). Dome-shaped houses were common; they were sometimes made of snow and other times of timber covered with earth. Fur clothing, dog sleds, and vivid folklore, mythology, and storytelling traditions were also important aspects of Arctic cultures. *See also* [Arctic: The people](#).

The Subarctic

This region lies south of the Arctic and encompasses most of present-day Alaska and most of Canada, excluding the Maritime Provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island), which are part of the Northeast culture area. The topography is relatively flat, the climate is cool, and the ecosystem is characterized by a swampy and coniferous [boreal forest](#) (taiga) ecosystem.

Prominent tribes include the [Innu](#) (Montagnais and Naskapi), [Cree](#), [Ojibwa](#), [Chipewyan](#), [Beaver](#), [Slave](#), [Carrier](#), [Gwich'in](#), [Tanaina](#), and [Deg Xinag](#) (Ingalik). Their traditional languages are in the [Athabaskan](#) and [Algonquian](#) families.

Small kin-based bands were the predominant form of social organization, although seasonal gatherings of larger groups occurred at favoured fishing locales. Moose, caribou, beavers, waterfowl, and fish were taken, and plant foods such as berries, roots, and sap were gathered. In winter people generally resided in snug semisubterranean houses built to withstand extreme weather; summer allowed for more mobility and the use of tents or lean-tos. Snowshoes, toboggans, and fur clothing were other common forms of material culture. *See also* [American Subarctic peoples](#).

The Northeast

This culture area reaches from the present-day Canadian provinces of Quebec, Ontario, and the Maritimes (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) south to the Ohio River valley (inland) and to North Carolina (on the Atlantic Coast). The topography is generally rolling, although the Appalachian Mountains include some relatively steep slopes. The climate is temperate, precipitation is moderate, and the predominant ecosystem is the deciduous forest. There is also extensive coastline and an abundance of rivers and lakes.

Prominent tribes include the [Algonquin](#), [Iroquois](#), [Huron](#), [Wampanoag](#), [Mohican](#), [Mohegan](#), [Ojibwa](#), [Ho-chunk](#) (Winnebago), [Sauk](#), [Fox](#), and [Illinois](#). The traditional languages of the Northeast are largely of the Iroquoian and [Algonquian language](#) families.

Most Northeastern peoples engaged in agriculture, and for them the village of a few dozen to a few hundred persons was the most important social and economic unit in daily life. Groups that had access to reliably plentiful wild foods such as wild rice, salmon, or shellfish generally preferred to live in dispersed hamlets of extended families. Several villages or hamlets formed a tribe, and groups of tribes sometimes organized into powerful confederacies. These alliances

were often very complex political organizations and generally took their name from the most powerful member tribe, as with the [Iroquois Confederacy](#).

Cultivated corn (maize), beans, squash, and weedy seed-bearing plants such as *Chenopodium* formed the economic base for farming groups. All northeastern peoples took animals including deer, elk, moose, waterfowl, turkeys, and fish. Houses were [wickiups](#) (wigwams) or [longhouses](#); both house types were constructed of a sapling framework that was covered with rush matting or sheets of bark. Other common aspects of culture included dugouts made of the trunks of whole trees, birchbark canoes, clothing made of pelts and deerskins, and a variety of [medicine societies](#). See also [Northeast Indian](#).

The Southeast

This region reaches from the southern edge of the Northeast culture area to the Gulf of Mexico; from east to west it stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to somewhat west of the Mississippi valley. The climate is warm temperate in the north and grades to subtropical in the south. The topography includes coastal plains, rolling uplands known as the [Piedmont](#), and a portion of the Appalachian Mountains; of these, the Piedmont was most densely populated. The predominant ecosystems were coastal scrub, wetlands, and deciduous forests.

Perhaps the best-known indigenous peoples originally from this region are the [Cherokee](#), [Choctaw](#), [Chickasaw](#), [Creek](#), and [Seminole](#), sometimes referred to as the Five Civilized Tribes. Other prominent tribes included the [Natchez](#), [Caddo](#), [Apalachee](#), [Timucua](#), and Guale. Traditionally, most tribes in the Southeast spoke Muskogean languages; there were also some [Siouan language](#) speakers and one Iroquoian-speaking group, the Cherokee.

The region's economy was primarily agricultural and often supported social stratification; as chiefdoms, most cultures were structured around hereditary classes of elites and commoners, although some groups used hierarchical systems that had additional status levels. Most people were commoners and lived in hamlets located along waterways. Each hamlet was home to an extended family and typically included a few houses and auxiliary structures such as granaries and summer kitchens; these were surrounded by agricultural plots or fields. Hamlets were usually associated with a town that served as the area's ceremonial and market centre. Towns often included large earthen mounds on which religious structures and the homes of the ruling classes or families were placed. Together, each town and its associated hamlets constituted an autonomous political entity. In times of need these could unite into confederacies, such as those of the Creek and Choctaw.

People grew corn, beans, squash, tobacco, and other crops; they also gathered wild plant foods and shellfish, hunted deer and other animals, and fished. House forms varied extensively across the region, including [wickiups](#) (wigwams), earth-berm dwellings, and, in the 19th century, chickees (thatched roofs with open walls). The Southeast was also known for its religious iconography, which often included bird themes, and for the use of the "black drink," an emetic used in ritual contexts. See also [Southeast Indian](#).

The Plains

The Plains lie in the centre of the continent, spanning the area between the western mountains and the Mississippi River valley and from the southern edge of the Subarctic to the Rio Grande in present-day Texas. The climate is of the continental type, with warm summers and cold winters. Relatively flat short-grass prairies with little precipitation are found west of the Missouri River and rolling tallgrass prairies with more moisture are found to its east. Tree-lined river valleys form a series of linear oases throughout the region.

The indigenous peoples of the Plains include speakers of [Siouan](#), [Algonquian](#), [Uto-Aztecan](#), Caddoan, [Athabaskan](#), Kiowa-Tanoan, and Michif languages. Plains peoples also invented a sign language to represent common objects or concepts such as “buffalo” or “exchange.”

Earth-lodge villages were the only settlements on the Plains until the late 16th century; they were found along major waterways that provided fertile soil for growing corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, and tobacco. The groups who built these communities divided their time between village-based crop production and hunting expeditions, which often lasted for several weeks and involved travel over a considerable area. Plains villagers include the [Mandan](#), [Hidatsa](#), [Omaha](#), [Pawnee](#), and [Arikara](#).

By 1750 [horses](#) from the Spanish colonies in present-day New Mexico had become common in the Plains and had revolutionized the hunting of bison. This new economic opportunity caused some local villagers to become dedicated nomads, as with the [Crow](#) (who retained close ties with their Hidatsa kin), and also drew agricultural tribes from surrounding areas into a nomadic lifestyle, including the [Sioux](#), [Blackfoot](#), [Cheyenne](#), [Comanche](#), [Arapaho](#), and [Kiowa](#).

Groups throughout the region had in common several forms of material culture, including the [tepee](#), tailored leather clothing, a variety of battle regalia (such as feathered headdresses), and large drums used in ritual contexts. The [Sun Dance](#), a ritual that demanded a high degree of piety and self-sacrifice from its participants, was also found throughout most of the Plains.

The Plains is perhaps the culture area in which tribal and band classifications were most conflated. Depictions of indigenous Americans in popular culture have often been loosely based on Plains peoples, encouraging many to view them as the “typical” American Indians. See *also* [Plains Indian](#).

The Southwest

This culture area lies between the Rocky Mountains and the Mexican Sierra Madre, mostly in present-day Arizona and New Mexico. The topography includes plateaus, basins, and ranges. The climate on the Colorado Plateau is temperate, while it is semitropical in most of the basin and range systems; there is little precipitation and the major ecosystem is desert. The landscape includes several major river systems, notably those of the Colorado and the Rio Grande, that create linear oases in the region.

The Southwest is home to speakers of [Hokan](#), [Uto-Aztecan](#), Tanoan, Keresan, Kiowa-Tanoan, [Penutian](#), and [Athabaskan](#) languages. The region was the home of both agricultural and hunting and gathering peoples, although the most common lifeway combined these two economic strategies. Best known among the agriculturists are the [Pueblo Indians](#), including the [Zuni](#) and [Hopi](#). The [Yumans](#), [Pima](#), and [Tohono O'odham](#) (Papago) engaged in both farming and foraging, relying on each to the extent the environment would allow. The [Navajo](#) and the many [Apache](#) groups usually engaged in some combination of agriculture, foraging, and the raiding of other groups.

The major agricultural products were corn, beans, squash, and cotton. Wild plant foods, deer, other game, and fish (for those groups living near rivers) were the primary foraged foods. The Pueblo peoples built architecturally remarkable apartment houses of adobe and stone masonry (see [pueblo architecture](#)) and were known for their complex kinship structures, [kachina](#) (*katsina*) dances and dolls, and fine pottery, textiles, and kiva and sand paintings. The Navajo built round houses ("hogans") and were known for their complex clan system, healing rituals, and fine textiles and jewelry. The Apaches, Yumans, Pima, and Tohono O'odham generally built thatched houses or brush shelters and focused their expressive culture on oral traditions. Stone channels and check dams (low walls that slowed the runoff from the sporadic but heavy rains) were common throughout the Southwest, as were basketry and digging sticks. See also [Southwest Indian](#).

The [Great Basin](#)

The Great Basin culture area is centred in the intermontane deserts of present-day Nevada and includes adjacent areas in California, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona. It is so named because the surrounding mountains create a bowl-like landscape that prevented water from flowing out of the region. The most common topographic features are basin and range systems; these gradually transition to high intermontane plateaus in the north. The climate is temperate in the north and becomes subtropical to the south. Higher elevations tend to receive ample moisture but other areas average as little as 2 inches (50 mm) per year. Much of the region's surface water, such as the [Great Salt Lake](#), is brackish. The predominant ecosystem is desert.

The Great Basin is home to the Washoe, speakers of a [Hokan language](#), and a number of tribes speaking [Numic languages](#) (a division of the [Uto-Aztecan language](#) family). These include the [Mono](#), [Paiute](#), [Bannock](#), [Shoshone](#), [Ute](#), and [Gosiute](#).

The peoples of this region were hunters and gatherers and generally organized themselves in mobile, kin-based bands. Seeds, piñon nuts, and small game formed the bulk of the diet for most groups, although those occupying northern and eastern locales readily adopted horses and equestrian bison hunting after Spanish mounts became available. Some of these latter groups also replaced [wickiups](#) and brush shelters, the common house forms until that time, with Plains-style [tepees](#); peoples in the west and south, however, continued to use traditional house forms well into the 19th century. Other common forms of material culture included digging sticks,

nets, basketry, grinding stones for processing seeds, and rock art. See also [Great Basin Indian](#).

California

This culture area approximates the present states of California (U.S.) and northern Baja (Mexico). Other than the Pacific coast, the region's dominant topographic features are the Coast Range and the Sierra Nevada; these north-south ranges are interspersed with high plateaus and basins. An extraordinary diversity of local conditions created microenvironments such as coasts, tidewaters, coastal redwood forests, grasslands, wetlands, high deserts, and mountains.

California includes representatives of some 20 language families, including [Uto-Aztecan](#), [Penutian](#), Yokutsan, and [Athabaskan](#); American linguist [Edward Sapir](#) described California's languages as being more diverse than those found in all of Europe. Prominent tribes, many with a language named for them, include the [Hupa](#), [Yurok](#), [Pomo](#), [Yuki](#), [Wintun](#), [Maidu](#), and [Yana](#).

Many California peoples eschewed centralized political structures and instead organized themselves into tribelets, groups of a few hundred to a few thousand people that recognized cultural ties with others but maintained their political independence. Some tribelets comprised just one village and others included several villages; in the latter cases, one village was usually recognized as more important than the others. The relatively few groups that lived in areas with sparse natural resources preferred to live in small mobile bands.

Agriculture was practiced only along the Colorado River; elsewhere hunting and gathering provided a relatively easy living. Acorns were the most important of the wild food sources; California peoples devised a method of leaching the toxins from acorn pulp and converting it into flour, thus ensuring abundant and constant food. Fishing, hunting, and gathering shellfish and other wild foods were also highly productive. Housing varied from wood-framed single-family dwellings to communal apartment-style buildings; ceremonial structures were very important and could often hold several hundred people. The California peoples were also known for their fine basketry, ritualized trade fairs, and the Kuksu and Toloache religions. See also [California Indian](#).

The Northwest Coast

This culture area is bounded on the west by the Pacific Ocean and on the east by the Coast Range, the Sierra Nevada, and the Rocky Mountains; it reaches from the area around Yakutat Bay in the north to the Klamath River area in the south. It includes the coasts of present-day Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, much of southern Alaska, and a small area of northern California. The topography is steep and in many places the coastal hills or mountains fall abruptly to a beach or riverbank. There is an abundance of precipitation—in many areas more than 160 inches (406 cm) annually, but rarely less than 30 inches (76 cm). The predominant ecosystems are temperate rainforests, intertidal zones, and the ocean.

This culture area is home to peoples speaking [Athabaskan](#), Tshimshianic, Salishan, and other

languages. Prominent tribes include the [Tlingit](#), [Haida](#), [Tsimshian](#), [Kwakiutl](#), [Bella Coola](#), [Nuu-chah-nulth](#) (Nootka), [Coast Salish](#), and [Chinook](#).

The peoples of the Northwest Coast had abundant and reliable supplies of salmon and other fish, sea mammals, shellfish, birds, and a variety of wild food plants. The resource base was so rich that they are unique among nonagricultural peoples in having created highly stratified societies of hereditary elites, commoners, and slaves. Tribes often organized themselves into corporate “houses”—groups of a few dozen to 100 or more related people that held in common the rights to particular resources. As with the house societies of medieval Japan and Europe, social stratification operated at every level of many Northwest Coast societies; villages, houses, and house members each had their designated rank, which was reflected in nearly every social interaction.

Most groups built villages near waterways or the coast; each village also had rights to an upland territory from which the residents could obtain terrestrial foods. Dwellings were rectilinear structures built of timbers or planks and were usually quite large, as the members of a corporate “house” typically lived together in one building. Northwest Coast cultures are known for their fine wood and stone carvings, large and seaworthy watercraft, memorial or [totem poles](#), and basketry. The [potlatch](#), a feast associated with the bestowal of lavish gifts, was also characteristic of this culture area. See also [Northwest Coast Indian](#).

The [Plateau](#)

Lying at the crossroads of five culture areas (the Subarctic, Plains, Great Basin, California, and Northwest Coast), the Plateau is surrounded by mountains and drained by two great river systems, the Fraser and the Columbia. It is located in present-day Montana, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. Topographically, the area is characterized by rolling hills, high flatlands, gorges, and mountain slopes. The climate is temperate, although milder than the adjacent Plains because the surrounding mountain systems provide protection from continental air masses. The mountains also create a substantial rain shadow; most precipitation in this region falls at higher elevations, leaving other areas rather dry. The predominant ecosystems are grassland and high desert, although substantial forested areas are found at altitude.

Most of the languages spoken in this culture area belong to the Salishan, Sahaptin, Kutenai, and Modoc and Klamath families. Tribes include the [Salish](#), [Flathead](#), [Nez Percé](#), [Yakama](#), [Kutenai](#), [Modoc and Klamath](#), Spokane, Kalispel, Pend d'Oreille, Coeur d'Alene, Walla Walla, and Umatilla. “Flathead” is incorrectly used in some early works to denote all Salishan-speaking peoples, only some of whom molded infants' heads so as to achieve a uniform slope from brow to crown; notably, the people presently referred to as the Flathead did not engage in this practice (see [head flattening](#)).

The primary political unit was the village; among some groups a sense of larger tribal and cultural unity led to the creation of representative governments, tribal chieftainships, and confederations of tribes. This was possible in part because the Columbia and Fraser rivers provided enough salmon and other fish to support a relatively dense population; however, this region was never as heavily populated or as rigidly stratified as the Northwest Coast.

Efficient hunters and gatherers, Plateau groups supplemented fish with terrestrial animals and wild plant foods, especially certain varieties of camas (*Camassia*). Most groups resided in permanent riverside villages and traveled to upland locales during fair-weather foraging excursions; however, horses were readily adopted once available and some groups subsequently shifted to nomadic buffalo hunting. These groups quickly adopted tepees and many other Plains cultural forms; they became particularly respected for their equine breeding programs and fine herds (see [Appaloosa](#)). Plateau fishing villages were characterized by their multifamily A-frame dwellings, while smaller conical structures were used in the uplands; both house forms were covered with grass, although canvas became a popular covering once available. In terms of portable culture, the Plateau peoples were most characterized by the wide variety of substances and technologies they used; continuously exposed to new items and ideas through trade with surrounding culture areas, they excelled at material innovation and at adapting others' technologies to their own purposes. See also [Plateau Indian](#).

Prehistory

Indigenous Americans had (and have) rich traditions concerning their origins, but until the late 19th century, most outsiders' knowledge about the Native American past was speculative at best. Among the more popular misconceptions were those holding that the first residents of the continent had been members of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel or refugees from the lost island of [Atlantis](#), that their descendents had developed the so-called Mound Builder culture, and that Native Americans had later overrun and destroyed the Mound Builder civilization. These erroneous and overtly racist beliefs were often used to rationalize the destruction or displacement of indigenous Americans. Such beliefs were not dispelled until the 1890s, when Cyrus Thomas, a pioneering archaeologist employed by the [Smithsonian Institution](#), demonstrated conclusively that the great [effigy mounds](#), [burial mounds](#), and temple mounds of the [Northeast](#) and [Southeast](#) culture areas had been built by Native Americans.

Until the late 1980s, it was generally believed—on the basis of evidence of the [Clovis projectile points](#) that had been found in New Mexico—that humans arrived in the Americas approximately 13,500 years ago. During the last [ice age](#), a “[land bridge](#)” (a misnomer for a very broad swath of land) connected northeastern Asia to northwestern North America. The land route is known as [Beringia](#) because it formed along the present-day [Bering Strait](#).

Beringia began to emerge some 36,000–40,000 years ago, as the ice age began. At that time glaciers began to absorb increasing amounts of water, causing global sea levels to fall by as much as 400 feet (120 metres). A complete connection between Asia and North America existed from about 28,000 to 10,000 bce, and, at its greatest extent, Beringia may have spanned some 1,000 miles (1,600 km) from north to south.

The people who moved into Beringia from Asia relied on [hunting and gathering](#) for subsistence and traveled in [bands](#): small, mobile, kin-based groups of people who lived and foraged together. Three factors suggested that Beringia was inhabited for some time before people moved into North America itself: the long period during which the land route existed, the generally slow advance of hunter-gatherers into new territory, and the presence of

unsurpassable glaciers at Beringia's eastern extreme until perhaps 13,000 bce. When calculated from the point where sea levels began to expose the land route, Beringia may have been inhabited for as long as 20,000 years.

As the eastern glaciers began to recede, some Beringians probably followed the coast south, perhaps combining walking with boat travel; people had used boats to settle Australia as early as 50,000–60,000 bce, which suggests that such technology was by this time well-known. Other Beringians probably traveled via ice-free routes through the interior of North America; geological studies indicate that such passages probably existed in the [Mackenzie](#) Basin and along the [Yukon](#), [Liard](#), and [Peace river](#) systems. However, recent evidence has revealed that the ice-free routes were not viable until 12,600 years before the present. Yet numerous sites, including Gault (Texas), Monte Verde (Chile), Paisley Caves (Oregon), Meadowcroft Rockshelter (Pennsylvania), Cactus Hill (Virginia), Miles Point (Maryland), and others, have established that people were in the Americas 5,000–8,000 years before the ice-free routes were available, establishing that initial migration had to have been along one or both coasts.

In studies of North American prehistory, these very early cultures are generally known as Paleo-Indians. By about 6000 bce some groups had begun to experiment with food production as well as foraging; they are known as [Archaic cultures](#). Archaic peoples often returned to the same location on a seasonal basis, and as a result began to build small settlements. Archaic subsistence techniques were very efficient, and in a number of culture areas people sustained an essentially Archaic way of life until after European colonization.

By about 1000 bce a number of Native American peoples had become fully reliant upon [agriculture](#) for subsistence; their cultures were eventually characterized by relatively large, sedentary societies that included social or religious hierarchies. These groups include the early farmers of the [Southwest](#), known as the [Ancestral Pueblo culture](#), [Mogollon culture](#), and [Hohokam culture](#); those east of the Mississippi valley, known as [Woodland cultures](#) and later as [Mississippian cultures](#); and those who settled along the rivers of the Plains, known as members of the Plains Woodland and the Plains Village cultures.

Paleo-Indian cultures

Asia and North America remained connected until about 12,000 years ago. Although most of the routes used by the Paleo-Indians are difficult to investigate because they are now under water or deeply buried or have been destroyed by erosion and other geological processes, research has divulged a variety of information about their lives and cultures.

Archaeological discoveries in the first half of the 20th century indicated that the [migration](#) had occurred by about 9500 bce, and subsequent finds pushed this boundary to even earlier dates. Scholars group Paleo-Indians into two distinct traditions: the [Clovis](#), [Folsom](#), and related cultures of the North American interior; and the pre-Clovis cultures, whose distribution is emerging through contemporary research.

All the Paleo-Indian groups lived in a relatively dynamic landscape that they shared with [Pleistocene flora and fauna](#), most notably with [megafauna](#) such as [mammoths](#), [mastodons](#),

giant bison, giant ground sloths, [sabre-toothed cats](#), and short-faced bears. Paleo-Indian sites often include the remains of megafauna, sometimes leading to the mistaken impression that these peoples were solely dedicated to the capture of big game. For a time this impression was sustained by a variety of preservation and identification issues such as the rapid degeneration of small mammal, fish, and vegetal remains in the archaeological record and the use of recovery techniques that neglected or ignored such materials. By the turn of the 21st century, however, excavations at sites such as Gault (Texas) and Jake Bluff (Oklahoma) had clearly demonstrated that at least some Paleo-Indians used a variety of wild animal and plant foods and so are better characterized as generalized hunter-gatherers than as people who limited themselves to the pursuit of big game.

The [Clovis](#) and [Folsom](#) cultures

In 1908 George McJunkin, ranch foreman and former slave, reported that the bones of an extinct form of giant bison (*Bison antiquus*) were eroding out of a wash near Folsom, New Mexico; an ancient spear point was later found embedded in the animal's skeleton. In 1929 teenager Ridgley Whiteman found a similar site near Clovis, New Mexico, albeit with mammoth rather than bison remains. The Folsom and Clovis sites yielded the first indisputable evidence that ancient Americans had co-existed with and hunted the megafauna, a possibility that most scholars had previously met with skepticism.

The [Clovis](#) culture proved to be the earlier of the two. Clovis projectile points are thin, lanceolate (leaf-shaped), and made of stone; one or more longitudinal flakes, or flutes, were removed from the base of each of the point's two flat faces. Clovis points were affixed to spear handles and are often found on mammoth kill sites, usually accompanied by side scrapers (used to flense the hide) and other artifacts used to process meat. Clovis culture was long believed to have lasted from approximately 9500 to 9000 bce, although early 21st-century analyses suggest it may have been of shorter duration, from approximately 9050 to 8800 bce.

[Folsom](#) culture seems to have developed from Clovis culture. Also lanceolate, Folsom points were more carefully manufactured and include much larger flutes than those made by the Clovis people. The Lindenmeier site, a Folsom campsite in northeastern Colorado, has yielded a wide variety of end and side scrapers, graters (used to engrave bone or wood), and bone artifacts. The Folsom culture is thought to have lasted from approximately 9000 to 8000 bce. Related Paleo-Indian groups, such as the Plano culture, persisted until sometime between 6000 and 4000 bce.

Pre-Clovis cultures

The long-standing belief that Clovis people were the first Americans was challenged in the late 20th century by the discovery of several sites antedating those of the Clovis culture. Although many scholars were initially skeptical of the evidence from these sites, the late 1990s saw general agreement that humans had arrived in North and South America by at least 11,000 bce, some 1,500 years before the appearance of Clovis culture.

Dating to about 10,500 bce, Monte Verde, a site in Chile's Llanquihue province, is the oldest

confirmed human habitation site in the Americas. First excavated in the 1970s, the site did not seem to concord with findings that placed the earliest humans in northeastern Asia no earlier than c. 11,500 bce; it seemed extremely unlikely that people could have meandered from Siberia to Chile in just 1,000 years. However, excavations at the Yana Rhinoceros Horn site in Siberia subsequently determined that humans were present on the western side of Beringia as early as 25,000 bce, providing ample time for such a migration.

A number of other sites may be as early or earlier than Monte Verde: excavations of note include those at the Topper site (South Carolina), Cactus Hill (Virginia), Schaefer and Hebior (Wisconsin), Buttermilk Creek (Texas), and others. Further investigations will continue to clarify the patterns of Paleo-Indian migration.

Archaic cultures

Beginning about 6000 bce, what had been a relatively cool and moist [climate](#) gradually became warmer and drier. A number of cultural changes are associated with this environmental shift; most notably, bands became larger and somewhat more sedentary, tending to forage from seasonal camps rather than roaming across the entire landscape. Fish, fowl, and wild plant foods (especially seeds) also become more apparent in the archaeological record, although this may be a result of differential preservation rather than changes in ancient subsistence strategies. Finally, various forms of evidence indicate that humans were influencing the growth patterns and reproduction of plants through practices such as the setting of controlled fires to clear forest underbrush, thereby increasing the number and productivity of nut-bearing trees. In aggregate, these changes mark the transition from Paleo-Indian to [Archaic cultures](#).

The duration of the Archaic Period varied considerably in Northern America: in some areas it may have begun as long ago as 8000 bce, in others as recently as 4000 bce. Between 6000 and 4000 bce the wild squash seeds found at archaeological sites slowly increased in size, a sign of incipient [domestication](#). Similar changes are apparent by about 5000 bce in the seeds of wild sunflowers and certain “weedy” plants (defined as those that prefer disturbed soils and bear plentiful seeds) such as sumpweed (*Iva annua*) and [lamb's-quarters](#) (*Chenopodium album*). Northern Americans independently domesticated several kinds of flora, including a variety of squash (c. 3000 bce) unrelated to the those of Mesoamerica or South America, sunflowers *Helianthus annuus* (c. 3000 bce), and goosefoot *Chenopodium berlandieri* (c. 2500 bce).

Many prehistoric Native American peoples eventually adopted some degree of agriculture; they are said to have transitioned from the Archaic to subsequent culture periods when evidence indicates that they began to rely substantively upon domesticated foods and in most cases to make [pottery](#). Archaeologists typically place the end of the North American Archaic at or near 1000 bce, although there is substantial regional variation from this date. For instance, the Plains Archaic continued until approximately the beginning of the Common Era, and other groups maintained an essentially Archaic lifestyle well into the 19th century, particularly in the diverse microenvironments of the Pacific Coast, the arid Great Basin, and the cold boreal forests, tundras, and coasts of Alaska and Canada.

Pacific Coast Archaic cultures

Archaic peoples living along the Pacific Coast and in neighbouring inland areas found a number of innovative uses for the rich microenvironments of that region. Groups living in arid inland locales made rough flint tools, grinding stones, and, eventually, arrowheads and subsisted upon plant seeds and small game. Where there was more precipitation, the food supply included elk, deer, acorns, fish, and birds. People on the coast itself depended upon the sea for their food supply, some subsisting mainly on shellfish, some on sea mammals, others on fish, and still others on a mixture of all three.

In contrast to the larger projectile points found elsewhere in North America, many Pacific Coast Archaic groups preferred to use tools made of microblades; sometimes these were set into handles to make knives composed of a series of small individually set teeth rather than a long, continuous cutting edge. However, in the [Northwest Coast](#) culture area, the people of the [Old Cordilleran culture](#) (sometimes called the Paleoplateau or Northwest Riverine culture; c. 9000/8500–5000 bce) preferred lanceolate points, long blades, and roughly finished choppers.

During the postglacial warming period that culminated between 3000 and 2000 bce, the inhabitants of the drier areas without permanent streams took on many of the traits of the Desert Archaic cultures (see *below*), while others turned increasingly toward river and marsh resources. In the 1st millennium bce the Marpole complex, a distinctive toolmaking tradition focusing on ground slate, appeared in the Fraser River area. Marpole people shared a basic resemblance to historic [Northwest Coast](#) groups in terms of their maritime emphasis, woodworking, large houses, and substantial villages.

Desert Archaic cultures

Ancient peoples in the present-day [Plateau](#) and [Great Basin](#) culture areas created distinctive cultural adaptations to the dry, relatively impoverished environments of these regions. The [Cochise](#) or [Desert Archaic](#) culture began by about 7000 bce and persisted until the beginning of the Common Era.

Desert Archaic people lived in small nomadic bands and followed a seasonal round. They ate a wide variety of animal and plant foods and developed techniques for small-seed harvesting and processing; an essential component of the Desert Archaic tool kit was the milling stone, used to grind wild seeds into meal or flour. These groups are known for having lived in caves and rock shelters; they also made twined basketry, nets, mats, cordage, fur cloaks, sandals, wooden clubs, digging sticks, [spear-throwers](#), and dart shafts tipped with pointed hardwood, flint, or obsidian. Their chopping and scraping tools often have a rough, relatively unsophisticated appearance, but their projectile points show excellent craftsmanship.

Plains Archaic cultures

The Plains Archaic began by about 6000 bce and persisted until about the beginning of the

Common Era. It is marked by a shift from just a few kinds of fluted Paleo-Indian points to a myriad of styles, including stemmed and side-notched points. The primary game animal of the Plains Archaic peoples was the bison, although as savvy foragers they also exploited a variety of other game and many wild plant foods.

As the climate became warmer, some groups followed grazing herds north into present-day [Saskatchewan](#) and [Alberta](#); by 3000 bce these people had reached the Arctic tundra zone in the Northwest Territories and shifted their attention from bison to the local caribou. Other groups moved east to the Mississippi valley and western Great Lakes area.

Eastern Archaic cultures

The Eastern Archaic (c. 8000–1500 bce) included much of the Eastern Subarctic, the Northeast, and the Southeast culture areas; because of this very wide distribution, Eastern Archaic cultures show more diversity over time and space than Archaic cultures elsewhere in North America. Nonetheless, these cultures are characterized by a number of material similarities. The typical house was a small circular structure framed with wood; historical analogies suggest that the covering was probably bark. Cooking was accomplished by placing hot rocks into wood, bark, or hide containers of food, which caused the contents to warm or even boil; by baking in pits; or by roasting. Lists of mammal, fish, and bird remains from Eastern Archaic sites read like a catalog of the region's fauna at about the time of European contact. Game-gathering devices such as nets, traps, and pitfalls were used, as were spears, darts, and dart or [spear throwers](#). Fishhooks, gorges, and net sinkers were also important, and in some areas fish [weirs](#) (underwater pens or corrals), were built. River, lake, and ocean mollusks were consumed, and a great many roots, berries, fruits, and tubers were part of the diet.

Over time, Eastern Archaic material culture reflects increasing levels of technological and economic sophistication. A large variety of chipped-flint projectiles, knives, scrapers, perforators, drills, and adzes appear. The era is also marked by the gradual development of ground and polished tools such as grooved stone axes, pestles, gouges, adzes, plummets (stones ground into a teardrop shape, used for unknown purposes), and [bird stones](#) and other weights that attached to spear throwers.

Eastern Archaic people in what are now the states of [Michigan](#) and [Wisconsin](#) began to work copper, which can be found in large nodules there. Using cold-hammer techniques, they created a variety of distinctive tools and art forms. Their aptly named Old Copper culture appeared about 3000 bce and lasted approximately 2,000 years. Its tools and weapons, particularly its adzes, gouges, and axes, clearly indicate an adaptation to the forest environment.

In the area south of [James Bay](#) to the upper [St. Lawrence River](#) about 4000 bce, there was a regional variant called the Laurentian Boreal Archaic and, in the extreme east, the Maritime Boreal Archaic (c. 3000 bce). In this eastern area, slate was shaped into points and knives similar to those of the copper implements to the west. Trade between the eastern and western areas has been recognized; in addition, copper implements have been found as far south as [Louisiana](#) and [Florida](#) and southeastern marine shells have been found in the upper Mississippi–Great Lakes area. This suggests that transportation by [canoe](#) was known to Eastern Archaic peoples.

Along the southern border of the central and eastern boreal forest zone between 1500 and 500 bce there developed a distinctive [burial](#) complex, reflecting an increased attention to mortuary ceremonies. These burials, many including cremations, were often accompanied by red ochre, caches of triangular stone blanks (from which stone tools could be made), fire-making kits of iron pyrites and flint strikers, copper needles and awls, and polished stone forms. The triangular points of this complex may have represented the introduction of the bow and arrow from the prehistoric Arctic peoples east of [Hudson Bay](#).

Prehistoric farmers

In much of North America, the shift from generalized foraging and horticultural experimentation to a way of life dependent on domesticated plants occurred about 1000 bce, although regional variation from this date is common.

[Corn](#) (maize), early forms of which had been grown in Mexico since at least 5000 bce, appeared among Archaic groups in the Southwest culture area by about 1200 bce and in the Eastern Woodlands by perhaps 100 bce; other Mesoamerican domesticates, such as chile peppers and cotton, did not appear in either region until approximately the beginning of the Common Era. Although the importance of these foreign domesticates increased over time, most Native American groups retained the use of locally domesticated plants for several centuries. For instance, improvements to sumpweed continued until about 1500 ce, after which the plants abruptly returned to their wild state. It is unclear why sumpweed fell out of favour, although some have suggested that its tendency to cause [hay fever](#) and [contact dermatitis](#) may have contributed to the demise of its domesticated forms. Others believe that the timing of the event, coincident with the first wave of European conquest, suggests that cultural disruption initiated this change. Notably, many other indigenous American domesticates, including [sunflowers](#), [squashes](#), [beans](#), and [tobacco](#), have persisted as economically important crops into the 21st century.

Although prehistoric farming communities exhibited regional and temporal variation, they shared certain similarities. For the most part, farming groups were more sedentary than Archaic peoples, although the dearth of domesticated animals in Northern America ([turkeys](#) and [dogs](#) being the exception) meant that most households or communities continued to engage in hunting forays. Agriculturists' housing and settlements tended to be more substantial than those of Archaic groups, and their communities were often protected by walls or ditches; many also developed hierarchical systems of social organization, wherein a priestly or chiefly class had authority over one or more classes of commoners.

Southwestern cultures: the [Ancestral Pueblo](#), [Mogollon](#), and [Hohokam](#)

The first centuries of the Common Era saw the development of three major farming complexes in the Southwest, all of which relied to some extent on irrigation. The [Ancestral Pueblo](#) peoples (also known as the Anasazi; c. 100–1600 ce) of the Four Corners area built low walls (check

dams) to slow and divert the flow of water from seasonal rivulets to cultivated fields. The [Mogollon](#) (c. 200–1450) built their communities in the mountainous belt of southwestern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona and depended upon rainfall and stream diversion to water their crops. The [Hohokam](#) (c. 200–1400) lived in the desert area of the Gila basin of southern Arizona and built irrigation canals to water their fields.

These three cultures are known for their geographic expansion, population growth, and [pueblo architecture](#), all of which reached their greatest levels of complexity between approximately 700 and 1300—a period that generally coincided with an unusually favourable distribution of rainfall over the entire Southwest (analogous climatic conditions elsewhere in North America supported cultural florescences in the Eastern Woodlands [c. 700–1200] and on the Plains [c. 1000–1250]). During this period the population and cultures of central and western [Mexico](#) expanded to the northwest; trade and cultural stimuli were thus moving from Mesoamerica into the Southwest culture area at a time when the climate in both regions was most favourable for population and cultural growth. Materials entering the Southwest from Mexico during this era included cast copper bells, parrots, ball courts, shell trumpets, and pottery with innovative vessel shapes and designs.

Between 750 and 1150 the Ancestral Pueblo expanded into the Virgin River valley of southeastern Nevada, north as far as the Great Salt Lake and northwestern Colorado, to the east into southeastern Colorado and to the Pecos and upper Canadian River valleys of New Mexico. They also developed priestly offices, rituals, and ceremonialism during this period.

Ancestral Pueblo achievements during 1150–1300, a period known as Pueblo III, included the construction of large [cliff dwellings](#), such as those found at [Mesa Verde National Park](#), and the apartment-like “great houses” of Chaco Canyon and elsewhere (see [Chaco Culture National Historic Park](#)). Dressed stones were used in many localities to bear the weight of these massive structures, which had from 20 to as many as 1,000 rooms and from one to four stories. Each of the larger buildings was in effect a single village. Windows and doors were quite small, and usually no openings were made in the lowest rooms, which were entered by ladder through the roof. Buildings had a stepped appearance because each level or floor was set back from the one below it; the resulting terraces were heavily used as outdoor living space. Roofs were constructed to carry great weights by using heavy beams, covering them with a mat of smaller poles and brush, then adding a coat of adobe six to eight inches thick.

A number of new [kivas](#) (a type of subterranean ceremonial structure found at each settlement) were also built during this period, with some as large as 80 feet (25 metres) in diameter. Craftsmanship in pottery reached a high level; innovations included the use of three or more colours, and the techniques used by different communities—Chaco canyon, Mesa Verde, Kayenta, and a number of others—became so distinct that the vessels from each settlement can be recognized easily. Cotton cloth, blankets, and bags were woven, and yucca fibre also entered into various articles of clothing and such utility objects as mats. Feather-cloth robes were worn in cold weather.

Between about 1300 and 1600, increasing aridity and the arrival of hostile outsiders accelerated the pace of change; armed conflict and drought redirected Ancestral Pueblo efforts from artistic development to survival. Rituals designed to ensure rain increased in importance and elaboration and are portrayed in wall paintings and pottery. This period was also characterized

by a general movement southward and eastward, and new villages were built on the Little Colorado, Puerco, Verde, San Francisco, Rio Grande, Pecos, upper Gila, and Salt rivers.

In their early phases, from about 200 to 650, Mogollon settlements consisted of relatively small villages of pit houses grouped near a large ceremonial structure. Villages of this period were laid out rather randomly, and trash disposal was also haphazard. Houses became more substantial and several innovations in pottery design occurred between about 650 and 850. From about 850 to 1000, Mogollon villages exhibit Ancestral Pueblo influence in such things as construction techniques (shifting from pit houses to pueblos) and pottery design. The Mogollon reached their artistic pinnacle during the Classic [Mimbres](#) Period (c. 1000–1150). During the climatic deterioration after 1200, the Mogollon abandoned their territory in southwestern New Mexico.

The [Hohokam](#) people of central and southern Arizona built most of their settlements in major river valleys and lived in villages of pit houses that were arrayed along streams and canals. Agriculture was expanded through the use of extensive [irrigation](#) canals that may have been built by cooperating villages. Between approximately 775 and 1150, the Hohokam built their largest settlements and experienced a period of cultural innovation. Following this period, and until sometime between 1350 and 1450, Hohokam culture exhibits Ancestral Pueblo and Mexican influences. During this period, people built more compact settlements, often with a few massive multiroom and two-story buildings that were surrounded by compound walls.

The Ancestral Pueblo were the ancestors of contemporary [Pueblo Indians](#) such as the [Hopi](#), [Zuni](#), [Acoma](#), and others. The Hohokam are the ancestors of the [Pima](#) and [Tohono O'odham](#). After abandoning their villages, the Mogollon dispersed, probably joining other groups.

Eastern Woodland cultures

Outside of the Southwest, Northern America's early agriculturists are typically referred to as [Woodland cultures](#). This archaeological designation is often mistakenly conflated with the eco-cultural delineation of the continent's eastern culture areas: the term Eastern Woodland cultures refers to the early agriculturists east of the Mississippi valley, but the term Eastern Woodlands refers to the [Northeast](#) and [Southeast](#) culture areas together.

As in the Southwest, the introduction of corn in the East (c. 100 bce) did not cause immediate changes in local cultures; Eastern Archaic groups had been growing locally domesticated plants for some centuries, and corn was a minor addition to the agricultural repertoire. One of the most spectacular Eastern Woodland cultures preceding the introduction of maize was the [Adena culture](#) (c. 500 bce–100 ce, although perhaps as early as 1000 bce in some areas), which occupied the middle Ohio River valley. Adena people were hunters, gatherers, and farmers who buried their dead in large earthen mounds, some of which are hundreds of feet long. They also built [effigy mounds](#), elaborate earthen structures in the shape of animals.

This tradition of reshaping the landscape was continued by the [Hopewell culture](#) (c. 200 bce–500 ce) of the Illinois and Ohio river valleys. Hopewell society was hierarchical and village-based; surplus food was controlled by elites who used their wealth to support highly skilled artisans and the construction of elaborate earthworks. An outstanding feature of Hopewell culture was a tradition of placing elaborate burial goods in the tombs of individuals or

groups. The interment process involved the construction of a large box-like log tomb, the placement of the body or bodies and grave offerings inside, the immolation of the tomb and its contents, and the construction of an earthen mound over the burned materials. Artifacts found within these burial mounds indicate that the Hopewell obtained large quantities of goods from widespread localities in North America, including [obsidian](#) and [grizzly bear](#) teeth from as far away as the Rocky Mountains; [copper](#) from the northern Great Lakes; and [conch](#) shells and other materials from the southeast and along the coast of the [Gulf of Mexico](#). Sites in Ohio were particularly important distribution centres, controlling ceremonial goods and special products over a wide area. Evidence for this so-called Hopewell Interaction Sphere rapidly faded after about 400 ce, although Hopewell traditions continued for another century and Eastern Woodland cultures as a whole persisted for another 300 years.

Mississippian cultures

About 700 ce a new cultural complex arose in the Mississippi valley between the present-day cities of [St. Louis](#) and [Vicksburg](#). Known as the [Mississippian culture](#), it spread rapidly throughout the Southeast culture area and into some parts of the Northeast. Its initial growth and expansion took place during approximately the same period (700–1200) as the cultural zenith of the Southwest farmers. Some scholars believe that Mississippian culture was stimulated by the introduction of new concepts, religious practices, and improved agricultural techniques from northern Mexico, while others believe it developed in place as a result of climactic change and internal innovation.

Whatever the origin of particular aspects of Mississippian life, the culture as such clearly developed from local traditions; between 700 and 1000, many small Eastern Woodland villages grew into large towns with subsidiary villages and farming communities nearby. Regionally delimited styles of pottery, projectile points, house types, and other utilitarian products reflected diverse ethnic identities. Notably, however, Mississippian peoples were also united by two factors that cross-cut ethnicity: a common economy that emphasized corn production and a common religion focusing on the veneration of the sun and a variety of ancestral figures.

One of the most outstanding features of Mississippian culture was the earthen [temple](#) mound. These mounds often rose to a height of several stories and were capped by a flat area, or platform, on which were placed the most important community buildings—council houses and temples. Platform mounds were generally arrayed around a plaza that served as the community's ceremonial and social centre; the plazas were quite large, ranging from 10 to 100 acres (4–40 hectares). The most striking array of mounds occurred at the Mississippian capital city, [Cahokia](#), located near present-day St. Louis; some 120 mounds were built during the city's occupation. Monk's Mound, the largest platform mound at Cahokia, rises to approximately 100 feet (30 metres) above the surrounding plain and covers some 14 acres (6 hectares).

In some areas, large, circular charnel houses received the remains of the dead, but burial was normally made in large cemeteries or in the floors of dwellings. Important household industries included the production of mats, baskets, clothing, and a variety of vessels for specialized uses, as well as the creation of regalia, ornaments, and surplus food for use in religious ceremonies. In some cases, particular communities seem to have specialized in a certain kind of craft

activity, such as the creation of a specific kind of pottery or grave offering. Ritual and religious events were conducted by an organized priesthood that probably also controlled the distribution of surplus food and other goods. Core religious symbols such as the weeping eye, [feathered serpent](#), owl, and spider were found throughout the Mississippian world.

As the Mississippian culture developed, people increased the number and complexity of village fortifications and often surrounded their settlements with timber palisades. This was presumably a response to increasing intergroup aggression, the impetus for which seems to have included control of land, labour, food, and prestige goods. The Mississippian peoples had come to dominate the Southeast culture area by about 1200 and were the predominant groups met and described by Spanish and French explorers in that region. Some Mississippian groups, most notably the [Natchez](#), survived colonization and maintained their ethnic identities into the early 21st century.

Plains Woodland and Plains Village cultures

Archaic peoples dominated the Plains until about the beginning of the Common Era, when ideas and perhaps people from the Eastern Woodland cultures reached the region; some Plains Woodland sites, particularly in eastern Kansas, were clearly part of the Hopewell Interaction Sphere. Beginning between about 1 and 250 ce and persisting until perhaps 1000, Plains Woodland peoples settled in hamlets along rivers and streams, built earth-berm or [wattle-and-daub](#) structures, made pottery and other complex items, and raised corn, beans, and eventually sunflowers, gourds, squash, and tobacco.

On the Plains a regional variation of the favourable agricultural conditions that elsewhere supported the most elaborate forms of culture also fostered a marked increase in settlement size and population density; during this period (locally c. 1000–1250) the hospitable areas along most major streams became heavily occupied. These and subsequent village-dwelling groups are known as Plains Village cultures. These cultures were characterized by the building of substantial lodges, the coalescence of hamlets into concentrated villages, and the development of elaborate rituals and religious practices. Having expanded their populations and territories when conditions were favourable, a period of increasing aridity that began about 1275 caused hardship and in some cases armed conflict among these peoples; at the early 14th-century Crow Creek site (South Dakota), for instance, nearly 500 people were killed violently and buried in a mass grave.

Some village-dwelling peoples sustained their communities through this difficult period, while others retreated eastward and returned when the climate had improved. The descendants of the early Plains Village cultures, such as the [Arikara](#), [Mandan](#), [Hidatsa](#), [Crow](#), [Wichita](#), [Pawnee](#), and [Ponca](#), greeted European explorers from the 16th century onward and continued to live on the Plains in the early 21st century.

Between 1500 and 1700, the farming peoples of the western and southern Plains, such as the [Apache](#) and [Comanche](#), took up a predominantly nomadic, equestrian way of life; most continued to engage in some agriculture, but they did not rely on crops to the same extent as settled village groups. From the early 18th century onward, a number of agricultural groups from the Northeast culture area left their forest homes for the Plains and completely substituted

equestrian nomadism for agriculture; perhaps the best known of these were the [Sioux](#) and [Cheyenne](#), whose traditional territory had been in present-day [Minnesota](#).

Native American history

The thoughts and perspectives of indigenous individuals, especially those who lived during the 15th through 19th centuries, have survived in written form less often than is optimal for the historian. Because such documents are extremely rare, those interested in the Native American past also draw information from traditional [arts](#), [folk literature](#), [folklore](#), [archaeology](#), and other sources.

Native American history is made additionally complex by the diverse geographic and cultural backgrounds of the peoples involved. As one would expect, indigenous American farmers living in stratified societies, such as the [Natchez](#), engaged with Europeans differently than did those who relied on hunting and gathering, such as the [Apache](#). Likewise, Spanish conquistadors were engaged in a fundamentally different kind of colonial enterprise than were their counterparts from [France](#) or [England](#).

The sections below consider broad trends in Native American history from the late 15th century to the late 20th century. More-recent events are considered in the final part of this article, [Developments in the late 20th and early 21st centuries](#).

North America and Europe circa 1492

The [population](#) of Native America

[Scholarly estimates](#) of the pre-Columbian [population](#) of [Northern America](#) have differed by millions of individuals: the lowest credible approximations propose that some 900,000 people lived north of the [Rio Grande](#) in 1492, and the highest posit some 18,000,000. In 1910 anthropologist [James Mooney](#) undertook the first thorough investigation of the problem. He estimated the precontact population density of each culture area based on historical accounts and carrying capacity, an estimate of the number of people who could be supported by a given form of subsistence. Mooney concluded that approximately 1,115,000 individuals lived in Northern America at the time of Columbian landfall. In 1934 [A.L. Kroeber](#) reanalyzed Mooney's work and estimated 900,000 individuals for the same region and period. In 1966 ethnohistorian Henry Dobyns estimated that there were between 9,800,000 and 12,200,000 people north of the Rio Grande before contact; in 1983 he revised that number upward to 18,000,000 people.

Dobyns was among the first scholars to seriously consider the effects of epidemic diseases on indigenous demographic change. He noted that, during the reliably recorded [epidemics](#) of the 19th century, introduced [diseases](#) such as [smallpox](#) had combined with various secondary effects (i.e., [pneumonia](#) and [famine](#)) to create [mortality](#) rates as high as 95 percent, and he suggested that earlier epidemics were similarly devastating. He then used this and other information to calculate from early [census](#) data backward to probable founding populations.

Dobyns's figures are among the highest proposed in the scholarly [literature](#). Some of his critics fault Dobyns for the disjunctions between physical evidence and his results, as when the number of houses archaeologists find at a site suggests a smaller population than do his models of demographic recovery. Others, including the historian David Henige, criticize some of the assumptions Dobyns made in his analyses. For instance, many early fur traders noted the approximate number of warriors fielded by a tribe but neglected to mention the size of the general population. In such cases small changes in one's initial presumptions—in this example, the number of women, children, and elders represented by each warrior—can, when multiplied over several generations or centuries, create enormous differences in estimates of [population](#).

A third group suggests that Dobyns's estimates may be too low because they do not account for pre-Columbian contact between Native Americans and Europeans. This group notes that severe epidemics of European [diseases](#) may have begun in North America in the late 10th or early 11th century, when the Norse briefly settled a region they called [Vinland](#). The L'Anse aux Meadows site (on the island of [Newfoundland](#)), the archaeological remains of a small settlement, confirms the Norse presence in [North America](#) about 1000 ce. Given that sagas attest to an epidemic that struck [Erik the Red's colony](#) in [Greenland](#) at about the same time, the possibility that native peoples suffered from introduced diseases well before Columbian landfall must be considered.

Yet another group of demographers protest that an emphasis on population loss obscures the resilience shown by indigenous peoples in the face of conquest. Most common, however, is a middle position that acknowledges that demographic models of 15th-century Native America must be treated with caution, while also accepting that the direct and indirect effects of the European conquest included extraordinary levels of indigenous mortality not only from introduced diseases but also from battles, slave raids, and—for those displaced by these events—starvation and exposure. This perspective acknowledges both the resiliency of Native American peoples and cultures and the suffering they bore.

Native American ethnic and political diversity

Determining the number of [ethnic](#) and political groups in pre-Columbian Northern America is also problematic, not least because definitions of what constitutes an ethnic group or a polity vary with the questions one seeks to answer. Ethnicity is most frequently equated with some aspect of [language](#), while social or political organization can occur on a number of scales simultaneously. Thus, a given set of people might be defined as an ethnic group through their use of a common [dialect](#) or language even as they are recognized as members of nested polities such as a [clan](#), a village, and a confederation. Other factors, including geographic boundaries, a subsistence base that emphasized either foraging or farming, the presence or absence of a social or religious [hierarchy](#), and the inclinations of colonial bureaucrats, among others, also affected ethnic and political classification; see [Sidebar: The Difference Between a Tribe and a Band](#).

The cross-cutting relationships between ethnicity and political organization are complex today and were equally so in the past. Just as a contemporary speaker of a Germanic language—perhaps German or English—might self-identify as German, Austrian, English, Scottish, Irish, Australian, Canadian, American, South African, Jamaican, Indian, or any of a

number of other nationalities, so might a pre-Columbian Iroquoian speaker have been a member of the [Cayuga](#), [Cherokee](#), [Huron](#), [Mohawk](#), [Oneida](#), [Onondaga](#), [Seneca](#), or [Tuscarora](#) nation. And both the hypothetical Germanic speaker and the hypothetical Iroquoian speaker live or lived in nested polities or quasi-polities: families, neighbourhoods, towns, regions, and so forth, each of which has or had some level of autonomy in its dealings with the outside world. Recognizing that it is difficult to determine precisely how many ethnic or political groups or polities were present in 15th-century Northern America, most researchers favour relative rather than specific quantification of these entities.

The outstanding characteristic of [North American Indian languages](#) is their diversity—at contact Northern America was home to more than 50 language families comprising between 300 and 500 languages. At the same moment in history, western Europe had only 2 language families ([Indo-European](#) and [Uralic](#)) and between 40 and 70 languages. In other words, if one follows scholarly conventions and defines ethnicity through language, Native America was vastly more diverse than Europe.

[Politically](#), most indigenous American groups used consensus-based forms of organization. In such systems, leaders rose in response to a particular need rather than gaining some fixed degree of power. The [Southeast Indians](#) and the [Northwest Coast Indians](#) were exceptions to this general rule, as they most frequently lived in hierarchical societies with a clear chiefly class. Regardless of the form of organization, however, indigenous American polities were quite independent when compared with European communities of similar size.

European populations and polities

Just as Native American experiences during the early colonial period must be framed by an understanding of indigenous demography, ethnic diversity, and political organization, so must they be contextualized by the social, economic, political, and religious changes that were taking place in Europe at the time. These changes drove European expansionism and are often discussed as part of the centuries-long transition from [feudalism](#) to industrial [capitalism](#) (see [Western colonialism](#)).

Many scholars hold that the events of the early colonial period are inextricably linked to the epidemics of the [Black Death](#), or bubonic plague, that struck Europe between 1347 and 1400. Perhaps 25 million people, about one-third of the [population](#), died during this epidemic. The population did not return to preplague levels until the early 1500s. The intervening period was a time of severe labour shortages that enabled commoners to demand wages for their work. Standards of living increased dramatically for a few generations, and some peasants were even able to buy small farms. These were radical changes from the previous era, during which most people had been tied to the land and a lord through [serfdom](#).

Even as the general standard of living was improving, a series of military conflicts raged, including the [Hundred Years' War](#), between [France](#) and [England](#) (1337–1453); the [Wars of the Roses](#), between two English dynasties (1455–85); and the [Reconquista](#), in which Roman Catholics fought to remove Muslims from the [Iberian Peninsula](#) (c. 718–1492). These conflicts created intense local and regional hardship, as the roving brigands that constituted the military typically commandeered whatever they wanted from the civilian population. In the theatres of

war, troops were more or less free to take over private homes and to impress people into [labour](#); [famine](#), [rape](#), and [murder](#) were all too prevalent in these areas. Further, tax revenues could not easily be levied on devastated regions, even though continued military expenditures had begun to drain the treasuries of western [Europe](#).

As treasuries were depleted, overseas trade beckoned. The [Ottoman Empire](#) controlled the overland routes from Europe to South [Asia](#), with its markets of spices and other commercially lucrative goods. Seeking to establish a sea route to the region, the Portuguese prince [Henry the Navigator](#) sponsored expeditions down the Atlantic coast of Africa. Later expeditions attempted to reach the [Indian Ocean](#), but they were severely tested by the rough seas at the [Cape of Good Hope](#). [Christopher Columbus](#) had been a member of several such voyages and proposed an alternative, transatlantic route; in 1484 he requested the sponsorship of [John II](#), the king of [Portugal](#), who refused to support an exploratory journey.

Iberia was a hotbed of activity at the time. [Ferdinand II](#) of Aragon and [Isabella I](#) of Castille had begun to unify their kingdoms through their 1469 [marriage](#), but they were soon forced to resolve bitter challenges to their individual ascensions. Eventually quelling civil war, the devout Roman Catholic sovereigns initiated the final phase of the Reconquista, pitting their forces against the last Moorish stronghold, Grenada. The city fell in January 1492, an event Columbus reportedly witnessed.

The seemingly endless military and police actions to which Ferdinand and Isabella had been party had severely depleted their financial reserves. This situation was exacerbated by the chief inquisitor of the [Spanish Inquisition](#), [Tomás de Torquemada](#), who persuaded the monarchs to expel any [Jews](#) who refused to be baptized. Under his authority some 160,000—and by some accounts as many as 200,000—Jews were ultimately expelled or executed for heresy, including many of Spain's leading entrepreneurs, businessmen, and scientists. Having lost so many of its best minds, [Spain](#) faced a very slow economic recovery, if it was to recover at all. Seeking new sources of income, the royal treasurer, Luis de Santángel, urged the monarchs to accept Columbus's proposal to explore a western route to the East. Although Columbus did not find a route with which to sidestep Ottoman trade hegemony, his journey nonetheless opened the way to overseas wealth. Spain used American resources to restore its imperiled economy, a strategy that was soon adopted by the other maritime [nations](#) of [Europe](#) as well.

Colonial goals and geographic claims: the 16th and 17th centuries

Although the situation in 15th-century Iberia framed Columbus's expedition to the Americas, the problems of warfare, financial naïveté, and religious intolerance were endemic throughout Europe. This situation continued into the 16th century, when at least four factors contributed to levels of inflation so high as to be unprecedented: the rise of [Protestantism](#) inflamed religious differences and fostered new military conflicts, which in turn hindered [free trade](#); the plague-depleted population recovered, creating an excess of labour and depressing [wages](#); mass expulsions of Jews and Protestants undermined local and regional economies; and an influx of American [gold](#) and [silver](#), with additional silver from new mines in Germany, devalued most currencies.

European [colonialism](#) was thus begotten in a social climate fraught with [war](#), religious intolerance, a dispossessed peasantry, and inflation. Despite these commonalities, however, each of the countries that attempted to colonize [North America](#) in the 16th and 17th centuries—Spain, France, England, the Netherlands, and Sweden—had particular goals, methods, and geographic interests that played an important role in shaping Native American history.

Spain

[Spain](#)'s overseas agenda emphasized the extraction of wealth, with secondary goals that included the relocation of armies, the conversion of indigenous peoples to [Roman Catholicism](#), and the re-creation of the feudal social order to which the Spanish were accustomed. The first country to send large expeditions to the Americas, Spain focused its initial efforts on the conquest of the wealthy [Aztec](#) and [Inca](#) empires, which fell in 1521 and 1532, respectively. Immense quantities of precious [metals](#) were seized from these peoples and shipped to Spain; the initial influx of hard currency provided a period of fiscal relief, but the country suffered [bankruptcy](#) in the later 16th century and never fully recovered.

The conquest of the Americas also provided overseas work for the men who had fought in the [Reconquista](#), thus limiting the damage they might have inflicted if left unemployed in Iberia. In lieu of pay or a [pension](#), many [conquistadors](#) were provided with [encomiendas](#), a form of vassal [slavery](#) in which a particular Indian [population](#) was granted to a Spaniard. The system alleviated demands on the treasury and also transplanted the Spanish social hierarchy to the colonies. *Encomiendas* were gradually supplanted by [haciendas](#)—landed estates or plantations. However, this legal nicety did little to change conditions for the Indians living under Spanish rule.

Having vanquished the indigenous nations of [Mexico](#) and [Peru](#), the conquistadors turned their attention to Northern America. In 1540 [Francisco Vázquez de Coronado](#), the [governor](#) of Nueva Galicia (northwestern Mexico and the southwestern [United States](#)), began the exploration and conquest of the [Southwest Indians](#), taking with him 300 troops. In the same year, [Hernando de Soto](#) was authorized to establish Spanish control of La Florida (the southeastern United States) and its residents; he rode out with more than 600 conquistadors. Both expeditions relied upon large complements of native labourers, who were forcibly impressed into service. Coronado, de Soto, and their troops destroyed communities that resisted their demands for tribute, women, supplies, and obeisance. Concerted efforts at settlement north of Mexico began in 1565 in La Florida, with the founding of [St. Augustine](#); similar efforts in the Southwest did not begin until 1598, when [Juan de Oñate](#) led 400 settlers to a location near what is now [El Paso](#), Texas. Although its explorers sighted the coast of [California](#) in 1542, [Spain](#) did not colonize that area until the second part of the 18th century.

[Marriage](#) between Spanish men and native women was acceptable, although [concubinage](#) was more common; intermarriage was effectively forbidden to the few Spanish women who lived in the colonies. After a few generations, a complex social order based on ancestry, [land ownership](#), [wealth](#), and noble titles had become entrenched in the Spanish colonies.

The Roman Catholic missionaries that accompanied Coronado and de Soto worked assiduously

to Christianize the native [population](#). Many of the priests were hearty supporters of the Inquisition, and their pastoral forays were often violent; beatings, dismemberment, and execution were all common punishments for the supposed heresies committed by Native Americans.

France

France was almost constantly at war during the 15th and 16th centuries, a situation that spurred an overseas agenda focused on income generation, although territorial expansion and religious conversion were important secondary goals. France expressed an interest in the Americas as early as 1524, when the Italian explorer [Giovanni da Verrazzano](#) was commissioned to explore the Atlantic coast; in 1534 the French seaman [Jacques Cartier](#) entered the Gulf of St. Lawrence and claimed for King Francis I the region that became known as [New France](#). The French eventually claimed dominion over most of the [Northeast](#), [Southeast](#), and [American Subarctic](#) peoples. France's North American empire was, however, contested: its warm southern reaches were claimed by both France and Spain, while parts of the northern territory were claimed by both France and England. Native nations, of course, had their own claims to these territories.

Concerned about Spanish claims to the Americas, the French made a number of unsuccessful attempts at settlement in the 16th century. They built (and subsequently abandoned) a fort near present-day [Quebec](#) in 1541; they also built a fort near present-day [St. Augustine, Florida](#), in 1564, but the Spanish soon forced them to abandon that facility as well. In 1604 the French successfully established a more permanent presence on the continent, founding [Acadia](#) in present-day [Nova Scotia](#). They did not succeed in establishing a major settlement in the south until 1718, when they founded [New Orleans](#).

French colonial settlements were built on major waterways in order to expedite trade and shipping; the city of [Quebec](#) was founded in 1608 at the confluence of the [St. Lawrence](#) and St. Charles rivers, and [Montreal](#) was founded in 1642 at the conjunction of the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa rivers. Although these trading centres were lively, the settlement of northern New France was slowed by several factors. Among these were the lucrative nature of the fur trade, which required a highly mobile and enterprising workforce—quite a different set of habits and skills than those required of farmers—and a cool climate, which produced thick furs but unpredictable harvests. In 1627 a group of investors formed the Company of [New France](#), but governance of the colony reverted to the king in 1663, after the company repeatedly failed to meet the obligations of its charter.

Most of the northern locales where the French founded settlements were already occupied by various [Algonquin](#) groups or members of the Iroquoian-speaking [Huron](#) ([Wendat](#)) confederacy, all of whom had long used the inland waterways of the heavily forested region as trade and transportation routes. These peoples quickly partnered with the French—first as fur trappers, later as middlemen in the trade, and always as a source of staples such as [corn](#) (maize). Because the Algonquin, Huron, and French were all accustomed to using [marriage](#) as a means of joining extended families, because indigenous warfare caused a demographic imbalance that favoured women, and because few women were eager to leave France for the rough life of the colonies, unions between native women and French men quickly became common. The attitudes of missionaries in New France varied: some simply promoted the adoption of Roman

Catholic beliefs and practices, while others actively discouraged and even used force in order to end the practice of indigenous religions.

England

England focused its conquest of North America primarily on territorial expansion, particularly along the Atlantic coast from New England to Virginia. The first explorer to reach the continent under the English flag was [John Cabot](#), an Italian who explored the North Atlantic coast in 1497. However, England did little to follow up on Cabot's exploits until the early 17th century. By that time, the wool trade had become the driving force in the English economy; as a source of foreign exchange, wool sales softened inflation somewhat but did not render the English immune to its effects.

England responded to the pressure of inflation in several ways that influenced Native American history. One response, the intensification of wool production, ensured that the wealthy would remain secure but greatly disrupted the domestic economy. To effect the production of more wool, the landed nobility began to practice [enclosure](#), merging the many small fields that dotted the English countryside into larger pastures. This allowed more sheep to be raised but came at a harsh cost to the burgeoning population of commoners. The landless majority were evicted from their farms, and many had to choose between starvation and illicit activities such as theft, poaching, and prostitution. By the mid-1600s a new option arose for the dispossessed: indentured servitude, a form of [contract labour](#) in which transport to a colony and several years' room and board were exchanged for work; [petty criminals](#) were soon disposed of through this method as well.

The English elite chartered a variety of commercial entities, such as the [Virginia Company](#), to which King [James I](#) granted the control of large swaths of American territory. These business ventures focused especially on the extraction of resources such as [tobacco](#), a new [commodity](#) that had proved extremely popular throughout [Europe](#). The monarch also made land grants to religious dissidents, most notably to the Puritan shareholders of the [Massachusetts Bay Company](#), to the Roman Catholic leader Cecilius Calvert, who established the colony of [Maryland](#), and to the Quaker leader [William Penn](#), who established the [Pennsylvania](#) colony. English settlements eventually stretched from the [Chesapeake Bay](#) north to present-day Massachusetts and included [Jamestown](#) (founded in 1607), [Plymouth](#) (1620), [Boston](#) (1630), [St. Mary's City](#) (1634), [New York City](#) (formerly New Amsterdam, which England had seized from the Dutch in 1664), and [Philadelphia](#) (1681).

England was the only imperial nation in which colonial companies were successful over the long term, in large part because ordinary citizens were eventually granted clear (and thus heritable) title to land. In contrast, other countries generally reserved legal title to overseas [real estate](#) to the monarch, a situation that encouraged entrepreneurs to limit their capital investments in the colonies. In such cases it made much more financial sense to build ships than to improve settler housing or colonial infrastructure; a company could own a ship outright but was at constant risk of losing new construction to the sovereign. Because English real estate practices more or less assured entrepreneurs and colonizers that they would retain any infrastructure they built, they set about the construction of substantial settlements, farms, and [transportation](#) systems.

A tradition of enduring title also caused the English to conclude formal compacts with Native Americans, as some of the former believed (and the English courts could potentially have ruled) that indigenous groups held [common-law](#) title to the various Northern American territories. As a result, tribes from Newfoundland ([Canada](#)) to [Virginia](#) (U.S.) engaged in early agreements with the English. However, a fundamental philosophical difference undermined many such agreements: the English held that it was possible to own land outright, while the indigenous American peoples believed that only [usufruct](#), or use rights, to land could be granted. The situation was further complicated by the French custom, soon adopted by the English, of providing native communities with gifts on a seasonal or annual basis. What the colonizers intended as a relatively inexpensive method for currying goodwill, the indigenous peoples interpreted as something akin to rent.

Although mortality was high in the malarial lowlands that the English initially settled, a seemingly endless stream of indentured labourers—and, from 1619 onward, enslaved Africans—poured into the new communities throughout the 17th century. [Colonial laws](#) meant to discourage intermarriage generally prevented the children of indigenous-English marriages from inheriting their father's wealth. This effectively forestalled the formation of multiethnic households in areas that were under close colonial control. However, such households were considered unremarkable in indigenous towns.

In contrast to their Spanish and French counterparts, who were invariably Roman Catholic, most English colonizers were members of the Church of England or of various Protestant sects. Evangelization was not particularly important to most of the English elite, who traveled to the Americas for commercial, territorial, or political gain, nor for most indentured servants or [criminal](#) transportees. Among those who had left in pursuit of religious freedom, however, some proselytized with zeal. Like the clergy from France, their emphases and methods ranged from the fairly benign to the overtly oppressive.

The Netherlands and Sweden

The colonial efforts of the [Netherlands](#) and [Sweden](#) were motivated primarily by commerce. Dutch businessmen formed several colonial monopolies soon after their country gained independence from [Spain](#) in the late 16th century. The [Dutch West India Company](#) took control of the New Netherland colony (comprising parts of the present-day states of [Connecticut](#), [New York](#), [New Jersey](#), and [Delaware](#)) in 1623. In 1624 the company founded Fort Orange (present-day [Albany](#), New York) on the [Hudson River](#); New Amsterdam was founded on the island of [Manhattan](#) soon after.

In 1637 a group of individuals formed the New Sweden Company. They hired [Peter Minuit](#), a former governor of [New Amsterdam](#), to found a new colony to the south, in what is now Delaware, U.S. In 1655 [New Sweden](#) fell to the Dutch.

Despite some local successes, the Dutch ceded their North American holdings to the English after just 40 years, preferring to turn their attention to the lucrative East Indies trade rather than defend the colony (see [Dutch East India Company](#)). The English renamed the area New York

and allowed the Dutch and Swedish colonists to maintain title to the land they had settled.

Native Americans and colonization: the 16th and 17th centuries

From a Native American perspective, the initial intentions of Europeans were not always immediately clear. Some Indian communities were approached with respect and in turn greeted the odd-looking visitors as guests. For many indigenous nations, however, the first impressions of Europeans were characterized by violent acts including raiding, murder, rape, and kidnapping. Perhaps the only broad generalization possible for the cross-cultural interactions of this time and place is that every group—whether indigenous or colonizer, elite or common, female or male, elder or child—responded based on their past experiences, their cultural expectations, and their immediate circumstances.

The [Southwest Indians](#)

Although Spanish colonial expeditions to the Southwest had begun in 1540, settlement efforts north of the Rio Grande did not begin in earnest until 1598. At that time the agricultural [Pueblo Indians](#) lived in some 70 compact towns, while the hinterlands were home to the nomadic [Apaches](#), [Navajos](#), and others whose foraging economies were of little interest to the Spanish.

Although nomadic groups raided the Pueblos from time to time, the indigenous peoples of the Southwest had never before experienced occupation by a conquering army. As an occupying force, the Spanish troops were brutal. They continued to exercise the habits they had acquired during the Reconquista, typically camping outside a town from which they then extracted heavy tribute in the form of food, impressed labour, and women, whom they raped or forced into concubinage.

The missionaries who accompanied the troops in this region were often extremely doctrinaire. They were known to beat, dismember, torture, and execute Indians who attempted to maintain traditional religious practices; these punishments were also meted out for civil offenses. Such depredations instigated a number of small rebellions from about 1640 onward and culminated in the [Pueblo Rebellion](#) (1680)—a synchronized strike by the united Pueblo peoples against the Spanish missions and garrisons. The Pueblo Rebellion cost the lives of some 400 colonizers, including nearly all the priests, and caused the Spanish to remove to Mexico.

The Spanish retook the region beginning in 1692, killing an estimated 600 native people in the initial battle. During subsequent periods, the Southwest tribes engaged in a variety of nonviolent forms of resistance to Spanish rule. Some Pueblo families fled their homes and joined Apachean foragers, influencing the Navajo and Apache cultures in ways that continue to be visible even in the 21st century. Other Puebloans remained in their towns and maintained their traditional cultural and religious practices by hiding some activities and merging others with Christian rites.

The [Southeast Indians](#)

Most Southeast Indians experienced their first sustained contact with Europeans through the expedition led by [Hernando de Soto](#) (1539–42). At that time most residents were farmers who supplemented their agricultural produce with wild game and plant foods. Native communities ranged in size from hamlets to large towns, and most Southeast societies featured a social hierarchy comprising a priestly elite and commoners.

Warfare was not unknown in the region, but neither was it endemic. The indigenous peoples of present-day Florida treated de Soto and his men warily because the Europeans who had visited the region previously had often, but not consistently, proved violent. As the conquistadors moved inland, tribes at first treated them in the manner accorded to any large group of visitors, providing gifts to the leaders and provisions to the rank and file. However, the Spaniards either misread or ignored the intentions of their hosts and often forced native commoners, who customarily provided temporary labour to visitors as a courtesy gesture, into [slavery](#).

News of such treatment traveled quickly, and the de Soto expedition soon met with military resistance. Indigenous warriors harassed the Spanish almost constantly and engaged the party in many battles. Native leaders made a number of attempts to capture de Soto and the other principals of the party, often by welcoming them into a walled town and closing the gates behind them. Such actions may have been customary among the Southeast Indians at this time—diplomatic customs in many cultures have included holding nobles hostage as a surety against the depredations of their troops. Such arrangements were common in Europe at the time and were something with which the conquistadors were presumably familiar. However, the Spanish troops responded to these situations with violence, typically storming the town and setting upon the fleeing residents until every inhabitant was either dead or captured.

As losses to capture, slaughter, and European diseases progressively decimated the Native American [population](#), the Spanish began to focus on extracting the region's wealth and converting its inhabitants to [Christianity](#). The Southeast nations had little [gold](#) or [silver](#), but they had accumulated a plenitude of pearls to use as decoration and in ritual activities. The slave trade was also extremely lucrative, and many of those who survived the immediate effects of conquest were kidnapped and transported to the Caribbean [slave](#) markets. Some indigenous communities relocated to Catholic missions in order to avail themselves of the protection offered by resident priests, while others coalesced into defensible groups or fled to remote areas.

The [Northeast Indians](#)

The Northeast Indians began to interact regularly with Europeans in the first part of the 16th century. Most of the visitors were French or English, and they were initially more interested in cartography and trade than in physical conquest. Like their counterparts in the Southeast, most Northeast Indians relied on a combination of agriculture and foraging, and many lived in large walled settlements. However, the Northeast tribes generally eschewed the social hierarchies common in the Southeast. Oral traditions and archaeological materials suggest that they had been experiencing increasingly fierce intertribal rivalries in the century before colonization; it has

been surmised that these ongoing conflicts made the Northeast nations much more prepared for offensive and defensive action than the peoples of the Southwest or the Southeast had been.

Discussions of the early colonial period in this region are typically organized around categories that conjoin native political groupings and European colonial administrations. The discussion below considers two broad divisions: the Algonquian-speaking tribes of the mid-Atlantic region, an area where the English settled, and the Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking tribes of [New England](#) and [New France](#), where the English and the French competed in establishing colonial outposts.

The mid-Atlantic [Algonquians](#)

The mid-Atlantic groups that spoke [Algonquian languages](#) were among the most populous and best-organized indigenous nations in Northern America at the time of European landfall. They were accustomed to negotiating boundaries with neighbouring groups and expected all parties to abide by such understandings. Although they allowed English colonizers to build, farm, and hunt in particular areas, they found that the English colonial agenda inherently promoted the breaking of boundary agreements. The businessmen who sponsored the early colonies promoted expansion because it increased profits; the continuous arrival of new colonizers and slaves caused settlements to grow despite high mortality from malaria and misfortune; and many of the individuals who moved to the Americas from England—especially the religious freethinkers and the petty [criminals](#)—were precisely the kinds of people who were likely to ignore the authorities.

The earliest conflict between these Algonquians and the colonizers occurred near the [Chesapeake Bay](#). This region was home to the several hundred villages of the allied [Powhatan](#) tribes, a group that comprised many thousands of individuals. In 1607 this populous area was chosen to be the location of the first permanent English settlement in the Americas, the [Jamestown Colony](#). Acting from a position of strength, the Powhatan were initially friendly to the people of Jamestown, providing the fledgling group with food and the use of certain lands.

By 1609 friendly interethnic relations had ceased. [Powhatan](#), the leader for whom the indigenous alliance was named, observed that the region was experiencing a third year of severe drought; [dendrochronology](#) (the study of tree rings) indicates that this [drought](#) ultimately spanned seven years and was the worst in eight centuries. In response to English thievery (mostly of food), Powhatan prohibited the trading of comestibles to the colonists. He also began to enforce bans against [poaching](#). These actions contributed to a period of starvation for the colony (1609–11) that nearly caused its abandonment.

It is not entirely clear why Powhatan did not press his advantage, but after his death in 1618 his brother and successor, Opechancanough, attempted to force the colonists out of the region. His men initiated synchronized attacks against Jamestown and its outlying [plantations](#) on the morning of March 22, 1622. The colonists were caught unawares, and, having killed some 350 of the 1,200 English, Opechancanough's well-organized operation created so much terror that it nearly succeeded in destroying the colony.

The so-called [Powhatan War](#) continued sporadically until 1644, eventually resulting in a new

boundary agreement between the parties; the fighting ended only after a series of epidemics had decimated the region's native population, which shrank even as the English population grew. Within five years, colonists were flouting the new boundary and were once again poaching in Powhatan territory. Given the persistence of the mid-Atlantic Algonquians, their knowledge of local terrain, and their initially large numbers, many scholars argue that the Algonquian alliance might have succeeded in eliminating the English colony had Powhatan pressed his advantage in 1611 or had its population not been subsequently decimated by epidemic disease.

The Iroquoians of Huronia

During the 15th and early 16th centuries, warfare in the Northeast culture area fostered the creation of extensive political and military alliances. It is generally believed that this period of increasing conflict was instigated by internal events rather than by contact with Europeans; some scholars suggest that the region was nearing its [carrying capacity](#). Two of the major alliances in the area were the [Huron](#) confederacy (which included the [Wendat](#) alliance) and the Five Tribes (later Six Tribes), or [Iroquois Confederacy](#). The constituent tribes of both blocs spoke Iroquoian languages; the term "Iroquoian" is used to refer generally to the groups speaking such languages, while references to the "[Iroquois](#)" generally imply the tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy alone.

The Huron were a relatively tight alliance of perhaps 20,000–30,000 people who lived in rather dense settlements between [Hudson Bay](#) and the [St. Lawrence River](#), an area thus known as [Huronia](#). This was the northern limit at which agriculture was possible, and the Huron grew [corn](#) (maize) to eat and to trade to their [Subarctic Indian](#) neighbours—the [Innu](#) to the north and east and the [Cree](#) to the west—who provided [meat](#) and [fish](#) in return. The Huron confederacy is believed to have coalesced in response to raids from other Iroquoians and to have migrated northward to escape pressure from the Five Tribes to their south and southeast. Although the Huron [coalition](#)'s major goal was defense, the strength of the alliance also helped them to maintain trading, rather than raiding, relationships with the Innu, the Cree, and later the French.

The [Five Tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy](#) lived south of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Erie, for the most part in the present-day state of [New York](#). The alliance comprised the [Mohawk](#), [Oneida](#), [Onondaga](#), [Cayuga](#), and [Seneca](#) peoples; the [Tuscarora](#) joined the confederacy later. Evenly matched with the Huron alliance in terms of aggregate size, the Iroquois were more loosely united and somewhat less densely settled across the landscape. While the Huron nations traded extensively for food, this was less the case for the Five Tribes, who relied more thoroughly upon [agriculture](#). Before colonization they seem to have moved southward, perhaps in response to raids from the Huron to their north. The alliances among the Five Tribes were initiated not only for defense but also to regulate the blood feuds that were common in the region. By replacing retributory raids among themselves with a [blood money](#) payment system, each of the constituent nations was better able to engage in offensive and defensive action against outside enemies.

The Northeast was crisscrossed by an extensive series of trade routes that consisted of rivers and short portages. The Huron used these routes to travel to the Cree and Innu peoples, while the Iroquois used them to travel to the Iroquoians on the Atlantic coast. The French claimed the more northerly area and built a series of trade entrepôts at and near Huron communities, whose

residents recognized the material advantages of French goods as well as the fortifications' defensive capabilities. The Huron alliance quickly became the gatekeeper of trade with the Subarctic, profiting handsomely in this role. Its people rapidly adopted new kinds of material culture, particularly iron axes, as these were immensely more effective in shattering indigenous wooden armour than were traditional stone [tomahawks](#).

For a period of time the new weapons enabled the Huron confederacy to gain the upper hand against the Iroquois, who did not gain access to European goods as quickly as their foes. By about 1615 the long traditions of interethnic conflict between the two alliances had become inflamed, and each bloc formally joined with a member of another traditional rivalry—the French or the [English](#). Initially the Huron-French alliance held the upper hand, in no small part because the French trading system was in place several years before those of the Dutch and English. The indigenous coalitions became more evenly matched after 1620, however, as the Dutch and English trading system expanded. These Europeans began to make guns available for trade, something the French had preferred not to do. The Huron found that the technological advantage provided by iron axes was emphatically surpassed by that of the new firearms.

French records indicate that a [smallpox](#) epidemic killed as many as two-thirds of the Huron alliance in 1634–38; the epidemic affected the Iroquois as well, but perhaps to a lesser extent. At about the same time, it became increasingly clear that beavers, the region's most valuable fur-bearing animals, had been overhunted to the point of extinction in the home territories of both groups. The Iroquois blockaded several major rivers in 1642–49, essentially halting canoe traffic between Huronia and the Subarctic. The combination of smallpox, the collapse of the beaver population, and the stoppage of trade precipitated an economic crisis for the Huron, who had shifted so far from a subsistence economy to one focused on exchange that they faced starvation. Decades of intermittent warfare culminated in fierce battles in 1648–49, during which the Iroquois gained a decisive victory against the Huron and burned many of their settlements. In 1649 the Huron chose to burn their remaining villages themselves, some 15 in all, before retreating to the interior.

Having defeated the Huron confederacy to their north and west, the Iroquois took the Beaver Wars to the large [Algonquin population](#) to their north and east, to the Algonquian territory to their west and south, and to the French settlements of [Huron](#). They fought the alliances of these parties for the remainder of the 17th century, finally accepting a peace agreement in 1701. With both the Huron and the Iroquois confederacies having left Huronia, mobile French fur traders took over much of the trade with the Innu and Cree, and various bands of [Ojibwa](#) began to enter the depopulated region from their original homelands to the south of the Great Lakes.

The Subarctic Indians and the Arctic peoples

The European exploration of the Subarctic was for many decades limited to the coasts of the Atlantic and [Hudson Bay](#), an inland sea connected to the Atlantic and the Arctic oceans. The initial European exploration of the bay occurred in 1610. It was led by the English navigator [Henry Hudson](#), who had conducted a number of voyages in search of a northwest passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The Subarctic climate and ecosystem were eminently suited to the production of fur-bearing

[animals](#). This circumstance was well understood by the Huron alliance, which maintained a virtual lock on trade between this region and the French posts to the south until about 1650. Although the French colonial administration purported to encourage entrepreneurial individuals, its bureaucracy could be difficult to work with. In the 1660s, brothers-in-law [Pierre Esprit Radisson](#) and Médard Chouart des Groseilliers, their pelts seized by authorities for the lack of a proper license, offered the English their services as guides to the region around Hudson Bay. The English hired the men and sponsored an exploratory voyage in 1668. The expedition was well received by the resident [Cree](#), who had relied upon the Hurons for trade goods and found their supply greatly diminished in the wake of the Beaver Wars.

The initial voyage was successful enough to instigate the creation of the [Hudson's Bay Company](#), which was chartered in 1670. Its first governor was [Prince Rupert](#), an experienced military commander and the cousin of [King Charles II](#). The company was granted proprietary control of the vast territory from [Labrador](#) to the [Rocky Mountains](#), a region that soon became known as [Rupert's Land](#). Company traders spent the remainder of the 17th century building relationships with the local Cree, [Innu](#), and Inuit peoples. The Hudson's Bay Company eventually became one of the most dominant forces of [colonialism](#) in Northern America, maintaining political control over Rupert's Land until 1870 and economic control of the north for decades more.

By about 1685 the company had built a series of trading posts around the bay. These posts were staffed by company employees who were instructed not to travel far afield. As a result, indigenous peoples came to the posts to trade, and particular bands became associated with particular posts. Known as Home Guard Indians, the relatively close proximity of these bands and [Hudson's Bay Company](#) employees often led to intermarriage, [adoption](#), and other forms of [kinship](#). Band members with limited mobility might spend most of the year at a post [community](#), and all of the [population](#) would usually reside there for some part of the year.

The French built a few trading posts in the Subarctic but found that having independent contractors transport goods to native communities was more profitable—as was the practice of taking over Hudson's Bay Company posts after running off the staff. Accustomed to the difficult conditions of the boreal forest and the tundra, the [Innu](#), [Cree](#), and Inuit could easily defend themselves against potential depredations by Europeans. Many bands chose not to form an exclusive alliance with either colonial power. Instead, they played the French and the English against one another in order to gain advantageous terms of exchange, profiting as the two colonial powers squabbled for control over the northern trade.

The chessboard of empire: the late 17th to the early 19th century

In general, this period was characterized by indigenous resistance to colonial efforts at establishing anything more than toeholds in Northern America. Had victory been based on military skill and tenacity alone, Native Americans might well have avoided or significantly delayed colonization. However, epidemic diseases, the [slave trade](#), and a continuous stream of incoming Europeans proved to be more decisive elements in the American narrative.

Eastern North America and the Subarctic

During the 17th century the [Iroquois Confederacy](#) and the English had created a strong [alliance](#) against the competing [coalitions](#) formed by the Huron, Algonquin, Algonquian, and French. The tradition of forming such alliances continued in the 18th century. Some of these coalitions were very strong, while loyalties shifted readily in others. Indigenous leaders often realized that they could reap the most benefit by provoking colonial rivalries and actively did so. Many also recognized that the Europeans were no more consistent in maintaining alliances than they were in observing territorial boundaries, and so they became wary of colonial opportunism. Such was the case for the Iroquois: about 1700 they adopted a policy of neutrality between the English and French that held for some 50 years.

Colonial administrative decisions of the 18th century were thoroughly coloured by issues in [Europe](#), where the diplomatic and military milieus were characterized by constant tension. [England](#), [France](#), [Spain](#), [Austria](#), [Prussia](#), and other countries engaged in several conflicts that either spread to or greatly influenced events in eastern [North America](#) during this period. The most important of these conflicts are discussed below.

[Queen Anne's War \(1702–13\)](#) and the [Yamasee War \(1715–16\)](#)

The [War of the Spanish Succession](#) (1702–13) pitted France and Spain against England, the [Dutch Republic](#), and Austria in a fight to determine the European balance of power. One theatre of this war was Northern America, where the conflict became known as [Queen Anne's War](#). It set an alliance of the English and some Southeast Indian nations, notably the [Creek](#) and the eastern [Choctaw](#), against one comprising the French, the Spanish, and other Southeast Indians, notably the western Choctaw.

The latter alliance lost, and treaties negotiated in Europe caused France to relinquish claim to a vast area including [Newfoundland](#), French Acadia (renamed [Nova Scotia](#)), and [Rupert's Land](#). The French presence in the north was thin and had always been contested by the English; as a result, the war had few immediate effects on First Nations peoples (the Native Americans of [Canada](#); see [Sidebar: Tribal Nomenclature: American Indian, Native American, and First Nation](#)) other than to cement the position of the [Hudson's Bay Company](#). The company remained paramount in the north until 1783, when its hegemony was challenged by the rival [North West Company](#).

In the Southeast the war caused widespread havoc. Many communities, both native and colonial, were forced to move or risk destruction. With territorial boundaries in disarray, the war's aftermath included a series of smaller engagements through which Native Americans tried to avoid being squeezed between the westward expansion of the English, who held the Atlantic coast, and the French expansion eastward from their Mississippi River entrepôts.

One of the better-known of these conflicts was the [Yamasee War](#) (1715–16), in which an alliance of Yamasee, Creek, and other tribes fought against English expansion. Their resistance was ultimately unsuccessful, and some of the refugees fled south to [Florida](#), where their

descendants later joined with others to found the [Seminole](#) nation. The Yamasee War inspired the [Creek](#) to take a neutral stance between the colonizers; they subsequently became one of the most successful groups in profiting from colonial rivalries. However, the Creek and their traditional rivals, the [Cherokee](#), continued intermittent raids against one another until the late 1720s. At the same time, the neighbouring [Chickasaw](#) were shifting their trade from the French to the English because the goods provided by the latter were generally less expensive and of better quality than those of the former. The Chickasaw defended themselves from repeated [Choctaw](#)-French attacks and successfully avoided French trade [hegemony](#). The [Natchez](#) were less fortunate: their resistance was quashed by the Choctaw-French [alliance](#), which captured hundreds of Natchez people and sold them into the Caribbean [slave trade](#).

The [French and Indian War](#) (1754–63) and Pontiac's War (1763–64)

During the years from 1754 to 1763, disputes between the European empires ignited conflicts in [Europe](#), [Asia](#), and [North America](#). The fighting that took place in Europe became known as the [Seven Years' War](#) (1756–63) and pitted the joint forces of Prussia, Hanover, and England against an alliance comprising Austria, France, Russia, [Saxony](#), and [Sweden](#).

Although they participated in the European theatre of war, for France and England the most important battlegrounds were their colonies in Asia and America. The last of the [Carnatic Wars](#) (1756–63) saw these two colonial powers battle for control over eastern [India](#)—a contest in which England's victory was decisive.

The international conflict was most prolonged in North America, where it became known as the [French and Indian War](#) (1754–63). There it pitted the English, allied with the Iroquois Confederacy once again, against a much larger [coalition](#) comprising many Algonquian-speaking tribes, the French, and the Spanish. Most of the fighting occurred in the [Ohio River](#) watershed and the [Great Lakes](#) region. Surprisingly, given their smaller numbers, the Iroquois-English alliance prevailed. Under the terms of the [Treaty of Paris](#) (1763), France ceded to England its colonies east of the [Mississippi River](#). England now ruled a vast landmass reaching from [Hudson Bay](#) to the [Gulf of Mexico](#) and from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi River.

Treaties at this time generally transferred sovereignty over a territory from one monarch to another but did not dispossess locals of their property nor abrogate prior agreements between monarch and subject. Categories of people were seen as rather interchangeable—if the sovereign (in this case, of France) had made a promise to subjects in a territory that was to become the domain of another monarch (in this case, of England), the latter was expected to honour the arrangement. The subjects living in the region, here the native and colonial peoples of [New France](#), were likewise expected to transfer their loyalty from the first monarch to the second. Although European and Euro-American colonists were accustomed to having no voice in such matters, the region's indigenous residents objected to being treated as subjects rather than nations; not having been party to the treaty, they felt little need to honour it.

With English rule came the usual flood of settlers. Like their compatriots in [New England](#) and the mid-Atlantic, the First Nations in the former French territory observed that the English were unwilling or unable to prevent trespass by [squatters](#). Indigenous groups throughout the [Great Lakes](#) region were further piqued because the annual giveaway of trade goods had been

suspended. The English had come to view the giveaway as an unnecessary expense and were glad to be rid of it. In contrast, the First Nations felt that they were being deprived of income they were owed for allowing foreign access to the North American interior.

These and other issues caused the indigenous nations to press their advantage during the disorderly period marking the end of the [French and Indian War](#). Recognizing that strength of unified action, the [Ottawa](#) leader [Pontiac](#) organized a regional coalition of nations. Among other actions in the conflict that became known as Pontiac's War (1763–64), the native [coalition](#) captured several English forts near the Great Lakes. These and other demonstrations of military skill and numerical strength prompted King [George III](#)'s ministers to issue the [Proclamation of 1763](#), one of the most important documents in Native American legal history. It reserved for the use of the tribes "all the Lands and Territories lying to the Westward of the sources of the Rivers which fall into the Sea from the West and Northwest." That is, the land between the [Appalachian Mountains](#) and the [Mississippi River](#), and from the Great Lakes almost to the [Gulf of Mexico](#), was declared reserved for Indian use exclusively. The proclamation also reserved to the English monarch the exclusive right to purchase or otherwise control these tribal lands.

The proclamation also required all settlers to vacate the region. Despite this mandate, thousands of English settlers followed their forebears' tradition of ignoring the colonial authorities and moved into the reserved territory during the relatively quiescent period following Pontiac's War. French Canadians were also on the move, not least because British law prohibited Roman Catholics from a number of activities, such as holding public office. The British attempted to address French Canadian discontent by passing the [Quebec Act](#) (1774). It included a number of provisions ensuring the free practice of [religion](#) and the continuation of French [civil law](#).

More important from an indigenous view, it extended [Quebec](#)'s boundaries northward to [Hudson Bay](#) and southward to the confluence of the [Ohio](#) and [Mississippi rivers](#), the site of present-day [Cairo](#), Ill. Although [England](#) saw this as an expedient way to establish the [governor](#) of Quebec's political authority over remote French Canadian settlements, Native Americans saw the act as an abrogation of the [Proclamation of 1763](#). In addition, Euro-American settlers who had entered the region after pacification saw it as an attempt to curtail what they believed was their God-given right to expand into the west. The feelings among these parties soon became so inflamed that they led to the brink of yet another war.

The American Revolution (1775–83)

The discontentment caused by the [Quebec Act](#) contributed directly to a third 18th-century war of empire, the [American Revolution](#) (1775–83), in which 13 of the English colonies in [North America](#) eventually gained political independence. This war was especially important to the [Iroquois Confederacy](#), which by then included the [Tuscarora](#). The confederacy had long been allied with the English against the [Huron](#), the northern Algonquians, and the French. Now the Iroquois were faced with a conundrum: a number of the English individuals with whom they had once worked were now revolutionaries and so at least nominally allied with France. All the foreigners, whether English loyalists, revolutionaries, or French, promised to uphold the [sovereignty](#) of Iroquois lands, but by this time most Indians recognized that such promises were as likely to be expediences as they were to be true pledges. This left the council of the Iroquois

Confederacy with the problem of balancing its knowledge of individual colonizers, some of whom were trustworthy allies, against its experiences with the colonial administrations, which were known to be inconstant. Despite much deliberation, the council was unable to reach consensus. As its decisions could only be enacted after full agreement, some individuals, families, and nations allied themselves with the English loyalists and others with the colonial upstarts and their French allies.

For the colonizers, the [war](#) ended with the [Peace of Paris](#) (1783). The [treaties](#) between [England](#) and the new [United States](#) included the English cession of the lands south of the [St. Lawrence River](#) and the Great Lakes and as far west as the [Mississippi River](#). The indigenous [nations](#) were not consulted regarding this cession, which placed those Iroquois who had been allied with the English loyalists in what was now U.S. [territory](#). Realizing that remaining in the territory would expose them to retribution, several thousand members of the [Iroquois-English alliance](#) left their homes and resettled in Canada.

The nascent United States was deeply in debt after the war and had a military too small to effectively patrol its extensive borders. Hoping to overextend and reconquer the upstarts, their rivals—formidable alliances comprising the displaced Iroquois, the Algonquians, and the English in the north and the Spanish with some of the [Chickasaw](#), [Creek](#), [Cherokee](#), and [Choctaw](#) in the south—engaged in munitions trading and border raids. The United States committed to a number of treaties in order to clarify matters with indigenous nations, but in eastern [North America](#) the end of the 18th century was nonetheless characterized by confusion over, and lack of enforcement of, many territorial boundaries.

The [War of 1812](#) (1812–14)

American Indian experiences of the transition from the 18th to the 19th century were rather thoroughly, if indirectly, affected by the [French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars](#) (1789–1815). The fall of the French [monarchy](#) worried [Europe's](#) elite, who began to decrease the level of conspicuous consumption to which they had previously been accustomed. The subsequent suppression of [Napoleon's](#) armies required a concentrated international military effort that was enormously expensive in both cash and lives and which further encouraged relative frugality. This social and economic climate caused a serious decline in the fur trade and much hardship for those who depended upon it, including indigenous North Americans.

By 1808–10, despite assurances from the U.S. government that the [Proclamation of 1763](#) would be honoured, settlers had overrun the valleys of the [Ohio](#) and [Illinois rivers](#). [Game](#) and other wild food was increasingly scarce, and settlers were actively attempting to dislocate native peoples. Tensions that had been building since the [American Revolution](#) were worsened by the decline in the fur trade and a multiyear drought during which native and settler [crops](#) alike failed.

Realizing that the fates of indigenous peoples throughout the [Great Lakes](#) region were intertwined, [Tecumseh](#), a [Shawnee](#) leader who had served with the British during the American Revolution, began to advocate for a pan-Indian [alliance](#). He recommended a renewed association with the [English](#), who seemed less voracious for land than the Americans. By all accounts, however, Tecumseh was simply choosing the less odious of two fickle partners. He had fought in the [Battle of Fallen Timbers](#) (1794), one of several postrevolutionary engagements

in which Indian-English coalitions attempted to prevent the [United States](#)' settlement of the Ohio valley. Tecumseh's brother and hundreds of other native combatants were killed at Fallen Timbers because the British would neither send reinforcements nor open the gates of their fort to the fleeing warriors. British inconstancy in events with such severe and personal consequences was not soon forgotten.

For the Native American [coalition](#) that participated in the [War of 1812](#), the conflict centred on territorial rights; for the English and the Euro-Americans, it was a conflict over transatlantic shipping rights. Eventually, the actions of future U.S. president [William Henry Harrison](#), who attempted to break the nascent native alliance by burning its settlement at Prophetstown during the [Battle of Tippecanoe](#) (1811), sealed the indigenous leaders' decision to support England.

Tecumseh's coalition won a number of early victories. One of the most notable was the 1813 capture of Fort Detroit—through canny tactics that made his troops seem much greater in number than they were, Tecumseh caused the fort's commander, Gen. [William Hull](#), to panic. Hull surrendered without mounting a defense and was later court-martialed.

Despite these and other victories won by the alliance of Indians and English, the [War of 1812](#) was ultimately a draw between England and the United States. They agreed to terms in the [Treaty of Ghent](#) (1814); England did not consult with its native allies regarding the terms of the agreement, which for the most part returned Northern America to its prewar status. That status did not hold in southern [Quebec](#), however, which at the time extended well south of the Great Lakes. Instead, the English relinquished their claims to the [Ohio River](#) basin area and left the members of Tecumseh's coalition to fend for themselves. This was a tremendous blow, as the resident nations were immediately subject to displacement by Euro-American settlers. With the fur trade in the doldrums and peaceful relations between [England](#) and the United States, the pelts and military assistance that had been the economic mainstays of the Northeast tribes had lost their value. Indigenous prosperity and power in the region entered a period of rapid decline.

The Southwest and the southern Pacific Coast

While the 18th-century wars of empire raged in Europe and eastern [North America](#), colonization continued apace in the western part of the continent. There the principal imperial powers were [Spain](#) and [Russia](#). In the Southwest the Spanish continued to dominate the indigenous nations. The tribes there, particularly the Pueblos, continued to face severe punishment for "heretical" practices and other forms of direct resistance to colonization. They maintained their cultural heritage through a combination of overt acceptance of European conventions and private practice of their own traditions. Most hunting and gathering groups in the region continued to live in areas that were not amenable to [farming](#) or ranching and so encountered the colonizers less often.

European explorers had sighted [California](#) in 1542 but did not attempt to occupy it until 1769. Following the Pacific coast northward from [Mexico](#), the Franciscan friar [Junípero Serra](#) and his successors established 21 [missions](#), while their military and civilian counterparts chose nearby sites for presidios (forts) and [haciendas](#) (estates).

The arrival of the Spanish proved disastrous for the [California Indians](#). The resident nations of

California were unusually prosperous hunters and gatherers, making a living from a landscape that was extremely rich with wild foods. These peoples used a form of political organization known as the *tribelet*: moderately sized sedentary groups characterized by hierarchical but highly independent relationships both within and between polities.

The California nations were accustomed to negotiating agreements among themselves but, like their Southwestern counterparts, had no experience of occupation. As elsewhere, the Spanish occupation was brutal. Having selected a building site, Spanish leaders dispatched troops to indigenous villages, where they captured the residents. Having been marched to the chosen location, the people were forced to [labour](#) as builders and farmers and were forbidden to leave. In both hacienda and mission contexts, but more so in the missions, rules often mandated that native individuals be separated by gender, a practice that left women and children especially vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse at the hands of [clergy](#) and soldiers. As in the Southwest, resistance to any aspect of the missionizing experience was often harshly punished; nonetheless, many native Californians sought to escape the conquest by fleeing to distant areas and rebuilding their lives.

The northern Pacific Coast

North America's northern Pacific coast was home to [Arctic peoples](#) and [Northwest Coast Indians](#). These groups made their living primarily from the sea. Like their counterparts in the Northeast culture area, they were accustomed to offensive and defensive military action. They also participated in an indigenous trade network so extensive that it necessitated its own [pidgin](#), or trade language, known as [Chinook Jargon](#).

By the early 18th century, European elites had begun to recognize the potential profitability of trade relations with the peoples of [North America](#)'s Pacific coast. From the mid-18th century on, the northern Pacific trade was dominated by [Russia](#), although explorers and traders from other countries also visited the region.

Russian elites initially saw North America as rich but so distant that attempts at occupation might prove ill-advised. This perception was soon reversed, however. The Russian tsar [Peter I](#) sent [Vitus Bering](#) to explore the northern seas in 1728, and Russian traders reached the [Aleutian Islands](#) and the coasts of present-day [Alaska](#) (U.S.) and [British Columbia](#) ([Canada](#)) in the 1740s.

Russian trade was conducted by a rugged group of Siberian sailors and trappers, the *promyshlenniki*. Like their French counterparts, they wished to establish themselves in the lucrative fur trade, but, whereas the French sought beaver pelts for the European markets, the Russians sought the rich pelts of sea otters for trade with [China](#). The differences between the French and Russian traders were more substantial than their pelt preferences, however. Where the 17th-century French traders had generally built settlements near native towns and partnered with local peoples, the 18th-century Russians imposed a devastating occupation that replicated the brutal social order to which they were accustomed—one in which they assumed the status of elites and exercised the power of life and death over their indigenous “serfs.”

The initial encounters between the native peoples of the northern Pacific coast and Russian

traders presaged terrible hardships to come. In 1745 a group of *promyshlenniki* overwintered in the Aleutian Islands; their behaviour was so extreme that the Russian courts eventually convicted several members of the party of atrocities. The [Aleuts](#) and the neighbouring Koniag mounted a spirited resistance against Russian incursions over the next 20 years but were outgunned. The Native Alaskan men who survived these early battles were immediately impressed into service hunting sea otters from light boats; their absences could range in length from days to months. During these periods the colonizers held entire villages hostage as surety and demanded food, labour, and sex from the remaining residents. This caused extraordinary human suffering; many communities endured cruel exploitation and prolonged periods of near-[starvation](#).

During the last decade of the 18th century, Russian attempts to expand operations southward met with fierce military resistance from the [Northwest Coast Indians](#), especially the [Tlingit](#). With larger numbers than the Aleuts and Koniag, access to firearms, and the ability to retreat to the interior, the Tlingit nation successfully repelled the Russian colonizers. Having gained control of the region's harbours and waterways, the [Tlingit](#) and other Northwest Coast peoples profited by charging European (and later Euro-American) traders tolls for passage therein and by selling them immense quantities of [fish](#), game, and [potatoes](#).

In 1799 Russia's many independent trading outfits coalesced into a single [monopoly](#), the [Russian-American Company](#). Over the next decade it became clear that the practice of hunting mature female otters, which had more-luxurious pelts than males, was seriously depleting the sea otter [population](#). Desiring a permanent southern outpost from which to stage hunts as well as a source for cheaper comestibles, in 1812 the company founded the northern [California](#) trading post of Fort Ross (about 90 miles [140 km] north of what is now [San Francisco](#)). The *promyshlenniki* continued to force Aleut and Koniag men on extended [hunting](#) trips. In many cases, local [Pomo](#) women married these Native Alaskan men, and together they built a unique multiethnic community.

In the early decades of the 19th century, voluntary cohabitation and intermarriage between native women and Russian men began to soften colonial relations in [Alaska](#). Equally important, the multiethnic progeny of these matches and of the Native Alaskan-Pomo couples at Fort Ross began to ascend into the administrative ranks of the fur trade. By the 1850s, common customs in the northern Pacific colonies included wage rather than impressed labour; ritual [godparenting](#), a Russian custom in which an adult makes a serious and public commitment to ensuring the physical, economic, and spiritual well-being of another person's child; and name exchanges, a Native Alaskan custom in which one receiving a name (usually of a deceased person) assumes some of the rights of its previous owner.

The [Plains](#) and [Plateau](#) culture areas

The European conquest of North America proceeded in fits and starts from the coasts to the interior. During the early colonial period, the [Plains](#) and the [Plateau](#) peoples were affected by epidemics of foreign diseases and a slow influx of European trade goods. However, sustained direct interaction between these nations and colonizers did not occur until the 18th century.

In 1738 the [Mandan](#) villages on the upper [Missouri River](#) hosted a party led by the French trader

Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de la Vérendrye; this is often characterized as the event that initiated lasting contact between the peoples of the northern Plains and the colonial powers. Certainly a significant number of traders, such as [David Thompson](#), were living with the Mandans and other Plains peoples by the late 18th century. Accounts of daily life in the region, gleaned from the diaries and letters of these traders, indicate that the interior nations were adept negotiators who enjoyed a relatively prosperous lifestyle; indeed, many visitors commented on the snug nature of the earth lodges in which Plains families lived and on the productivity they witnessed in the region. Although somewhat less historical data exists for the Plateau peoples of this era, it is clear that the 18th century was a time of great change for both groups. Three key factors influenced the trajectory of change: the arrival of [horses](#), the arrival of guns, and the arrival of native peoples from adjacent culture areas.

Horses were introduced to the Americas by the Spanish [conquistadors](#). The advantages of using horses, whether as pack animals or as mounts, were obvious to the [Plains](#) and [Plateau](#) peoples, who had until then been obligated to travel overland by foot or in small boats on the regions' few navigable rivers. Horses might be acquired in one of several ways: through purchase or trade, by capture from a rival group, or by taming animals from the wild herds that soon arose.

The dense forests of the Northeast, Southeast, and Subarctic had discouraged the widespread use of horses; in those regions, abundant waterways provided a more readily negotiated system of transportation. Thus, horses spread from the Southwest culture area to the Plains and the Plateau following a northerly and easterly trajectory. As horses spread, the pedestrian foragers of the southwestern Plains quickly incorporated them into [bison](#) hunts. Previously these had been dangerous affairs: the range of the [bow and arrow](#) was not great and so required hunters to approach [animals](#) rather closely, while the alternative method of hunting was to stampede a herd of bison toward a cliff, from which they would fall to their deaths. The speed and mobility provided by horses were great improvements over these earlier conditions.

Spanish law expressly forbade the distribution of [firearms](#) to indigenous individuals, but the English and Dutch traded them freely. Initially used in battle and to hunt the large game of the eastern and boreal forests, firearms were readily incorporated into the bison hunt by the pedestrian forager-farmers of the northeastern Plains. The horse's speed and agility had inspired a more effective form of hunting in the southern Plains; in the north a similar increase in productivity occurred as [guns](#) replaced bows and arrows. A [rifle](#)'s greater firepower allowed more distance between hunter and hunted, lessening the danger of attack from a charging animal.

Horses and guns spread to the interior over the course of about 100 years, from roughly 1600 to 1700. By approximately 1700 many tribes were moving to the interior as well. Those from the Northeast were agriculturists pushed west by the intertribal hostilities of the Huron-Algonquian-French and Iroquois-English alliances. Those from the Southwest were Apachean and other hunters and gatherers who, having acquired horses, were able for the first time to match the movement of the bison herds.

By the 1750s the horse culture of the southern interior had met with the gun culture of the northern interior. The combination of guns and horses was invaluable: nations could follow herds of bison across the landscape and also take advantage of the greater distance and power

allowed by firearms. From the mid-18th century to the first part of the 19th century, horses and guns enabled the indigenous nations of the North American interior to enjoy an unprecedented level of prosperity.

Domestic colonies: the late 18th to the late 19th century

While Native American experiences of the 18th century were influenced by internecine warfare between the European powers, their experiences of the 19th century reflected an increasing political shift from overseas [colonialism](#) to domestic expansionism. Events of the 19th century made two things clear to indigenous nations: there were no longer any territories so remote as to escape colonization, and, for the most part, colonizers continued to prove inconstant and unable—or unwilling—to fulfill the commitments to which they agreed.

Removal of the eastern nations

The first full declaration of U.S. policy toward the country's indigenous peoples was embodied in the third of the [Northwest Ordinances](#) (1787):

The utmost good faith shall always be observed toward the Indians, their lands and [property](#) shall never be taken from them without their consent; and in their property, rights, and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless in just and lawful wars authorized by [Congress](#); but laws founded in justice and humanity shall from time to time be made, for preventing wrongs being done to them, and for preserving peace and friendship with them.

Within a few decades this guarantee of legal, political, and property rights was undermined by a series of [Supreme Court](#) decisions and the passage of a new federal law.

The rulings in question were written by Chief Justice [John Marshall](#). In *Johnson v. M'Intosh* (1823), the court ruled that European doctrine gave a “discovering” (e.g., colonial) power and its successors the exclusive right to purchase land from aboriginal nations. This ruling removed control of land transactions from the [tribes](#), which had previously been able to sell to whomever they wished. In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), the court further opined that the political autonomy of indigenous polities was inherently reliant on the federal [government](#), defining them as domestic (dependent) nations rather than foreign (independent) nations. This status prevented tribes from invoking a number of privileges reserved to foreign powers, such as suing the United States in the Supreme Court. In a third case, *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), the court ruled that only the federal government, not the states, had the right to impose their regulations on Indian land. This created an important precedent through which tribes could, like states, reserve some areas of political autonomy. Together these three decisions suggested that Indian nations were simultaneously dependent upon and independent from federal control; subsequent case law has often focused on defining exactly which form of relationship obtains in a particular situation.

Even as these cases made their way through the U.S. courts, Congress was passing the [Indian Removal Act](#) (1830). The act was initiated after the 1828 discovery of [gold](#) on [Cherokee](#) land in [Georgia](#). Speculators hoping to profit from the discovery, including President [Andrew Jackson](#), subsequently pressured [Congress](#) to find a way to legally divest the tribe of its land. Jackson's speech [On Indian Removal](#), presented to Congress in December 1830, provides a sample, although certainly not a full account, of his rationalizations for such action.

The [Indian Removal Act](#) enabled the president to designate tracts of land west of the [Mississippi](#) as new Indian Territories, to negotiate with tribes to effect their removal from east of the Mississippi, and to fund these transactions and associated [transportation](#) costs. The Native American population had not been consulted in these matters and responded in a variety of ways: [Black Hawk](#) led the [Sauk](#) and [Fox](#) in defending their territory; the Cherokee pursued resolution through the courts; the [Choctaw](#) agreed to arrange a departure plan with the designated federal authorities; and the [Chickasaw](#) gained permission to sell their property and arrange their own transportation to points west. Perhaps the most determined to remain in place were the [Seminoles](#), who fiercely defended their homes; the [Seminole Wars](#) (1817–18, 1835–42, and 1855–58) came to be the most expensive military actions undertaken by the U.S. [government](#) up to that point.

Ultimately, all the eastern tribes found that overt resistance to removal was met with military force. In the decade after 1830, almost the entire U.S. [population](#) of perhaps 100,000 eastern Indians—including nearly every nation from the Northeast and Southeast culture areas—moved westward, whether voluntarily or by force. Encountering great difficulties and losing many people to exposure, starvation, and illness, those who survived this migration named it the [Trail of Tears](#).

The conquest of the western United States

In 1848 the [Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo](#) granted the [United States](#) all of [Mexico's](#) territories north of the Rio Grande (see [Mexican-American War](#)); in the same year, [gold](#) was discovered in [California](#). Thousands of miners and settlers streamed westward on the [Oregon Trail](#) and other routes, crossing over and hunting on indigenous land without asking leave or paying tribute. From the resident nations' perspective, these people were trespassers and poachers, although their presence was somewhat ameliorated by the goods and services they purchased from the tribes. Contrary to their frequent portrayal in 20th-century popular culture, few armed conflicts between travelers and Indians took place, although tense situations certainly occurred. These circumstances moved the U.S. government to initiate a series of treaties through which to pacify the trans-Mississippi west. Perhaps the most important of these was the First Treaty of Fort Laramie (1851), which was negotiated with the [Arapaho](#), [Arikara](#), [Assiniboin](#), [Blackfoot](#), [Cheyenne](#), [Crow](#), Dakota [Sioux](#), [Hidatsa](#), and [Mandan nations](#). Among other issues, it explicitly defined the home territories of each of these peoples, disputes over which had fostered intertribal conflict. It also required the signatory nations to forego battle among themselves and against Euro-Americans and gave the United States the right to build and protect roads through the Plains. In return, the United States agreed to provide a variety of goods and services to the tribes.

Notably, while the impetus for the First Treaty of Fort Laramie was federal concern about the safety of travelers, indigenous actions against these people paled before the depredations of Euro-Americans, which have been described as genocidal. In the first three decades following the 1848 [gold strike](#), for example, California's Native American population declined from between 100,000 and 150,000—a figure already depleted by the decades of poor conditions the “novitiates” had experienced at the hands of Spanish missionaries and businessmen—to perhaps 15,000 individuals. In 1850 the [California](#) legislature legalized the de facto [slavery](#) of indigenous individuals by allowing Euro-American men to declare them “vagrant” and to bind such “vagrants” by indenture. Thousands of people were enslaved under this statute, and many died of maltreatment. Between 1851 and 1857 the state legislature also authorized some \$1.5 million for reimbursement to private individuals who quelled native “hostilities”; most of these private expeditions were little more than shooting sprees and slave raids against peaceful indigenous settlements.

For a time, the conquest of the West was overshadowed by the [American Civil War](#) (1861–65). Conflicts in the Plains increased during this period and included two of the worst interethnic atrocities of 19th-century America: the Sioux Uprising (1862), in which [Santee](#) warriors killed some 400 settlers in [Minnesota](#), many of whom were women and children, and the [Sand Creek Massacre](#) (1864), in which members of the [Colorado](#) militia killed at least 150 and perhaps as many as 500 people, mostly women and children, at a [Cheyenne](#) village known to be peaceable.

As the Civil War ended, increasing numbers of U.S. troops were sent to pacify the North American interior. The federal [government](#) also began to develop the policies that eventually confined the nations of the West to [reservations](#), and to pursue treaties with Native American polities in order to effect that goal. These agreements generally committed tribes to land cessions, in exchange for which the United States promised to designate specific areas for exclusive indigenous use and to provide tribes with annual payments (annuities) comprising cash, [livestock](#), supplies, and services. A second major treaty convention occurred at Fort Laramie in 1868, but treaty making ceased with the passage of the Indian Appropriation Act (1871), which declared that “hereafter no Indian nation or tribe” would be recognized “as an independent power with whom the United States may contract by treaty.” Indian affairs were thus brought under the legislative control of the [Congress](#) to a much greater extent than previously.

These actions eventually had an enormous effect on native nations. However, policy changes made from afar are difficult to enforce, and Washington, D.C., was nearly 1,700 miles (2,700 km) away from the communication nexus at Fort Laramie. The tasks of finding, moving, and restricting the nomadic nations to their designated reservations were given to the U.S. military. The best-known event of the conquest of the American West, the [Battle of the Little Bighorn](#) (June 25, 1876), arose directly from this delegation of authority. Notably, and despite its notoriety, this engagement caused few or no injuries to noncombatants; only military personnel were directly injured or killed. During the battle a combined group of [Cheyenne](#) and Sioux warriors defended their families from [George Armstrong Custer](#) and the U.S. 7th Cavalry. Custer's mission had been to remove these people (several hundred in all) to their reservations, and he had intended to forcibly capture or kill every member of the community, including women, children, the aged, and the infirm, in order to do so. With the exception of a small group of soldiers led by Maj. Marcus Reno, who were trapped under fire on a hill, Custer and his

troops were completely annihilated. Unfortunately for the western nations, this event—and particularly Elizabeth Custer's decades-long promotion of her husband's death as an atrocity, despite his status as a recognized combatant—spawned a prolonged media sensation that reignited the United States' commitment to complete hegemony over Native America.

By the late 1880s an indigenous millenarian movement, the [Ghost Dance religion](#), had arrived on the Plains. Growing from an older tradition known as the Round Dance, the new religion was based on the revelations of a young [Paiute](#) man, [Wovoka](#), who prophesied the departure of the Euro-Americans and a reunion of Indians and their departed kin. The songs and ceremonies born of Wovoka's revelation swept the Plains, offering hope to indigenous believers but also shifting over time and space from a pacifist set of practices to one with at least some military aspects. Concerned that the Ghost Dance would disturb the uneasy peace of the northern Plains, U.S. government agents moved to capture its proponents. Among them was the Sioux leader [Sitting Bull](#), who was killed on December 15, 1890, while being taken into custody. Just 14 days later the U.S. 7th Cavalry—Custer's regiment reconstituted—encircled and shelled a peaceful Sioux encampment at [Wounded Knee](#), [South Dakota](#), an action many have argued was taken in revenge of the [Little Bighorn battle](#). More than 200 men, women, children, and elders who were waiting to return to their homes were killed. Although this massacre marked the effective end of native military resistance in the western [United States](#), [tribes](#) and individuals continued to resist conquest in a variety of other ways.

The conquest of western Canada

For the indigenous peoples of the Canadian West, the 19th century was a time of rapid transformation. The fur trade and a variety of large prey animals were in decline, and, with the elimination of government tribute payments, this created a period of economic hardship for the tribes. In addition, [Canada](#)'s northern forests and Plains saw an influx of European and Euro-American settlers and a series of treaties that greatly reduced the landholdings of aboriginal peoples.

Many legal issues of import to aboriginal nations were decided early in the century, before Canadian independence. Among the most important of these policies was the Crown Lands Protection Act (1839), which affirmed that aboriginal lands were the [property](#) of the crown unless specifically titled to an individual (see [crown land](#)). By disallowing indigenous control of real estate, a requirement for full [citizenship](#) in most of Canada, the act disenfranchised most native peoples. Through the 1850s a series of additional laws codified Indian policy in Canada. Initiated by the assimilationist Bagot Commission (1842–44), these laws defined what constituted native identity, mandated that individuals carry only one legal status (e.g., aboriginal or citizen), prohibited the sale of alcohol to native peoples, and shifted the administration of native affairs from the British Colonial Office to Canada.

For native peoples, the most momentous legal changes in the later 19th century included the creation of the Dominion of Canada (1867) and the passage of legislation including the Gradual Civilization Act (1857), the Act Providing for the Organisation of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada and for the Management of Indian and Ordnance Lands (1868), the Manitoba Act (1870), and the first consolidated Indian Act (1876). Events of the 19th century were also heavily influenced by the intensifying competition between the Hudson's Bay

Company and the North West Company, a rivalry with roots a century old.

The Red River crisis and the creation of [Manitoba](#)

The [Hudson's Bay Company](#) (HBC) and the [North West Company](#) (NWC) had initially exploited different territories: the HBC took northern Huronia, Hudson Bay, and the land from the bay's western shore to the [Rocky Mountains](#), while the NWC took the region lying between Lake Superior and the Rockies. In 1810 [Thomas Douglas, 5th earl of Selkirk](#), became the major shareholder of the HBC. Selkirk was a Scottish philanthropist who felt that emigration was the most reasonable response to [enclosure](#), which in [Scotland](#) was causing the precipitous eviction and impoverishment of literally thousands of farm families. He arranged to have the HBC provide nearly 120,000 square miles (approximately 310,000 square km) for settlement in and around the [Red River](#) valley of present-day [Manitoba](#) and [North Dakota](#). The area was referred to as [Assiniboia](#), named after the [Assiniboin](#) nation, which resided there.

The scheme was not well received by the established residents of the area. The [population](#) of [Assiniboia](#) was a heterogeneous mix of aboriginal and Euro-American individuals, essentially all of whom were engaged in the fur trade in one form or another. Members of the [Métis](#) nation were among the region's most prominent residents—economically successful, numerous, and well-traveled. Their economy emphasized commercial [hunting](#), trapping, [fishing](#), trading, and cartage; by generally limiting [farming](#) to such labour as was required to meet subsistence needs, they preserved the habitat of the [animals](#) upon which the [fur](#) trade relied. Métis culture arose from the marriages of indigenous women, who were most often [Cree](#), to European traders, who were most often French or Scottish. In the early 19th century, some Métis identified most closely with their indigenous heritage, some with their European heritage, and some with both equally. A fourth group saw themselves as members of a unique culture that drew from, but was independent of, those of their ancestors. Given that the first interethnic [marriages](#) had occurred some two centuries earlier and that new individuals were constantly admixing into Métis communities, each of these perspectives could be reasonably held.

A number of Métis were officers in the [NWC](#); the HBC, however, eschewed hiring them (and all indigenous individuals) for anything but the most basic labour. This rankled the Métis, many of whom supposed that Selkirk's settlers and their intensive farming were meant to dispossess the residents of Assiniboia of their lands and livelihoods. The NWC shareholders encouraged these sentiments. The two companies' dispute over control of the [territory](#) became quite heated; the NWC had a longer presence there, but both had trading posts in the region, and the crown's grant of [Rupert's Land](#) to the HBC seemed—to HBC shareholders, at least—to prove the superiority of the HBC claim.

In 1812 the first of the Selkirk settlers arrived at the [Red River Settlement](#) (near present-day [Winnipeg](#), [Manitoba](#), [Canada](#)). Additional immigrants arrived in succeeding years; they were often harassed, and in some cases their buildings were burned and their [crops](#) destroyed. Tensions between the NWC-Métis contingent and the HBC-settler contingent were compounded in the severe [winter](#) of 1815–16, which produced widespread [starvation](#). When a group of NWC men, almost entirely Métis, attacked and captured an HBC supply [convoy](#), the HBC-appointed [governor](#) of the [colony](#) led a group of some 20–25 troops to retaliate. The NWC men killed 20 of this group in an engagement known as the [Seven Oaks Massacre](#) (1816). Many historians

credit this event with fostering the unified Métis identity that later proved to be a key element in shaping the Canadian West and that continues to exist today.

In 1818 the Canadian courts, packed with judges who were NWC shareholders and supporters, ordered Selkirk to pay the NWC a very large settlement. The animosity between the rival companies was not resolved until 1821, when the British government insisted that they merge. The resultant corporation retained the [Hudson's Bay Company](#) name and many of its policies, including the use of discriminatory employment practices. Many Métis thus lost their primary employment as trappers, traders, and carters and began to move from the countryside into the [Red River Settlement](#). Over the next several decades they made numerous petitions to the colonial and British governments requesting recognition of their status as an independent people, an end to the HBC [monopoly](#), and colony status for Assiniboia, among other things. Their [petitions](#) were denied, although in some cases only after heated debate in the British [Parliament](#).

[Parliament](#) granted Canada independence through the [British North America Act](#) (1867), legislation that included little acknowledgement of the concerns of the Métis or other aboriginal nations. Instead, [Canada's](#) 1868 Act Providing for the Organisation of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada and for the Management of Indian and Ordnance Lands (sometimes referred to as the first Indian Act, although an act by that name was not passed until 1876) defined the ways that the dominion government would relate to native nations, essentially codifying the colonial legislation that had been passed during the 1850s.

Britain's Parliament also approved the transfer of [Rupert's Land](#) from the HBC to Canada, to be effective December 1, 1869. Convinced that this would result in the seizure of their homes and land, the Métis formed a coalition through which they hoped to negotiate with the new dominion government. Led by [Louis Riel](#), a young Métis who had studied law in Montreal, the coalition waded into a political morass that pitted an assortment of competing interests against one another. The parties included not only the Métis but also various First Nations groups, the Canadian Parliament, the HBC, and a variety of entities whose interests were diametrically opposed, such as Irish Catholic [Fenians](#) and Irish Protestant [Orange Order](#) members, French Canadian Catholics and British Canadian Protestants, and fur traders and farmers. The [United States](#) followed the proceedings closely, hoping to connect the lower 48 states with [Alaska](#) through the purchase or annexation of Rupert's Land; the state of Minnesota even offered Canada \$10 million for the [territory](#).

In an attempt to ensure that their concerns were heard, Riel's men prevented [William McDougall](#), the commissioner of crown lands, from entering [Assiniboia](#) to implement the transfer of Rupert's Land from the HBC to the [dominion](#). A frustrated McDougall nevertheless executed the part of the proclamation eliminating HBC rule over the region, unwisely leaving it without an official [government](#). Riel quickly emplaced a provisional government as allowed under law.

Soon after, in one of the communities governed by the Riel coalition, an Orangeman was tried for disturbing the peace; his trial, despite its legality, and subsequent execution created an uproar throughout Canada. Hoping to quell the situation, the Canadian Parliament quickly wrote and passed the Manitoba Act (1870). Among other provisions, it recognized the [property](#) claims of the area's occupants and set aside 1,400,000 acres (some 565,000 [hectares](#)) for future Métis use. It also mandated legal and educational parity between the English- and French-speaking

communities, as that had become the key political issue for most of the Canadian public.

The Numbered Treaties and the Second Riel Rebellion

The [Red River](#) crisis laid the groundwork for the [Numbered Treaties](#), 11 in all, that were negotiated between 1871 and 1921. For the most part these involved the cession of indigenous land in exchange for reserve areas and the governmental provision of annuities, including cash, equipment, [livestock](#), health care, and public [education](#), all in perpetuity. Leaders from all the involved parties generally felt it better to negotiate than to fight, as the human and financial costs of the conflicts in the western United States were well publicized at the time.

No aboriginal [nation](#) was able to negotiate everything it desired through the [Numbered Treaties](#), although many native leaders were successful in pushing the dominion well beyond its preferred levels of remuneration. In addition to their own negotiating skills, which were considerable, these leaders relied upon individuals who were trained to repeat discussions verbatim—a group whose talents were especially useful when the colonizers “forgot” important clauses of agreements. By the end of 1876, Treaties 1 through 6 had been negotiated by the nations of the southern reaches of present-day [Ontario](#), [Manitoba](#), [Alberta](#), and [Saskatchewan](#). A particularly interesting idea had been advocated by the Plains [Cree](#) leader Big Bear, who persuaded the leaders of other nations to join him in requesting adjoining reserves. Their request was denied on the grounds that it would create an indigenous nation within a nation, which had of course been exactly the goal Big Bear wished to achieve.

The [Métis](#) fared poorly during the implementation of the Manitoba Act and the Numbered Treaties despite their earlier role in instigating dominion consultation with indigenous peoples in the Canadian West. Government assurances that Métis [property](#) claims in Manitoba would be recognized had been negated by the post hoc addition of development requirements—approximately 90 percent of Métis title requests were refused on the basis of insufficient improvements such as too few cultivated [acres](#) or [housing](#) that was deemed unsuitable. A large number moved to Saskatchewan, where the government insisted they file individual land claims as regular [citizens](#). As an aboriginal nation, the Métis argued against this, noting that new block reserves should replace the [land](#) they had lost in Manitoba. From the perspective of the dominion, however, the matter was closed.

Even before the 1876 completion of Treaties 1–6, many members of the northern Plains nations were taking up [farming](#) and ranching. Most also continued to rely on [bison](#) for [meat](#) and for robes or finished [hides](#), which had become very popular trade items. The Métis engaged in the same activities, and, while the resident tribes were not happy with the arrival of competitors, they and the Métis were generally sympathetic to each others’ [human rights](#) causes.

The bison robe trade peaked in the late 1870s. Consumers preferred the lush robes of young [cows](#), and the hunting of animals in their prime reproductive years contributed heavily to the imminent collapse of the bison [population](#). Even as bison became scarce, harvests failed, and for several years in the early 1880s [starvation](#) became a real possibility for many people. For indigenous nations, these hardships were worsened by government agents who refused to fulfill their legal obligations to distribute annuities or who distributed only partial or substandard goods.

In 1884, at the suggestion of Big Bear, more than 2,000 people convened for a pan-tribal gathering. Although tribal leaders had been quietly meeting for years to arrange the scheduling of bison hunts, this was by far the largest indigenous gathering the Canadian Plains had seen. Government agents subsequently prohibited inter-reserve travel and began in earnest to use the withholding of food as a method of control.

Their actions ultimately precipitated a crisis. Late in 1884 [Louis Riel](#) arrived in Saskatchewan, having spent several years in exile in the United States. He attempted to engage the dominion government, advocating for colony status, a position supported by Big Bear's pan-tribal alliance, the Métis, and local Euro-Americans alike. In early 1885 a few starving tribal members looted Euro-American storage facilities and convoys, provoking government retaliation. Big Bear and another Plains Cree leader, [Poundmaker](#), were able to intercede before the resultant skirmishes became full-blown engagements, thus preventing the deaths of many settlers and [Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#) officers. Government troops and ordnance were quickly transported to the area, and within a few weeks Big Bear, [Poundmaker](#), Riel, and other alliance leaders had surrendered. They were soon convicted of various crimes. Riel was executed for treason, and, although their actions had clearly saved many lives, Big Bear and Poundmaker were sentenced to [prison](#), where their health was quickly broken; both died within two years. Although Treaties 7 through 11 remained to be negotiated, colonial conquest was complete in the most populated portions of western Canada.

[Assimilation](#) versus [sovereignty](#): the late 19th to the late 20th century

In many parts of the world, including Northern America, the indigenous peoples who survived military conquest were subsequently subject to political conquest, a situation sometimes referred to colloquially as “death by red tape.” Formulated through governmental and quasi-governmental policies and enacted by nonnative bureaucrats, law enforcement officers, [clergy](#), and others, the practices of political conquest typically fostered structural inequalities that disenfranchised indigenous peoples while strengthening the power of colonizing peoples.

Although the removals of the eastern tribes in the 1830s initiated this phase of conquest, the period from approximately 1885 to 1970 was also a time of intense political manipulation of Native American life. The key question of both eras was whether indigenous peoples would be better served by self-governance or by assimilation to the dominant colonial cultures of [Canada](#) and the [United States](#).

For obvious reasons, most Indians preferred self-governance, also known as [sovereignty](#). Although many Euro-Americans had notionally agreed with this position during the removal era, by the late 19th century most espoused assimilation. Many ascribed to progressivism, a loosely coherent set of values and beliefs that recognized and tried to ameliorate the growing structural inequalities they observed in Northern America. Generally favouring the small businessman and farmer over the industrial capitalist, most progressives realized that many inequities were tied to race or ethnicity and believed that [assimilation](#) was the only reasonable means through which the members of any [minority](#) group would survive.

This view held that the desire among American Indians to retain their own cultures was merely a matter of nostalgia and that it would be overcome in a generation or two, after [rationalism](#) replaced indigenous sentimentality. In Canada, early assimilationist legislation included the Crown Lands Protection Act (1839) and the many acts flowing from Canada's Bagot Commission, such as the Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes of the Canadas (1857). In the [United States](#), the most prominent example of such legislation was the Indian Civilization Act (1819).

Although assimilationist perspectives were often patronizing, they were also more liberal than some of those that had preceded them. The reservation system had been formulated through models of [cultural evolution](#) (now discredited) that claimed that indigenous cultures were inherently inferior to those originating in Europe. In contrast to those who believed that indigenous peoples were inherently incompetent, assimilationists believed that any human could achieve competence in any culture.

Programs promoting assimilation were framed by the social and economic ideals that had come to dominate the national [cultures](#) of Canada and the United States. Although they varied in detail, these ideals generally emphasized Euro-American social structures and habits such as nuclear or, at most, three-generation families; patrilineal [kinship](#); differential [inheritance](#) among "legitimate" and "illegitimate" children; male-led households; a division of [labour](#) that defined the efforts of women, children, and elders as "domestic help" and those of men as "productive labour"; sober religiosity; and [corporal punishment](#) for children and women. Economically, they emphasized capitalist principles, especially the [ownership](#) of private [property](#) (particularly of land, [livestock](#), and machinery); self-directed occupations such as shop keeping, [farming](#), and ranching; and the self-sufficiency of the [nuclear household](#).

Most Native American nations were built upon different social and economic ideals. Not surprisingly, they preferred to retain self-governance in these arenas as well as in the political sphere. Their practices, while varying considerably from one group to the next, generally stood in opposition to those espoused by assimilationists. Socially, most indigenous polities emphasized the importance of extended families and corporate [kin](#) groups, matrilineal or bilateral [kinship](#), little or no consideration of [legitimacy](#) or [illegitimacy](#), households led by women or by women and men together, a concept of labour that recognized all work as work, highly expressive religious traditions, and cajoling and other nonviolent forms of discipline for children and adults. Economically, native ideals emphasized [communitarian principles](#), especially the sharing of use rights to land (e.g., by definition, land was community, not private, property) and the self-sufficiency of the community or kin group, with wealthier households ensuring that poorer neighbours or kin were supplied with the basic necessities.

Assimilationists initiated four movements designed to ensure their victory in this contest of philosophies and lifeways: allotment, the boarding school system, reorganization, and termination. Native peoples unceasingly fought these movements. The survival of indigenous cultures in the face of such strongly assimilationist programming is a measure of their success.

Allotment

Within about a decade of creating the western [reservations](#), both [Canada](#) and the [United States](#) began to abrogate their promises that reservation land would be held inviolable in perpetuity. In Canada the individual assignment, or allotment, of parcels of land within reserves began in 1879; by 1895 the right of allotment had officially devolved from the tribes to the superintendent general. In the United States a similar policy was effected through the [Dawes General Allotment Act](#) (1887).

Although some reservations were large, they consistently comprised economically marginal land. Throughout the colonial period, settlers and speculators—aided by government entities such as the military—had pushed tribes to the most distant hinterlands possible. Further, as treaty after treaty drew and redrew the boundaries of reservations, the same parties lobbied to have the best land carved out of the reserves and made available for sale to non-Indians. As a result, confinement to a [reservation](#), even a large one, generally prevented nomadic groups from obtaining adequate wild food; [farming](#) groups, who had always supplemented their [crops](#) heavily with wild fare, got on only slightly better.

Native leaders had insisted that treaties include various forms of payment to the tribes in exchange for the land they ceded. Although the governments of the United States and Canada were obliged to honour their past promises of annuities, many of the bureaucrats entrusted with the distribution of these materials were corrupt. The combination of marginal land and bureaucratic malfeasance created immense poverty in native communities.

Ignorant of the legal and bureaucratic origins of reservation poverty, many Euro-Americans in the United States and Canada developed the opinion that reservation life, particularly its communitarian underpinnings, fostered indolence. They came to believe that the privatization of land was the key to economic rehabilitation and self-sufficiency. The right to allot reserves was held by the government in Canada, which at the time dictated that individual title and full citizenship were restricted to those who relinquished their aboriginal status. In the United States, the Dawes Act authorized the president to divide reservations into parcels and to give every native head of household a particular piece of [property](#). The [land](#) would be held in trust for a period of 25 years, after which full title would devolve upon the individual. With title would go all the rights and duties of citizenship. Reservation land remaining after all qualified tribal members had been provided with allotments was declared “surplus” and could be sold by the [government](#), on behalf of the tribe, to non-Indians. In the United States a total of 118 reservations were allotted in this manner. Through the alienation of the surplus lands and the patenting of individual holdings, the nations living on these reservations lost 86 million acres (34.8 million hectares), or 62 percent, of the 138 million acres (55.8 million hectares) that had been designated by treaty as Native American common property.

Although the particulars of allotment were different in the United States and Canada, the outcomes were more or less the same in both places: indigenous groups and individuals resisted the partitioning process. Their efforts took several forms and were aided by allotment’s piecemeal implementation, which continued into the early 20th century.

A number of tribes mounted legal and lobbying efforts in attempts to halt the allotment process. In the United States these efforts were greatly hindered when the [Supreme Court](#) determined, in *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* (1903), that allotment was legal because Congress was entitled to abrogate treaties. In Canada the decision in *St. Catherine’s Milling & Lumber Company v. The*

Queen (1888) found that aboriginal land remained in the purview of the crown despite treaties that indicated otherwise and that the [dominion](#), as an agent of the crown, could thus terminate native title at will.

In the United States, some [tribes](#) held property through forms of title that rendered their holdings less susceptible to the [Dawes Act](#). For instance, in the 1850s some members of the [Fox](#) (Meskwaki) nation purchased land on which to reside. Their original purchase of 80 acres (32 hectares) of land was held through free title and was therefore inalienable except through condemnation; the Meskwaki Settlement, as it became known, had grown to more than 7,000 acres (2,800 hectares) by 2000. In a number of other areas, native individuals simply refused to sign for or otherwise accept their parcels, leaving the property in a sort of bureaucratic limbo.

Despite its broad reach, not every reservation had been subjected to partition by the end of the allotment movement. The reservations that avoided the process were most often found in very remote or very arid areas, as with land held by several Ute nations in the Southwest. For similar reasons, many Arctic nations avoided not only allotment but even its precursor, partition into reserves.

Allotment failed as a mechanism to force cultural change: the individual [ownership](#) of land did not in itself effect assimilation, although it did enrich many Euro-American land speculators. Native social networks and cultural cohesion were in some places shattered by the dispersal of individuals, families, and corporate kin groups across the landscape. Many native institutions and cultural practices were weakened, and little to nothing was offered in substitution.

Boarding schools

The worst offenses of the assimilationist movement occurred at government-sponsored boarding schools, referred to as [American Indian boarding schools](#) in the United States and [residential schools](#) in Canada. From the mid-19th century until as late as the 1960s, native families in both countries were compelled by law to send their children to these institutions, which were usually quite distant from the family home. At least through [World War II](#), the schools' educational programming was notionally designed to help students achieve basic [literacy](#) and [arithmetic](#) skills and to provide vocational training in a variety of menial jobs—the same goals, to a large extent, of public education throughout Northern America during that period.

However, the so-called Indian schools were often led by men of assimilationist convictions so deep as to be [racist](#). One example is Carlisle Indian Industrial School (in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, U.S.) founder Richard Pratt, who in 1892 described his mission as “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.” Such sentiments persisted for decades; in 1920 [Duncan Campbell Scott](#), the superintendent of the Canadian residential school system, noted his desire to have the schools “continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department.” Stronger statements promoting assimilation at the expense of indigenous sovereignty can hardly be imagined.

In pursuing their goals, the administrators of residential schools used a variety of material and psychological techniques to divest native children of their cultures. Upon arrival, students were

forced to trade their clothes for uniforms, to have their hair cut in Euro-American styles, and to separate from their relatives and friends. Physical conditions at the schools were often very poor and caused many children to suffer from malnutrition and exposure, exacerbating tuberculosis and other diseases that were common at the time. The schools were generally run by [clergy](#) and commingled religious education with secular subjects; staff usually demanded that students convert immediately to [Christianity](#). Displays of native culture, whether of indigenous [language](#), [song](#), [dance](#), stories, [religion](#), [sports](#), or [food](#), were cruelly punished through such means as beatings, electrical shocks, the withholding of food or water, and extended periods of forced labour or kneeling. Sexual [abuse](#) was rampant. In particularly bad years, abuse and neglect were acknowledged to have caused the deaths of more than half of the students at particular schools.

Native families were aware that many children who were sent to boarding schools never returned, and they responded in a number of ways. Many taught their children to hide at the approach of the government agents who were responsible for assembling children and transporting them to the schools. Many students who were transported ran away, either during the trip or from the schools themselves; those who escaped often had to walk hundreds of miles to return home. Some communities made group decisions to keep their children hidden; perhaps the best-known of such events occurred in 1894–95, when 19 [Hopi](#) men from [Oraibi](#) pueblo were incarcerated for refusing to reveal their children's whereabouts to the authorities. Through these and other efforts, native communities eventually gained control over the education of their children. It was, however, a slow process: the first school in the [United States](#) to come under continuous tribal administration was the Rough Rock Demonstration School in [Arizona](#) in 1966, while in Canada the Blue Quills First Nations College in [Alberta](#) was the first to achieve that status, in 1971.

Many researchers and activists trace the most difficult issues faced by 20th- and 21st-century Indian communities to the abuses that occurred at the boarding schools. They note that the problems common to many reservations—including high rates of [suicide](#), substance abuse, domestic violence, [child abuse](#), and sexual assault—are clear sequelae of [childhood](#) abuse. In 1991 the assaults perpetrated upon Canadian children who had attended residential schools in the mid-20th century began to be redressed through the work of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The commission's 1996 report substantiated indigenous claims of abuse, and in 2006 Canada allocated more than \$2 billion (Canadian) in class-action [reparations](#) and mental health funding for the former students.

Reorganization

By the late 19th century the removal of the eastern tribes, the decimation of California peoples, a series of epidemics in the Plains, and the high [mortality](#) rates at boarding schools seemed to confirm that Indians were “vanishing.” The belief that Native Americans would not survive long as a “race” provided a fundamental justification for all assimilationist policies. It also supported rationalizations that indigenous views on legislation and public policy were immaterial. When it became obvious after about 1920 that Northern American's aboriginal populations were actually increasing, the [United States](#) and [Canada](#) found themselves unprepared to acknowledge or advance the interests of these people.

In the United States a 1926 survey brought into clear focus the failings of the previous 40 years. The investigators found most Indians “extremely poor,” in bad health, without education, and isolated from the dominant Euro-American culture around them. Under the impetus of these findings and other pressures for reform, the [U.S. Congress](#) adopted the [Indian Reorganization Act](#) of 1934, which was designed to effect an orderly transition from federal control to native self-government. The essentials of the new law were as follows: (1) allotment of tribal lands was prohibited, but tribes might assign use rights to individuals; (2) so-called surplus lands that had not been sold or granted to non-Indians could be returned to the [tribes](#); (3) tribes could adopt written [constitutions](#) and charters of incorporation through which to manage their internal affairs; and (4) funds were authorized for the establishment of a revolving credit program which was to be used for land purchases, for educational assistance, and for helping the tribes to form [governments](#). The terms of the act were universally applicable, but any particular nation could reject them through a [referendum](#) process.

The response to the Reorganization Act was indicative of the indigenous peoples’ ability to rise above adversity. About 160 communities adopted written constitutions, some of which combined traditional practices with modern parliamentary methods. The revolving credit fund helped to improve tribal economies in many ways: native ranchers built up their herds, artisans were better able to market their work, and so forth. Educational and health services were also improved.

After 1871, when internal tribal matters had become the subject of U.S. legislation, the number and variety of regulatory measures regarding native individuals multiplied rapidly. In the same year that the [Indian Reorganization Act](#) was passed, Congress took the significant step of repealing 12 statutes that had made it possible to hold indigenous people virtual prisoners on their reservations. The recognition of tribal governments following the Reorganization Act seemed to awaken an interest in civic affairs beyond tribal boundaries. The earlier Snyder Act (1924) had extended [citizenship](#) to all Indians born in the United States, opening the door to full participation in American civic life. But few took advantage of the law, and a number of states subsequently excluded them from the [franchise](#). During the reorganization period, many native peoples successfully petitioned to regain the right to vote in state and federal [elections](#). The major exception to this trend occurred in [Arizona](#) and [New Mexico](#), which withheld enfranchisement until 1948 and granted it only after a lengthy lawsuit.

A number of nations had for many years sponsored tribal councils. These councils had functioned without federal [sanction](#), although their members had represented tribal interests in various ways, such as leading delegations to [Washington, D.C.](#), to protest allotment. Reorganization gave tribes the opportunity to formalize these and other indigenous institutions. Tribal governments soon initiated a number of lawsuits designed to regain land that had been taken in contravention of [treaty](#) agreements. Other lawsuits focused on the renewal of use rights, such as the right to hunt or [fish](#), that had been guaranteed in some treaties.

These legal strategies for extending sovereignty were often very successful. The federal courts consistently upheld treaty rights and also found that ancestral lands could not be taken from an aboriginal nation, whether or not a treaty existed, “except in fair trade.” The fair trade argument was cited by the Hualapai against the [Santa Fe Railway](#), which in 1944 was required to relinquish about 500,000 acres (200,000 [hectares](#)) it thought it had been granted by the [United States](#). A special Indian Claims Commission, created by an act of [Congress](#) on August 13,

1946, received petitions for land claims against the United States. Many land claims resulted in significant compensation, including nearly \$14,800,000 to the [Cherokee](#) nation, \$10,250,000 to the [Crow](#) tribe, \$12,300,000 to the [Seminole](#)s, and \$31,750,000 to the [Ute](#).

Even as many tribes in the United States were regaining land or compensation, the U.S. [Bureau of Indian Affairs](#) instituted the Urban Indian Relocation Program. Initiated within the bureau in 1948 and supported by Congress from the 1950s on, the relocation program was designed to transform the predominantly rural native [population](#) into an assimilated urban workforce. The bureau established offices in a variety of destination cities, including [Chicago](#), [Dallas](#), [Denver](#), [Los Angeles](#), [San Francisco](#), [San Jose](#), and [St. Louis](#). Through program auspices, it promised to provide a variety of services to effect the transition to city life, including [transportation](#) from the [reservation](#), financial assistance, help in finding [housing](#) and employment, and the like, although the distribution and quality of these services were often uneven. From 1948 to 1980, when the program ended, some 750,000 Indians are estimated to have relocated to cities, although not all did so under the official program and not all remained in urban areas permanently. Evaluations of its success vary, but it is clear that urban relocation helped to foster the sense of pan-Indian identity and activism that arose in the latter half of the 20th century.

Termination

The ultimate goals of assimilationist programming were to completely divest native peoples of their cultural practices and to terminate their special relationship to the national [government](#). Canada's attempts at promoting these goals tended to focus on the individual, while those of the [United States](#) tended to focus on the community.

In Canada a variety of 19th-century policies had been emplaced to encourage individuals to give up their aboriginal status in favour of regular [citizenship](#). Native people were prohibited from voting, serving in public office, owning land, attending public school, holding a business license, and a variety of other activities. These disincentives did not prove to be very strong motivating forces toward the voluntary termination of native status. More successful were regulations that initiated the termination of status without an individual's permission. For instance, until 1985, indigenous women who married nonnative men automatically lost their aboriginal status; undertaking military service or earning a university degree could also initiate involuntary changes in status.

Major adjustments to Canada's pro-termination policies did not occur until after [World War II](#), when returning veterans and others began to agitate for change. In 1951 activists succeeded in eliminating many of the disincentives associated with indigenous status. After years of prohibitions, for instance, native peoples regained the right to hold [powwows](#) and [potlatches](#) and to engage in various (if limited) forms of self-governance. The new policy also defined procedures for the reinstatement of aboriginal status, for which some 42,000 individuals applied within the first year of passage.

In the United States, termination efforts were handled somewhat differently. In 1954 the [U.S. Department of the Interior](#) began terminating federal control and support of tribes that had been deemed able to look after their own affairs. From 1954 to 1960, support to 61 indigenous nations was ended by the withdrawal of federal services or trust supervision.

The results were problematic. Some extremely impoverished communities lost crucial services such as schools and clinics due to a lack of funds; in a number of cases, attempts to raise the capital with which to replace these services attracted unscrupulous business partners and further impoverished the [community](#). The protests of tribal members and other activists became so insistent that the termination program began to be dismantled in 1960.

American Indians became increasingly visible in the late 20th century as they sought to achieve a better life as defined on their own terms. During the [civil rights movement](#) of the 1960s, many drew attention to their causes through mass demonstrations and protests. Perhaps the most publicized of these actions were the 19-month seizure (1970–71) of [Alcatraz Island](#) in San Francisco Bay (California) by members of the militant [American Indian Movement](#) (AIM) and the February 1973 occupation of [Wounded Knee](#), on the Oglala Sioux Pine Ridge ([South Dakota](#)) reservation.

During the 1960s and '70s, native polities continued to capitalize on their legal successes and to expand their sphere of influence through the courts; [forestry](#), [mineral](#), [casino gambling](#), and other rights involving tribal lands became the subjects of frequent litigation. Of the many cases filed, *United States v. Washington* (1974) had perhaps the most famous and far-reaching decision. More commonly referred to as the Boldt case, after the federal judge, George Boldt, who wrote the decision, this case established that treaty agreements entitled certain Northwest Coast and Plateau tribes to one-half of the [fish](#) taken in the state of [Washington](#)—and by implication in other states where tribes had similarly reserved the right to fish. In addition, some groups continued their efforts to regain [sovereignty](#) over or compensation for tribal lands. The most important results of the latter form of activism were the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (1971), in which Native Alaskans received approximately 44 million [acres](#) (17.8 million [hectares](#)) of land and nearly \$1 billion (U.S.) in exchange for land cessions, and the creation of [Nunavut](#) (1999), a new Canadian province predominantly administered by and for the Inuit.

Developments in the late 20th and early 21st centuries

Native American life in the late 20th and early 21st centuries has been characterized by continuities with and differences from the trajectories of the previous several centuries. One of the more striking continuities is the persistent complexity of native ethnic and political identities. In 2000 more than 600 indigenous bands or tribes were officially recognized by Canada's dominion government, and some 560 additional bands or tribes were officially recognized by the government of the United States. These numbers were slowly increasing as additional groups engaged in the difficult process of gaining official recognition.

The Native American population has continued to recover from the astonishing losses of the colonial period, a phenomenon first noted at the turn of the 20th century. Census data from 2006 indicated that people claiming aboriginal American ancestry numbered some 1.17 million in Canada, or approximately 4 percent of the population; of these, some 975,000 individuals were

officially recognized by the dominion as of [First Nation, Métis, or Inuit](#) heritage. U.S. census figures from 2000 indicated that some 4.3 million people claimed Native American descent, or 1–2 percent of the population; fewer than one million of these self-identified individuals were officially recognized as of native heritage, however.

The numerical difference between those claiming ancestry and those who are officially recognized is a reflection of many factors. Historically, bureaucratic error has frequently caused individuals to be incorrectly removed from official rolls. Marrying outside the Native American community has also been a factor: in some places and times, those who out-married were required by law to be removed from tribal rolls; children of these unions have sometimes been closer to one side of the family than the other, thus retaining only one parent's ethnic identity; and in some cases, the children of ethnically mixed marriages have been unable to document the degree of genetic relation necessary for official enrollment in a particular tribe. This degree of relation is often referred to as a *blood quantum* requirement; one-fourth ancestry, the equivalent of one grandparent, is a common minimum blood quantum, though not the only one. Other nations define membership through features such as residence on a reservation, knowledge of traditional culture, or fluency in a native language. Whether genetic or cultural, such definitions are generally designed to prevent the improper enrollment of people who have wishful or disreputable claims to native ancestry. Known colloquially as “wannabes,” these individuals also contribute to the lack of correspondence between the number of people who claim Indian descent and the number of officially enrolled individuals.

A striking difference from the past can be seen in Native Americans' ability to openly engage with both traditional and nontraditional cultural practices. While in past eras many native individuals had very limited economic and educational opportunities, by the turn of the 21st century they were members of essentially every profession available in North America. Many native people have also moved from [reservations](#) to more urban areas, including about 65 percent of U.S. tribal members and 55 percent of aboriginal Canadians.

Despite these profound changes in occupation and residency, indigenous Americans are often represented anachronistically. Depictions of their cultures are often “frozen” in the 18th or 19th century, causing many non-Indians to incorrectly believe that the aboriginal nations of the United States and Canada are culturally or biologically extinct—a misbelief that would parallel the idea that people of European descent are extinct because one rarely sees them living in the manner depicted in [history museums](#) such as the Jorvik Viking Center (York, England) or Colonial Williamsburg (Virginia). To the contrary, 21st-century American Indians participate in the same aspects of modern life as the general population: they wear ordinary apparel, shop at grocery stores and malls, watch television, and so forth. Ethnic festivals and celebrations do provide individuals who are so inclined with opportunities to honour and display their cultural traditions, but in everyday situations a [powwow](#) dancer would be as unlikely to wear her regalia as a bride would be to wear her wedding dress; in both cases, the wearing of special attire marks a specific religious and social occasion and should not be misunderstood as routine.

Although life has changed drastically for many tribal members, a number of indicators, such as the proportion of students who complete secondary school, the level of unemployment, and the median household income, show that native people in the United States and Canada have had more difficulty in achieving economic success than non-Indians. Historical inequities have clearly contributed to this situation. In the United States, for instance, banks cannot repossess

buildings on government trust lands, so most Indians have been unable to obtain mortgages unless they leave the reservation. This regulation in turn leads to depopulation and substandard housing on the reserve, problems that are not easily resolved without fundamental changes in regulatory policy.

The effects of poorly considered government policies are also evident in less-obvious ways. For example, many former residential-school students did not parent well, and an unusually high number of them suffered from [post-traumatic stress disorder](#). Fortunately, [social service](#) agencies found that mental health care, parenting classes, and other actions could resolve many of the problems that flowed from the boarding school experience.

While most researchers and Indians agree that historical inequities are the source of many problems, they also tend to agree that the resolution of such issues ultimately lies within native communities themselves. Thus, most nations continue to pursue [sovereignty](#), the right to self-determination, as an important focus of activism, especially in terms of its role in tribal well-being, cultural traditions, and economic development. Questions of who or what has the ultimate authority over native nations and individuals, and under what circumstances, remain among the most important, albeit contentious and misunderstood, aspects of contemporary Native American life.

Although community self-governance was the core right that indigenous Americans sought to maintain from the advent of colonialism onward, the strategies they used to achieve it evolved over time. The period from the Columbian landfall to the late 19th century might be characterized as a time when Native Americans fought to preserve sovereignty by using economics, diplomacy, and force to resist military conquest. From the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th, political sovereignty, and especially the enforcement of treaty agreements, was a primary focus of indigenous activism; local, regional, and pan-Indian resistance to the allotment of communally owned land, to the mandatory attendance of children at boarding schools, and to the termination of tribal rights and perquisites all grew from the basic tenets of the sovereignty movement. By the mid-1960s the [civil rights movement](#) had educated many peoples about the philosophy of equal treatment under the law—essentially the application of the sovereign entity's authority over the individual—and civil rights joined sovereignty as a focus of Indian activism.

One, and perhaps the principal, issue in defining the sovereign and civil rights of American Indians has been the determination of [jurisdiction](#) in matters of Indian affairs. Historical events in Northern America, that part of the continent north of the Rio Grande, created an unusually complex system of competing national, regional (state, provincial, or territorial), and local claims to jurisdiction. Where other countries typically have central governments that delegate little authority to regions, Canada and the United States typically assign a wide variety of responsibilities to provincial, state, and territorial governments, including the administration of such unrelated matters as unemployment insurance, highway maintenance, public education, and criminal law. With nearly 1,200 officially recognized tribal governments and more than 60 regional governments extant in the United States and Canada at the turn of the 21st century, and with issues such as taxation and regulatory authority at stake, it is unsurprising that these various entities have been involved in a myriad of jurisdictional battles.

Two examples of criminal jurisdiction help to clarify the interaction of tribal, regional, and federal

or dominion authorities. One area of concern has been whether a non-Indian who commits a criminal act while on [reservation](#) land can be prosecuted in the tribal court. In *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe* (1978), the [U.S. Supreme Court](#) determined that tribes do not have the authority to prosecute non-Indians, even when such individuals commit crimes on tribal land. This decision was clearly a blow to tribal sovereignty, and some reservations literally closed their borders to non-Indians in order to ensure that their law enforcement officers could keep the peace within the reservation.

The *Oliphant* decision might lead one to presume that, as non-Indians may not be tried in tribal courts, Indians in the United States would not be subject to prosecution in state or federal courts. This issue was decided to the contrary in *United States v. Wheeler* (1978). Wheeler, a Navajo who had been convicted in a tribal court, maintained that the prosecution of the same crime in another (federal or state) court amounted to [double jeopardy](#). In this case the Supreme Court favoured tribal sovereignty, finding that the judicial proceedings of an independent entity (in this case, the indigenous nation) stood separately from those of the states or the United States; a tribe was entitled to prosecute its members. In so ruling, the court seems to have placed an extra burden on Native Americans: whereas the plaintiff in *Oliphant* gained immunity from tribal law, indigenous plaintiffs could indeed be tried for a single criminal act in both a tribal and a state or federal court.

A plethora of other examples are available to illustrate the complexities of modern native life. The discussion below highlights a selection of four issues that are of pan-Indian importance: the placement of native children into non-Indian foster and adoptive homes, the free practice of traditional religions, the disposition of the dead, and the economic development of native communities. The article closes with a discussion of international law and Native American affairs.

The outplacement and [adoption](#) of indigenous children

From the beginning of the colonial period, Native American children were particularly vulnerable to removal by colonizers. Captured children might be sold into slavery, forced to become religious novitiates, made to perform labour, or adopted as family members by Euro-Americans; although some undoubtedly did well under their new circumstances, many suffered. In some senses, the 19th-century practice of forcing children to attend boarding school was a continuation of these earlier practices.

Before the 20th century, social welfare programs were, for the most part, the domain of charities, particularly of religious charities. By the mid-20th century, however, governmental institutions had surpassed charities as the dominant instruments of public well-being. As with other forms of Northern American civic authority, most responsibilities related to social welfare were assigned to state and provincial governments, which in turn developed formidable [child welfare](#) bureaucracies. These were responsible for intervening in cases of child neglect or abuse; although caseworkers often tried to maintain the integrity of the family, children living in dangerous circumstances were generally removed.

The prevailing models of well-being used by children's services personnel reflected the culture of the Euro-American middle classes. They viewed caregiving and financial well-being as the responsibilities of the nuclear family; according to this view, a competent family comprised a married couple and their biological or legally adopted children, with a father who worked outside the home, a mother who was a homemaker, and a residence with material conveniences such as electricity. These expectations stood in contrast to the values of reservation life, where extended-family households and communitarian approaches to wealth were the norm. For instance, while Euro-American culture has emphasized the ability of each individual to climb the economic ladder by eliminating the economic "ceiling," many indigenous groups have preferred to ensure that nobody falls below a particular economic "floor." In addition, material comforts linked to infrastructure were simply not available on reservations as early as in other rural areas. For instance, while U.S. [rural electrification](#) programs had ensured that 90 percent of farms had electricity by 1950—a tremendous rise compared with the 10 percent that had electricity in 1935—census data indicated that the number of homes with access to electricity did not approach 90 percent on reservations until 2000. These kinds of cultural and material divergences from Euro-American expectations instantly made native families appear to be backward and neglectful of their children.

As a direct result of these and other ethnocentric criteria, disproportionate numbers of indigenous children were removed from their homes by social workers. However, until the mid-20th century there were few places for such children to go; most reservations were in thinly populated rural states with few foster families, and interstate and interethnic foster care and [adoption](#) were discouraged. As a result, native children were often institutionalized at residential schools and other facilities. This changed in the late 1950s, when the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs joined with the Child Welfare League of America in launching the Indian Adoption Project (IAP), the country's first large-scale transracial adoption program. The IAP eventually moved between 25 and 35 percent of the native children in the United States into interstate adoptions and interstate foster care placements. Essentially all of these children were placed with Euro-American families.

Appalled at the loss of yet another generation of children—many tribes had only effected a shift from government-run boarding schools to local schools after World War II—indigenous activists focused on the creation and implementation of culturally appropriate criteria with which to evaluate caregiving. They argued that the definition of a functioning family was a matter of both sovereignty and civil rights—that a community has an inherent right and obligation to act in the best interests of its children and that individual bonds between caregiver and child are privileged by similarly inherent, but singular, rights and obligations.

The U.S. Indian Child Welfare Act (1978) attempted to address these issues by mandating that states consult with tribes in child welfare cases. It also helped to establish the legitimacy of the wide variety of indigenous caregiving arrangements, such as a reliance on clan relatives and life with fewer material comforts than might be found off the reservation. The act was not a panacea, however; a 2003 report by the Child Welfare League of America, "Children of Color in the Child Welfare System," indicated that, although the actual incidence of child maltreatment in the United States was similar among all ethnic groups, child welfare professionals continued to substantiate abuse in native homes at twice the rate of substantiation for Euro-American homes. The same report indicated that more than three times as many native children were in foster care, per capita, as Euro-American children.

Canadian advocates had similar cause for concern. In 2006 the leading advocacy group for the indigenous peoples of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), reported that as many as 1 in 10 native children were in outplacement situations; the ratio for nonnative children was approximately 1 in 200. The AFN also noted that indigenous child welfare agencies were funded at per capita levels more than 20 percent under provincial agencies. Partnering with a child advocacy group, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, the AFN cited these and other issues in a human rights complaint filed with the Canadian Human Rights Commission, a signal of the egregious nature of the problems in the country's child welfare system.

Religious freedom

The colonization of the Americas involved religious as well as political, economic, and cultural conquest. Religious oppression began immediately and continued unabated well into the 20th—and some would claim the 21st—century. Although the separation of church and state is given primacy in the U.S. [Bill of Rights](#) (1791) and freedom of religion is implied in Canada's founding legislation, the [British North America Act](#) (1867), these governments have historically prohibited many indigenous religious activities. For instance, the Northwest Coast [potlatch](#), a major ceremonial involving feasting and gift giving, was banned in Canada through an 1884 amendment to the Indian Act, and it remained illegal until the 1951 revision of the act. In 1883 the U.S. secretary of the interior, acting on the advice of Bureau of Indian Affairs personnel, criminalized the Plains [Sun Dance](#) and many other rituals; under federal law, the secretary was entitled to make such decisions more or less unilaterally. In 1904 the prohibition was renewed. The government did not reverse its stance on the Sun Dance until the 1930s, when a new Bureau of Indian Affairs director, John Collier, instituted a major policy shift. Even so, arrests of Sun Dancers and other religious practitioners continued in some places into the 1970s.

Restrictions imposed on religion were usually rationalized as limiting dangerous actions rather than as legislating belief systems; federal authorities claimed that they had not only the right but the obligation to prevent the damage that certain types of behaviour might otherwise visit upon the public welfare. It was argued, for instance, that potlatches, by impoverishing their sponsors, created an underclass that the public was forced to support; the Sun Dance, in turn, was a form of torture and thus inherently harmed the public good. These and other public good claims were contestable on several grounds, notably the violation of the free practice of activities essential to a religion and the violation of individual self-determination. Analogues to the prohibited behaviours illustrate the problems with such restrictions. Potlatch sponsors are substantively comparable to Christian church members who tithe or to religious novitiates who transfer their personal property to a religious institution. Likewise, those who choose to endure the physical trials of the Sun Dance are certainly as competent to make that decision as those who donate bone marrow for transplant; in both cases, the participants are prepared to experience physical suffering as part of a selfless endeavour intended to benefit others.

By the late 1960s it had become increasingly clear that arguments prohibiting indigenous religious practices in the name of the public good were ethnocentric and were applied with little discretion. In an attempt to ameliorate this issue, the U.S. Congress eventually passed the

American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA; 1978). AIRFA was intended to ensure the protection of Native American religions and their practitioners, and it successfully stripped away many of the bureaucratic obstacles with which they had been confronted. Before 1978, for instance, the terms of the Endangered Species Act prohibited the possession of eagle feathers, which are an integral part of many indigenous rituals; after AIRFA's passage, a permitting process was created so that these materials could legally be owned and used by Native American religious practitioners. In a similar manner, permits to conduct indigenous religious services on publicly owned land, once approved or denied haphazardly, became more freely available.

If allowing certain practices was one important effect of AIRFA's passage, so was the reduction of certain activities at specific sites deemed sacred under native religious traditions. For instance, [Devils Tower National Monument](#) (Wyoming), an isolated rock formation that rises some 865 feet (264 metres) over the surrounding landscape, is for many Plains peoples a sacred site known as Grizzly Bear Lodge. Since 1995 the U.S. National Park Service, which administers the property, has asked visitors to refrain from climbing the formation during the month of [June](#). In the Plains religious calendar this month is a time of reflection and repentance, akin in importance and purpose to [Lent](#) for Christians, the period from [Rosh Hashana](#) to [Yom Kippur](#) for Jews, or the month of [Ramadan](#) for Muslims. Many native individuals visit the monument during June and wish to meditate and otherwise observe their religious traditions without the distraction of climbers, whose presence they feel abrogates the sanctity of the site; to illustrate their point, religious traditionalists in the native community have noted that free climbing is not allowed on other sacred structures such as cathedrals. Although the climbing limits are voluntary and not all climbers refrain from such activities, a considerable reduction was effected: June climbs were reduced by approximately 80 percent after the first desist request was made.

Repatriation and the disposition of the [dead](#)

At the close of the 20th century, public good rationales became particularly heated in relation to the disposition of the indigenous dead: most Native Americans felt that graves of any type should be left intact and found the practice of collecting human remains for study fundamentally repulsive. Yet from the late 15th century onward, anthropologists, medical personnel, and curiosity seekers, among others, routinely collected the bodies of American Indians. Battlefields, cemeteries, and [burial mounds](#) were common sources of such human remains into the early 21st century, and collectors were quite open—at least among themselves—in their disregard for native claims to the dead.

Among others who freely admitted to stealing from recent graves was [Franz Boas](#), one of the founders of Americanist anthropology, who was in turn sued by the tribe whose freshly dead he had looted. The rationale for such behaviour was that indigenous skeletal material was by no means sacrosanct in the face of science; to the contrary, it was a vital link in the study of the origins of American Indians specifically and of humans in general. Indigenous peoples disagreed with this perspective and used many tools to frustrate those intent on disturbing burial grounds, including protesting and interrupting such activities (occasionally while armed), creating new cemeteries in confidential locations, officially requesting the return of human

remains, and filing cease-and-desist lawsuits. Despite their objections, the complete or partial remains of an estimated 300,000 Native Americans were held by repositories in the United States as of 1990. Most of these remains were either originally collected by, or eventually donated to, museums and universities. Inventories filed in the late 20th century showed that three of the largest collections of remains were at museums, two of which were university institutions: the [Smithsonian Institution](#) held the remains of some 18,000 Native American individuals, the Hearst Museum at the University of California at Berkeley held approximately 9,900, and the Peabody Museum at Harvard University held some 6,900. A plethora of smaller museums, colleges, and government agencies also held human remains.

The larger repositories had in-house legal counsel as well as a plentitude of experts with advanced degrees, most of whom were ready to argue as to the value of the remains for all of humanity. Lacking such resources, indigenous attempts to regain native remains proved generally unsuccessful for most of the 20th century. By the 1970s, however, a grassroots pan-Indian (and later pan-indigenous) movement in support of repatriation began to develop.

In crafting arguments for the return of human remains, repatriation activists focused on three issues. The first was moral: it was morally wrong, as well as distasteful and disrespectful, to disturb graves. The second centred on religious freedom, essentially holding that removing the dead from their resting places violated indigenous religious tenets and that allowing institutions to retain such materials amounted to unequal treatment under the law. The third issue was one of cultural property and revolved around the question, “At what point does a set of remains cease being a person and become instead an artifact?”

In part because many of the remains held by repositories had been taken from archaeological contexts rather than recent cemeteries, this last question became the linchpin in the legal battle between repatriation activists and those who advocated for the retention of aboriginal human remains. Native peoples generally held that personhood was irreducible. From this perspective, the disturbance of graves was an act of personal disrespect and cultural imperialism—individuals’ bodies were put to rest in ways that were personally and culturally meaningful to them, and these preferences should have precedence over the desires of subsequent generations. In contrast, archaeologists, biological anthropologists, and other researchers generally held (but rarely felt the need to articulate) that personhood was a temporary state that declined precipitously upon death. Once dead, a person became an object, and while one’s direct biological descendants had a claim to one’s body, such claims diminished quickly over the course of a few generations. Objects, like other forms of property, certainly had no inherent right to expect to be left intact, and, indeed, as mindless materials, they could not logically possess expectations. Thus, human remains were a legitimate focus of study, collection, and display.

These arguments were resolved to some extent by the U.S. Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA; 1990), which laid the groundwork for the repatriation of remains that could be attributed to a specific Native American nation. Important attributes in identifying the decedent’s cultural affiliation included the century in which death occurred, the original placement of the body (e.g., fetal or prone position), physical changes based on lifestyle (such as the tooth wear associated with labrets, or lip plugs), and culturally distinct grave goods. Remains that could be attributed to a relatively recent prehistoric culture (such as the most recent [Woodland cultures](#)) with known modern descendants (such as the various tribes of

[Northeast Indians](#)) were eligible for repatriation, as were those from more post-Columbian contexts. However, some legal scholars claimed that NAGPRA left unclear the fate of those remains that were so old as to be of relatively vague cultural origin; tribes generally maintained that these should be deemed distant ancestors and duly repatriated, while repositories and scientists typically maintained that the remains should be treated as objects of study.

This issue reached a crisis point with the 1996 discovery of skeletal remains near the town of Kennewick, Washington. Subsequently known as Kennewick Man (among scientists) or the Ancient One (among repatriation activists), this person most probably lived sometime between about 9,000 and 9,500 years ago, certainly before 5,600–6,000 years ago. A number of tribes and a number of scientists laid competing claims to the remains. Their arguments came to turn upon the meaning of “cultural affiliation”: Did the term apply to all pre-Columbian peoples of the territory that had become the United States, or did it apply only to those with specific antecedent-descendant relationships?

The U.S. National Park Service, a division of the Department of the Interior, was responsible for determining the answer to this question. When it issued a finding that the remains were Native American, essentially following the principal that all pre-Columbian peoples (within U.S. territory) were inherently indigenous, a group of scientists brought suit. The lawsuit, *Bonnichsen v. United States*, was resolved in 2004. The court’s finding is summarized in its concluding statement:

Because Kennewick Man’s remains are so old and the information about his era is so limited, the record does not permit the Secretary [of the Interior] to conclude reasonably that Kennewick Man shares special and significant genetic or cultural features with presently existing indigenous tribes, people, or cultures. We thus hold that Kennewick Man’s remains are not Native American human remains within the meaning of NAGPRA and that NAGPRA does not apply to them.

This finding frustrated and outraged the Native American community. Activists immediately asked legislators to amend NAGPRA so that it would specifically define pre-Columbian individuals as Native Americans. Many scientists countered that such a change would not reverse the need to specifically affiliate remains with an extant nation, and others lobbied for an amendment that would specifically allow the investigation of remains that lacked close affiliation to known peoples.

Economic development: tourism, tribal industries, and gaming

[Economic development](#) is the process through which a given economy, whether national, regional, or local, becomes more complex and grows in terms of the income or wealth generated per person. This process is typically accomplished by finding new forms of labour and often results in the creation of new kinds of products. One example of economic development has been the transition from hunting and gathering to a full reliance on agriculture; in this example, the new form of labour comprised the system of sowing and harvesting useful plants, while the new products comprised domesticates such as corn (maize) and cotton. During

the 19th century, much of the economic growth of Northern America arose from a shift in which extractive economies, such as farming and mining, were replaced by those that transformed raw materials into consumer goods, as with food processing and manufacturing. In the 20th century a broadly analogous shift from a manufacturing economy to one focused on [service industries](#) (e.g., clerical work, entertainment, health care, and information technology) took place.

Economic underdevelopment has been an ongoing problem for many tribes since the beginning of the [reservation](#) eras in the United States and Canada. Reservations are typically located in economically marginal rural areas—that is, areas considered to be too dry, too wet, too steep, too remote, or possessing some other hindrance to productivity, even at the time of their creation. Subsequent cessions and the allotment process decreased the reservation land base and increased the economic hurdles faced by indigenous peoples. Studies of reservation income help to place the situation in perspective: in the early 21st century, if rural Native America had constituted a country, it would have been classified on the basis of median annual per capita income as a “developing nation” by the [World Bank](#).

Although underdevelopment is common in rural Northern America, comparisons of the economic status of rural Indians with that of other rural groups indicate that factors in addition to location are involved. For instance, in 2002 a national study by the South Carolina Rural Health Research Center found that about 35 percent of the rural Native American population in the United States lived below the poverty line; although this was about the same proportion as seen among rural African Americans, less than 15 percent of rural Euro-Americans had such low income levels. Perhaps more telling, rural counties with predominantly Native American populations had less than one-fourth of the bank deposits (i.e., savings) of the average rural county—a much greater disparity in wealth than existed for any other rural group. (Predominantly Hispanic counties, the next lowest in the rankings, had more than twice the deposits of predominantly Native American counties.)

Explanations for the causes of such disparity abound, and it is clear that many factors—geography, historical inequities, nation-within-a-nation status, the blurring of boundaries between collectivism and nepotism, poor educational facilities, the prevalence of post-traumatic stress and of substance abuse, and others—may be involved in any given case. With so many factors to consider, it is unlikely that the sources of Indian poverty will ever be modeled to the satisfaction of all. Nonetheless, there is general agreement on the broad changes that mark the end of destitution. These typically involve general improvements to community well-being, especially the reduction of unemployment, the creation of an educated workforce, and the provision of adequate infrastructure, health care, child care, elder care, and other services.

During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, native nations used a suite of approaches to foster economic growth. Some of these had been in use for decades, such as working to gain official recognition as a nation and the filing of lawsuits to reclaim parts of a group’s original territory. Extractive operations, whether owned by individuals, families, or tribal collectives, also continued to play important and ongoing roles in economic development; mining, timber, fishing, farming, and ranching operations were long-standing examples of these kinds of enterprises.

Highway improvements in the 1950s and ’60s opened opportunities for [tourism](#) in what had been remote areas, and a number of indigenous nations resident in scenic locales began to

sponsor cultural festivals and other events to attract tourists. Tribal enterprises such as hotels, restaurants, and service stations—and, more recently, golf courses, water parks, outlet malls, and casinos (the last of these is also discussed below)—proved profitable. At the same time, indigenous families and individuals were able to use traditional knowledge in new commercial ventures such as the production and sale of art. The [powwow](#), a festival of native culture that features dancers, singers, artists, and others, is often the locus at which cultural tourism occurs. The provision of guide services to hunters and fishers represents another transformation of traditional knowledge that has proven valuable in the commercial marketplace, and ecotourism ventures were becoming increasingly popular among tribes in the early 21st century. Although the tourism industry is inherently volatile, with visitation rising and falling in response to factors such as the rate of inflation and the cost of travel, tourist enterprises have contributed significantly to some tribal economies.

The same transportation improvements that allowed tourists to reach the reservation also enabled tribes to connect better with urban markets. Some tribes chose to develop new industries, typically in light manufacturing. More recent tribal enterprises have often emphasized services that, with the aid of the Internet, can be provided from any location: information technology (such as server farms), accounting, payroll, order processing, and printing services are examples. More-localized operations, such as tribal telecommunications operations and energy companies, have also benefitted from better transportation.

In a reversal of the extractive industries common to rural Northern America, some indigenous nations have contracted to store materials that are difficult to dispose of, such as medical and nuclear waste. For the most part, these projects were not initiated until late in the 20th or early in the 21st century, and they have generally been controversial. Factions within actual or potential host tribes often disagree about whether the storage or disposal of dangerous materials constitutes a form of self-imposed environmental racism or, alternatively, a form of capitalism that simply takes advantage of the liminal geographic and regulatory space occupied by native nations.

While the kinds of economic development noted above are certainly not exhaustive, they do represent the wide variety of projects that indigenous nations and their members had undertaken by the beginning of the 21st century. At that time, mainstream businesses like these represented the numeric majority of indigenous development projects in Northern America, although they were neither the most profitable nor among nonnatives the best-known forms of indigenous economic development. Instead, the most important development tool for many communities is the [casino](#).

In 1979 the Seminoles of Florida opened the first [Native American gaming](#) operation, a bingo parlour with jackpots as high as \$10,000 (U.S.) and some 1,700 seats. The Seminole and other tribes surmounted a number of legal challenges over the next decade, principally suits in which plaintiffs argued that state regulations regarding gaming should obtain on tribal land. The issue was decided in *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians* (1987), in which the U.S. Supreme Court found that California's interest in the regulation of reservation-based gambling was not compelling enough to abrogate tribal sovereignty. Gaming could thus take place on reservations in states that did not expressly forbid gambling or lotteries. The U.S. Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act in 1988; the act differentiated between various forms of gambling (i.e., bingo, slot machines, and card games) and the regulations that would obtain

for each. It also mandated that tribes enter into compacts with state governments; these agreements guaranteed that a proportion of gaming profits—sometimes as much as 50 percent—would be given to states to support the extra burdens on infrastructure, law enforcement, and social services that are associated with casino traffic.

Although some Native American gaming operations have proven extremely profitable, others have been only minimally successful. To a large extent, success in these ventures depends upon their location; casinos built near urban areas are generally able to attract a much higher volume of visitors than those in rural areas and, as a result, are much more profitable. In order to expand their businesses, some tribes have reinvested their earnings by purchasing and developing property that is proximal to cities; others have filed suits claiming land in such areas. Some groups have petitioned the U.S. government for official recognition as tribes, an action that some antigambling activists have complained is motivated by a desire to gain the right to open casinos. In many such cases the group in question has a variety of reasons to press a claim, as well as ample historical documentation to support the request for recognition; in these cases recognition is eventually granted. In other cases, however, claims to indigenous heritage have proved bogus, and recognition has been denied.

International developments

In the early 21st century, while many of the efforts of Native American communities focused by necessity on local, regional, or national issues, others increasingly emphasized their interaction with the global community of aboriginal peoples. The quest for indigenous self-determination received international recognition in 1982, when the [United Nations](#) Economic and Social Council created the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. In 1985 this group began to draft an indigenous rights document, a process that became quite lengthy in order to ensure adequate consultation with indigenous nations and nongovernmental organizations. In 1993 the UN General Assembly declared 1995–2004 to be the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples; the same body later designated 2005–2015 as the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

In 1995 the UN Commission on Human Rights received the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The commission assigned a working group to review the declaration, and in 2006 the group submitted a final document to the Human Rights Council. Despite efforts by many members of the UN General Assembly to block a vote on the declaration, it was passed in 2007 by an overwhelming margin: 144 votes in favour, 11 abstentions, and 4 negative votes (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States, all of which would formally endorse the declaration by 2016). Indigenous communities in the Americas and elsewhere applauded this event, which they hoped would prove beneficial to their quests for legal, political, and land rights.

Elizabeth Prine Pauls

Additional Reading

Synthetic accounts of traditional cultures

There are many syntheses of the traditional cultures of Native America. An excellent collection of photos and essays was commissioned to celebrate the opening of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, Gerald McMaster and Clifford E. Trafzer (eds.), *Native Universe: Voices of Indian America* (2004).

An encyclopaedic summary of knowledge, literature, and research on the principal cultural regions north of Mexico is provided by the multivolume William C. Sturtevant (ed.), *Handbook of North American Indians* (1978–). Ongoing research is published in *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* (quarterly); and *American Indian Quarterly*.

Reference works include Carl Waldman and Molly Braun, *Atlas of the North American Indian* (1985), and *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes* (1988); Barbara A. Leitch and Kendall T. LePoer (eds.), *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Tribes of North America* (1979); Barry T. Klein (ed.), *Reference Encyclopedia of the American Indian*, 6th ed. (1993); and Duane Champagne (ed.), *The Native North American Almanac* (1994), a combination of handbook, encyclopaedia, and directory.

Classic surveys of the native peoples of North America include Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian*, 20 vol. (1907–30, reissued 1978); Clark Wissler, *The American Indian: An Introduction to the Anthropology of the New World* (1917, reprinted 2005); A.L. Kroeber, *Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America* (1939, reprinted 1976); John R. Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America* (1952, reprinted 1984); and Fred Eggan (ed.), *Social Anthropology of North American Tribes*, 2nd enlarged ed. (1955, reissued 1970).

Indigenous religions of the Americas as a whole are explored in Denise Lardner Carmody and John Tully Carmody, *Native American Religions: An Introduction* (1993). Religious beliefs and ceremonies specific to North America are described in Arlene Hirschfelder and Paulette Molin, *The Encyclopedia of Native American Religions* (1992); Sam D. Gill and Irene F. Sullivan, *Dictionary of Native American Mythology* (1992); Connie Burland, *North American Indian Mythology*, new rev. ed., revised by Marion Wood (1985); Omer C. Stewart, *Peyote Religion: A History* (1987); Weston La Barre, *The Peyote Cult*, 5th ed., enlarged (1989); and Gregory E. Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century* (2006).

Broadly comparative works include *Western Indians: Comparative Environments, Languages, and Cultures of 172 Western American Indian Tribes* (1980), on Northwest Coast, Californian, North American Plateau, Great Basin, and Southwest peoples; Christopher Vecsey and Robert W. Venables (eds.), *American Indian Environments: Ecological Issues in Native American History* (1980); Thomas E. Ross and Tyrel G. Moore (eds.), *A Cultural Geography of North American Indians* (1987); Paul Stuart, *Nations Within a Nation: Historical Statistics of American Indians* (1987), with extensive tables and bibliography; *North American Indians* (1991), well illustrated; John Gattuso (ed.), *Native America* (1991), a description of people, places, history, and culture written and illustrated by Native Americans; Alice Beck Kehoe, *North American Indians: A Comprehensive Account*, 2nd ed. (1992); William T. Hagan, *American Indians*, 3rd ed. (1993); Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (1999); and Julian Granberry, *The Americas That Might Have Been: Native American Social Systems Through Time* (2005).

Information on the United States alone includes Francis Paul Prucha, *Atlas of American Indian Affairs* (1990); and Arlene Hirschfelder and Martha Kreipe de Montañó, *The Native American*

Almanac: A Portrait of Native America Today (1993).

Synthetic studies of Canadian peoples are Harold Cardinal, *The Rebirth of Canada's Indians* (1977), a study of government relations; Diamond Jenness, *The Indians of Canada*, 7th ed. (1977), a classic work; Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown (eds.), *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (1985); Bruce Alden Cox (ed.), *Native People, Native Lands: Canadian Indians, Inuit, and Métis* (1987), a study of economics with a bibliographic essay on Canadian native studies; J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, rev. ed. (1991); Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (1992); and James S. Frideres and Lilianne Ernestine Krosenbrink-Gelissen, *Native Peoples in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts*, 4th ed. (1993).

An extensive listing of books and articles on particular Indian groups is given in George Peter Murdock and Timothy J. O'Leary, *Ethnographic Bibliography of North America*, 4th ed., 5 vol. (1975); and in a companion work, M. Marlene Martin and Timothy J. O'Leary, *Ethnographic Bibliography of North America, Supplement, 1973–1987*, 3 vol. (1990).

Prehistoric cultures, art, and populations

Thomas D. Dillehay, *The Settlement of the Americas: A New Prehistory* (2000), is an account by the archaeologist whose analysis of the Monte Verde site changed modern notions of North American prehistory; it provides a synthetic account of the peopling of the Americas.

Introductions to the broad chronological sweep of Native American prehistory include Jesse D. Jennings (ed.), *Ancient North Americans* (1983); M. Coe, Dean Snow, and Elizabeth Benson, *Atlas of Ancient America* (1986); David L. Browman (ed.), *Early Native Americans: Prehistoric Demography, Economy, and Technology* (1980); David Hurst Thomas, *Exploring Ancient Native America: An Archaeological Guide* (1994); and Norman Bancroft-Hunt, *Historical Atlas of Ancient America* (2001).

An account of the archaeological exploration of the largest city in prehistoric Native America is Biloine W. Young and Melvin L Fowler, *Cahokia, the Great Native American Metropolis* (2000); an analysis of the culture's artistic tradition is F. Kent Reilly III and James F. Garber (eds.), *Ancient Objects and Sacred Realms: Interpretations of Mississippian Iconography* (2007).

Richly illustrated catalogues of pre-Columbian art are available in Richard F. Townsend and Robert V. Sharp (eds.), *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand: American Indian Art of the Ancient Midwest and South* (2004); and Geneviève Le Fort (ed.), *Masters of the Americas: In Praise of the Pre-Columbian Artists: The Dora and Paul Janssen Collection* (2005).

The question of how many people lived in the Americas when the Europeans arrived has been the focus of much controversy. Authoritative essays on this topic are in William C. Sturtevant (ed.), *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 3, *Environment, Origins, and Population* (2006), ed. by Douglas H. Ubelaker. Key texts in the debate include Henry F. Dobyns and William R. Swagerty, *Their Number Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America* (1983); Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival* (1987); and William M. Denevan (ed.), *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492*, 2nd ed. (1992).

The methods of historical demography and the role of epidemic disease in indigenous depopulation are examined in Noble David Cook, *Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492–1650* (1998); David Henige, *Numbers from Nowhere: The American Indian Contact Population Debate* (1998); and David S. Jones, *Rationalizing Epidemics: Meanings and*

Uses of American Indian Mortality Since 1600 (2004).

History to the late 19th century

An account that places the initial encounters between Europeans and Native Americans in very broad historical perspective may be found in Brian Fagan, *Fish on Friday: Feasting, Fasting, and the Discovery of the New World* (2006); many of the scholarly debates regarding pre-Columbian life in the Americas, such as those surrounding precontact population figures, the existence of urban areas, and the genetic manipulation of food crops, are addressed in Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (2006). Syntheses of Native American history include Herman J. Viola, *After Columbus: The Smithsonian Chronicle of the North American Indians* (1990); Angie Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (1970, reissued 1989), including Alaska; Eleanor Burke Leacock and Nancy Oestreich Lurie (eds.), *North American Indians in Historical Perspective* (1971, reprinted 1988). Military engagements are summarized in Michael L. Nunnally, *American Indian Wars: A Chronology of Confrontations Between Native Peoples and Settlers and the United States Military, 1500s–1901* (2007).

A number of 19th-century artists drew, painted, or photographed Native American individuals and communities; their works provide a compelling visual record of traditional life. Among these are Swiss artist Karl Bodmer, whose works are collected in Karl Bodmer and Maximilian Wied, *Travels in the Interiors of North America 1832–1834* (1840, reprinted 2001); David C. Hunt and Marsha V. Gallagher (compilers), *Karl Bodmer's America* (1984); W. Raymond Wood, Joseph C. Porter, and David C. Hunt, *Karl Bodmer's Studio Art: The Newberry Library Bodmer Collection* (2002); and Brandon K. Ruud (ed.) and Marsha V. Gallagher (compiler), *Karl Bodmer's North American Prints* (2004). American painter George Catlin's work is collected in George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the North American Indians* (1841, reprinted 1995); and George Gurney and Therese Thau Heyman (eds.), *George Catlin and His Indian Gallery* (2002). The work of American photographer Edward S. Curtis is widely available, including Christopher Cardozo (ed.), *Edward S. Curtis: The Great Warriors* (2004), *Edward S. Curtis: The Women* (2004), and *Sacred Legacy: Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian* (2005).

Indigenous accounts of colonial history are collected in Peter Nabokov (ed.), *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations from Prophecy to the Present, 1492–2000*, rev. ed. (1999); Colin G. Calloway (ed.), *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History*, 2nd ed. (2004), *The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early America* (1994), and *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground: Plains Indian Views of How the West Was Lost* (1996); and Vicki Rozema (ed.), *Voices from the Trail of Tears* (2003).

The negotiation of power between colonizers and Native Americans is the focus of a myriad of texts, including Robert Blaisdell (ed.), *Great Speeches by Native Americans* (2000); Andrew L. Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt of 1680: Conquest and Resistance in Seventeenth-Century New Mexico* (1997); Nicholas P. Cushner, *Why Have You Come Here?: The Jesuits and the First Evangelization of Native America* (2006); Nathaniel Philbrick, *Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War* (2006); Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (2006); Warren R. Hofstra (ed.), *Cultures in Conflict: The Seven Years' War in North America* (2007); and James Welch and Paul Stekler, *Killing Custer: The Battle of Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians* (2007).

The effects of the enslavement of indigenous Americans are illuminated in Alan Gallay, *The*

Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670–1717 (2002). The conflicts that derived from Native American slaveholding are considered in James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (2002); Theda Purdue, *Mixed Blood Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (2005); and Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (2006). A case in which Africans and their descendants merged more easily with native peoples is illustrated in Gary Zellar, *African Creeks: Establisment and the Creek Nation* (2007).

History from the late 19th century onward

In the 20th century, many indigenous peoples began to assert that academic scholarship undermined their oral traditions and histories. Discussions regarding this issue in Native American historiography are available in Peter Nabokov, *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History* (2002); and Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (eds.), *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, 2nd ed. (2003).

Two memoirs that provide a fascinating perspective on the ways that Native American women's lives did (and did not) change during the period from about 1860 to the end of the 20th century are Frank B. Linderman, *Red Mother* (1932, reissued as *Pretty-Shield: Medicine Woman of the Crows*, 2003), essentially a transcript of a series of conversations between the author and Pretty-Shield; and Alma Hogan Snell, *Grandmother's Grandchild: My Crow Indian Life*, ed. by Becky Matthews (2000), the life story of Pretty-Shield's granddaughter. The lives of Pretty-Shield's contemporaries are recounted in Frank B. Linderman, *American: The Life Story of a Great Indian, Plenty-Coups: Chief of the Crows* (1930, reissued as *Plenty-Coups: Chief of the Crows*, new ed. 2002); Peter Nabokov (ed.), *Two Leggings: The Making of a Crow Warrior* (1967, reprinted 1982); and John Stands In Timber and Margot Liberty, *Cheyenne Memories*, 2nd ed. (1998), among others. Alma Hogan Snell's contemporaries have written memoirs, including Henry Mihesuah, *First to Fight*, ed. by Devon A. Mihesuah (2002); and Kenny Thomas, Sr., *Crow Is My Boss: The Oral Life History of a Tanacross Athabaskan Elder*, ed. by Craig Mishler (2005).

Personal accounts of childhood, particularly of early educational encounters, are the substance of Clyde Ellis, *To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893–1920* (1996). A number of essays are collected in Andrew Garrod and Colleen Larimore (eds.), *First Person, First Peoples: Native American College Graduates Tell Their Life Stories* (1997), which is notable for the essayists' reflections on the school experiences of earlier generations and the impact of those experiences on their own educational pursuits. Discussions of the problems that have plagued efforts at public education may be found in Delores J. Huff, *To Live Heroically: Institutional Racism and American Indian Education* (1997); Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (1998); John Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools* (2000); Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (2004); and Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc (eds.), *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* (2006). A striking contrast to these accounts is Amanda J. Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852–1949* (2000); it tells of a school that was tribally run and operated on the premise that educated young women were instrumental in effecting cultural resistance. Another genre that relies heavily on first-person accounts focuses on Native American

contributions to the military, such as Jere Bishop Franco, *Crossing the Pond: The Native American Effort in World War II* (1999); Kenneth William Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian* (2000); William C. Meadows, *The Comanche Code Talkers of World War II* (2002); and Tom Holm, *Strong Hearts, Wounded Souls: Native American Veterans of the Vietnam War* (1996). Biographies of Native Americans who have served in the military include Clark G. Reynolds, *On the Warpath in the Pacific: Admiral Jocko Clark and the Fast Carriers* (2005); between the world wars Admiral Clark (Cherokee) was instrumental in introducing aviation to the Navy. Memoirs of war include Hollis D. Stabler, *No One Ever Asked Me: The World War II Memoirs of an Omaha Indian Soldier*, ed. by Victoria Smith (2005); and Leroy TeCube, *Year in Nam: A Native American Soldier's Story* (1999).

Public policy and economic development

Government policy, ethnic identity and status, and land claims are set forth in Hazel W. Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements* (1971), on developments prior to 1934; Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *Now That the Buffalo's Gone: A Study of Today's American Indians* (1982), on land claims and on self-determination and sovereignty; Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (1983), on the Choctaw in the 18th century, the Pawnee in the 19th, and the Navajo in the 20th; Vine Deloria, Jr., and Clifford M. Lytle, *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty* (1984); Sandra L. Cadwalader and Vine Deloria, Jr. (eds.), *The Aggressions of Civilization: Federal Indian Policy Since the 1880s* (1984); Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, 2 vol. (1984), and *The Indians in American Society: From the Revolutionary War to the Present* (1985); Vine Deloria, Jr. (ed.), *American Indian Policy in the Twentieth Century* (1985); Sharon O'Brien, *American Indian Tribal Governments* (1989), on both historical and present-day governments; Janet A. McDonnell, *The Dispossession of the American Indian, 1887–1934* (1991); Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (2005); and Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, *The State of the Native Nations: Conditions Under U.S. Policies of Self-Determination* (2008). Census data on housing, family structure, education, and mortality are in C. Matthew Snipp, *American Indians: The First of This Land* (1989), a text that also makes comparisons with other American ethnic groups. The causes driving the high rate of population increase in indigenous communities are considered in Nancy Shoemaker, *American Indian Population Recovery in the Twentieth Century* (1999).

Discussions of the individuals, strategies, and tactics involved in Native American resistance and cultural movements are recounted in a number of texts, including Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805–1935* (1995); Rennard Strickland, *Tonto's Revenge: Reflections on American Indian Culture and Policy* (1997); Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., Joane Nagel, and Troy Johnson (eds.), *Red Power: The American Indians' Fight for Freedom*, 2nd ed. (1999); David E. Wilkins and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *Uneven Ground: American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law* (2001); R. David Edmunds (ed.), *The New Warriors: Native American Leaders Since 1900* (2001); Richard A. Grounds, George E. Tinker, and David E. Wilkins (eds.), *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance* (2003); and Sarah Eppler Janda, *Beloved Women: The Political Lives of Ladonna Harris and Wilma Mankiller* (2007).

The postwar mass relocation from reservations to cities that was instigated by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs is considered in Deborah Davis Jackson, *Our Elders Lived It: American Indian Identity in the City* (2002); and James B. LaGrand, *Indian Metropolis: Native Americans in Chicago, 1945–1975* (2002).

Economic development is often seen as the key to indigenous well-being. Discussions of trends in this area include Peter Iverson, *When Indians Became Cowboys: Native Peoples and Cattle Ranching in the American West* (1994); Donald Lee Fixico, *The Invasion of Indian Country in the Twentieth Century: American Capitalism and Tribal Natural Resources* (1998); Eve Darian-Smith, *New Capitalists: Law, Politics, and Identity Surrounding Casino Gaming on Native American Land* (2004); and Brian Hosmer and Colleen O'Neill (eds.), *Native Pathways: American Indian Culture and Economic Development in the Twentieth Century* (2004). A number of interesting tribal case studies are also available, including Joseph G. Jorgensen, *Oil Age Eskimos* (1990); and Colleen O'Neill, *Working the Navajo Way: Labor and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (2005).

Cultural appropriation

Native American cultures, images, and religions have been heavily appropriated by nonnative commercial ventures and individuals. General discussions include Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer (eds.), *Selling the Indian: Commercializing & Appropriating American Indian Cultures* (2001); Hal K. Rothman (ed.), *The Culture of Tourism, the Tourism of Culture: Selling the Past to the Present in the American Southwest* (2003); Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (2003); Alan Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans: 1880–1930* (2004); Philip Jenkins, *Dream Catchers: How Mainstream America Discovered Native Spirituality* (2004); and Huston Smith, *A Seat at the Table: Huston Smith in Conversation with Native Americans on Religious Freedom*, ed. by Phil Cousineau and Gary Rhine (2005).

The controversies surrounding the ownership and control of indigenous human remains and cultural property are discussed in Devon A. Mihesuah, *Repatriation Reader: Who Owns American Indian Remains?* (2000); Kathleen S. Fine-Dare, *Grave Injustice: The American Indian Repatriation Movement and NAGPRA* (2002); David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (2000); Keith James (ed.), *Science and Native American Communities: Legacies of Pain, Visions of Promise* (2001); and Peter Nabokov, *Where the Lightning Strikes: The Lives of American Indian Sacred Places* (2006).

The use of racially stereotypical mascots by professional, collegiate, and high school sports teams is discussed in Carol Spindel, *Dancing at Halftime: Sports and the Controversy over American Indian Mascots*, updated ed. (2002); Bruce Stapleton, *Redskins: Racial Slur or Symbol of Success?* (2001); and C. Richard King and Charles Fruehling Springwood (eds.), *Team Spirits: The Native American Mascots Controversy* (2001).

Evaluations of the portrayal of American Indians in the cinema include Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (eds.), *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film*, expanded ed. (2003); Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (1999); and M. Elise Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film* (2006).

The early 21st century saw a surge in Native American participation in media production, including acting, writing, directing, producing, and critiquing films and television, a phenomenon

discussed in Beverly R. Singer, *Wiping the War Paint off the Lens: Native American Film and Video* (2001); and Sierra S. Adare, *"Indian" Stereotypes in TV Science Fiction: First Nations' Voices Speak Out* (2005).

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Cite

While every effort has been made to follow citation style rules, there may be some discrepancies. Please refer to the appropriate style manual or other sources if you have any questions.

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