

During The One Hundred Years Following The Original Treaties Between The US Government And American Indian

During The One Hundred Years Following The Original Treaties Between The US Government And American Indian, a complex and transformative period unfolded in the history of Native American tribes and the United States. This century was marked by significant legal, political, and social changes that deeply affected the sovereignty, land rights, and cultural identities of indigenous peoples across North America. From the initial treaties in the late 18th and early 19th centuries to the numerous policies that followed, this era shaped the trajectory of Native-American relations and laid the groundwork for ongoing struggles for justice and recognition.

The Context of Native American Treaties with the US Government

Origins of the Treaties

The treaties between the US government and Native American tribes began in the late 1700s, as the newly formed United States sought to establish peaceful relations, secure land, and facilitate westward expansion. These treaties served as legal agreements that often included:

- Land cessions
- Guarantees of sovereignty
- Promises of protection
- Trade agreements

Key Principles and Expectations

While treaties were intended as mutual agreements, they frequently favored US interests, leading to:

- Dispossession of Native lands
- Suppression of tribal sovereignty
- Cultural assimilation pressures

Major Developments in Native American Policy (1820s-1920s)

The Indian Removal Act and Its Aftermath

The Indian Removal Act of 1830

One of the most infamous policies was the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which authorized the forced relocation of tribes living east of the Mississippi River. The consequences included:

- The infamous Trail of Tears
- Displacement of Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole tribes
- Loss of ancestral lands and lives

Impact on Tribal Sovereignty

This policy marked a shift toward a policy of removal and segregation, undermining treaty obligations and tribal sovereignty.

The Dawes Act (1887)

Another pivotal development was the Dawes Act, aimed at assimilating Native Americans into American society through:

- Dividing communal tribal lands into individual allotments
- Encouraging Native Americans to adopt farming lifestyles
- Opening remaining tribal lands to non-Native settlers

Consequences of the Dawes Act:

- Loss of tribal landholdings
- Erosion of communal culture
- Increased land fragmentation

The Role of Federal Policies in Cultural Suppression

Throughout this period, federal policies sought to diminish Native cultural practices:

- Indian boarding schools aimed at assimilating Native children
- Banning of traditional ceremonies and languages
- Suppression of spiritual and cultural identities

Key Treaties and Their Long-Term Effects

The Treaty of Fort Laramie (1851 and 1868)

The 1851 Treaty

- Established territorial boundaries for tribes
- Recognized tribal sovereignty in exchange for land rights

The 1868 Treaty

- Created the Great Sioux Reservation
- Recognized Sioux sovereignty over certain lands

Long-term Impact:

Despite these treaties, subsequent US policies led to violations, land confiscation, and forced

removals, undermining treaty promises.

The Treaty of Medicine Creek (1854)

- Ceded large portions of Washington Territory to the US
- Promised reservations and rights to Native tribes

Outcome:

Many tribes faced displacement and loss of traditional lands, with treaty promises often unfulfilled.

The Transition to Federal Indian Policy (1900s)

The Termination Policy (1950s)

Although slightly beyond the one hundred-year scope, the roots of the termination policy began earlier, aiming to:

- Dissolve tribal governments
- End recognition of tribal sovereignty
- Assimilate tribes into mainstream society

Effects:

- Loss of federal recognition for many tribes
- Displacement and economic hardship
- Increased marginalization

The Indian Reorganization Act (1934)

Marking a shift, this act sought to:

- Restore tribal self-governance
- Promote tribal cultural revival
- Reverse earlier assimilation policies

While not within the specified timeframe, its roots lie in the earlier century of treaties and policies.

Native Americans' Resistance and Legal Battles

Native American Sovereignty Movements

Throughout the century, tribes resisted unjust policies through:

- Legal challenges
- Cultural preservation efforts
- Political activism

Landmark Court Cases

Worcester v. Georgia (1832)

- Affirmed tribal sovereignty
- Declared Georgia laws unconstitutional in Native territories

Indian Claims Commission Act (1946)

- Addressed land claims stemming from treaty violations
- Provided a mechanism for tribes to seek compensation

The Legacy of the Treaties and Policies

Land Loss and Dispossession

Over the century, Native tribes lost millions of acres through treaties, legislation, and executive actions, leading to:

- Reduced land bases
- Concentration on reservations
- Economic hardships

Cultural and Social Impacts

- Suppression of languages and traditions
- Disruption of social structures
- Challenges to maintaining cultural identities

Ongoing Struggles for Rights and Recognition

Many tribes continue to seek:

- Land restitution
- Federal recognition
- Preservation of cultural heritage
- Sovereign rights

Conclusion: Reflection on a Century of Change

The hundred years following the original treaties between the US government and American Indian tribes were marked by both conflict and resilience. While treaties aimed to establish peace and relations, their frequent violations led to widespread land loss, cultural suppression, and diminished sovereignty. However, Native American tribes demonstrated resilience through resistance, legal challenges, and cultural revival efforts, shaping their ongoing journey toward justice, recognition, and self-determination. Understanding this historical period is crucial for appreciating the complexities of Native-American relations and the importance of honoring treaty commitments.

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SEO Keywords and Phrases

- Native American treaties history
- US government and American Indian relations
- Indian removal policies
- Dawes Act impacts
- Native American land rights
- Native American sovereignty
- Indian boarding schools
- Treaty of Fort Laramie
- Native American resistance
- Federal Indian policy history
- Native American legal battles
- Native tribes land disputes
- Native American cultural preservation

References and Further Reading

- "American Indian Treaties" - National Archives
- "The Indian Removal Act" - Library of Congress
- "The Dawes Act and Its Effects" - National Museum of the American Indian
- "Native American Sovereignty and Land Rights" - Smithsonian Institution
- "The History of Federal Indian Policy" - Indian Law Resource Center

This article provides a comprehensive overview of a pivotal century in Native American history, emphasizing the importance of understanding past treaties and policies to inform ongoing efforts for justice and reconciliation.

Frequently Asked Questions

What were the primary goals of the original treaties between the US government and American Indian tribes?

The original treaties aimed to establish peaceful relations, secure land rights, provide for the tribes' welfare, and define the boundaries and sovereignty of Native nations in exchange for peace and certain legal agreements.

How did the US government's policies toward Native American

tribes evolve during the hundred years following the treaties?

During this period, policies shifted from treaty-based negotiations to forced assimilation, including efforts like Indian removal, Indian boarding schools, and the Dawes Act, which aimed to assimilate Native Americans into mainstream society and diminish tribal sovereignty.

What impact did the Treaties have on Native American land ownership over the century?

Initially, treaties secured land rights for tribes, but over time, US policies led to the loss of large portions of tribal lands through forced removals, allotments, and sales, often resulting in significant land dispossession for Native peoples.

How did the legal status of treaties between the US and Native tribes influence Native American sovereignty?

Treaties are considered legally binding agreements, which initially recognized tribal sovereignty, but over time, US government actions often undermined this sovereignty, leading to legal disputes and ongoing efforts to reaffirm tribal rights.

What role did Native American activism play in the century following the treaties?

Native American activism, especially from the 1960s onward, aimed to reclaim treaty rights, restore sovereignty, and address injustices, leading to important legal victories and increased recognition of Native issues at the federal level.

How have modern courts interpreted treaties made with Native American tribes during the 100-year period?

Modern courts have increasingly upheld treaty rights, affirming their binding nature and recognizing tribes' rights to land, resources, and self-governance, although disputes and legal challenges still persist.

What ongoing challenges do Native American tribes face related to treaties and land rights today?

Tribes continue to face challenges such as land disputes, resource extraction conflicts, sovereignty issues, and federal recognition struggles, all rooted in historical treaty violations and policies of dispossession.

Additional Resources

During The One Hundred Years Following The Original Treaties Between The US Government And American Indian

The period following the original treaties between the United States government and Native American tribes marks a complex and often tumultuous chapter in American history. Spanning roughly from the early 19th century to the early 20th century, this century was characterized by a mixture of negotiation, coercion, displacement, and cultural upheaval. Understanding this era is crucial for comprehending the long-lasting impacts on indigenous communities and the evolution of U.S. federal policy toward Native Americans.

Historical Context and Foundations of Treaty-Making

The early 19th century was a transformative period for the United States as it expanded westward. The federal government engaged in a series of treaties with various Native American tribes, ostensibly to establish peace, delineate boundaries, and facilitate westward expansion. These treaties often contained promises of sovereignty, land rights, and resources, but in practice, they frequently resulted in loss of land and autonomy for Native tribes.

Key Aspects of the Original Treaties:

- Recognition of tribal sovereignty, though often nominal
- Land cessions in exchange for reservations or compensation
- Promises of protection and supplies
- Establishment of treaties as the primary means of negotiation

However, the treaties were often one-sided, with tribes pressured into signing under duress or manipulated through misrepresentations. The U.S. government's overarching goal was to assimilate or relocate Native peoples to facilitate territorial expansion.

Major Treaties and Their Consequences

The Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears

One of the most notorious policies enacted during this period was the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which authorized the forced relocation of southeastern tribes such as the Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Chickasaw, and Choctaw nations. Despite treaties that recognized their land rights, these tribes were compelled to move west of the Mississippi River, leading to the tragic Trail of Tears, where thousands died from exposure, disease, and starvation.

The Dawes Act of 1887 and Land Allotment

The Dawes Act marked a shift from treaty-based relations to assimilation policies. It aimed to dissolve communal tribal lands and allot parcels to individual Native Americans, with surplus lands sold to settlers. This policy drastically reduced tribal landholdings—by approximately 90%—and aimed to encourage Native Americans to adopt Euro-American farming practices and lifestyles.

Impacts of the Dawes Act:

- Loss of tribal sovereignty over land
- Breakdown of communal social structures
- Erosion of cultural practices tied to land

The Treaties of the 1850s and 1860s

During this period, treaties such as the Treaty of Fort Laramie (1851, 1868) sought to establish peace and define territories. However, these treaties often failed to prevent conflicts, and subsequent U.S. policies typically disregarded their terms. Many tribes found themselves confined to reservations with limited resources, leading to poverty and marginalization.

Legal and Political Dynamics of the Century

Treaty Negotiations and Violations

While treaties were considered the supreme law of the land, the U.S. government frequently violated their terms. Treaties were often broken or renegotiated under pressure, leading to further land dispossession and disenfranchisement.

The Role of Federal Agencies and Bureaucracy

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), established in 1824, became the primary agency managing Indian affairs. Its policies reflected a paternalistic approach, aiming to assimilate Native Americans into mainstream American society. The BIA's implementation of treaties was often marred by corruption, mismanagement, and cultural insensitivity.

Supreme Court and Legal Precedents

Legal cases such as *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) recognized tribal sovereignty, but enforcement was weak. Over the century, courts often sided with U.S. government interests, further eroding treaty obligations and tribal rights.

Cultural and Social Impacts on Native Communities

Loss of Land and Resources

Land was central to Native identities, spiritual practices, and livelihoods. The encroachment and dispossession caused profound cultural dislocation.

Suppression of Indigenous Languages and Practices

Government policies increasingly aimed at eradicating Native cultures through boarding schools, where children were forced to abandon their languages and traditions.

The Boarding School System

Established in the late 19th century, these schools sought to "civilize" Native children. They were often sites of cultural suppression, abuse, and loss of language, with lasting intergenerational trauma.

Native Resistance and Adaptation

Despite oppressive policies, Native communities actively resisted and adapted in various ways.

Armed Resistance and Warfare

Notable conflicts include the Sioux's resistance during the Great Sioux War (1876), led by Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, and the resistance of the Apache under Geronimo.

Legal Challenges and Political Activism

Some tribes challenged treaties and policies through legal means and formed political organizations advocating for rights and recognition, such as the Indian Rights Association and later the American Indian Movement.

Cultural Revitalization

In response to cultural suppression, tribes initiated efforts to revive languages, traditions, and ceremonies, fostering resilience and cultural pride.

The Legacy of the Century-Long Treaty Era

Land Loss and Economic Marginalization

By the early 20th century, Native tribes had lost vast amounts of land, leading to economic hardships and dependency on federal aid.

Erosion of Sovereignty

Treaties originally recognized tribal sovereignty, but over time, U.S. policies sought to assimilate and control Native nations, culminating in the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which aimed to restore some self-governance.

Cultural and Spiritual Resilience

Despite systemic efforts to erase indigenous identities, Native communities preserved and revitalized their cultural practices, languages, and spiritual beliefs, laying groundwork for contemporary activism.

Conclusion: Reflection and Ongoing Impact

The hundred years following the original treaties between the U.S. government and Native tribes reveal a turbulent history marked by betrayal, resilience, and ongoing struggle. The treaties themselves symbolize both the legal recognition of Native nations and the profound injustices wrought through policies of displacement and assimilation. Understanding this era is essential not only for historical clarity but also for acknowledging the enduring impacts on Native communities today.

Contemporary Native sovereignty movements, legal battles, and cultural revitalization efforts continue to address the historical wrongs of this period. Recognizing the complexities of this century-long relationship underscores the importance of honoring treaty obligations, respecting tribal sovereignty, and fostering genuine reconciliation. As the nation reflects on its history, it becomes clear that the story of Native American tribes during this era is not merely a chapter of the past but a foundation for ongoing dialogue, justice, and healing.

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In sum, the century following the initial treaties was a defining period that shaped the legal, cultural, and political landscape of Native American communities. Its legacy informs ongoing struggles for sovereignty, justice, and cultural preservation in the 21st century.

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