



The Great Plains region as used in this encyclopedia

Preface

This encyclopedia consists of 123 entries and an introductory essay that have been excerpted from the *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains* (University of Nebraska Press, 2004), together with 23 new entries and many new photographs. Most of the original entries, and the essay, come from the Native American chapter in the *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, but others were dispersed throughout the book in chapters such as “Literary Traditions” (for example, James Welch and Linda Hogan), “War” (for example, Red Cloud and the Battle of the Little Bighorn), and “Water” (for example, Winters Doctrine). The new entries, focusing mainly on contemporary Plains Indians, were written by Dr. Charles Vollan of the Department of History at South Dakota State University, for which I am most grateful.

There was never any doubt in our minds that our initial paperback spin-off from the *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains* would feature the Indigenous peoples, whose enduring presence is a primary defining characteristic of the region. This is a presence that will only grow in importance, because the reservations in the United States and the reserves in Canada are islands of population increase in a sea of rural population decline. Moreover, the association of Indians with the Plains region is one of great historical depth, extending back at least eighteen thousand years. That means that until relatively recently (really only the last two centuries), all the human landscapes of the Great Plains were shaped by Indians alone.

During the last two centuries, the Great Plains has been both a tragic and a triumphant setting for its Native peoples. The tragedies—nineteenth-century population collapse and dispossession, for example, or the massacres at Sand Creek (1864), the Washita (1868), and Wounded Knee (1890)—come most readily, and disquietly, to mind. But even in the nineteenth century, against a backdrop of violence, disease, and the two federal governments’ relentless assimilation policies, there were Indian triumphs, such as Standing Bear’s epic trek in 1879 back from Indian Territory to the Ponca homeland on the Niobrara River (in present-day Nebraska) and his equally epic victory in court, mandating that an Indian is indeed a person.

Still, the nineteenth century was mainly a time of loss for Plains Indians, and in the early years of the twentieth century many observers believed that Indians were headed to extinction. Extinction did not occur; population revived; court cases were won (for example, *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians* [1980], compensating for the illegal taking of the Black Hills in 1876); many ceremonies persisted, and new ones (the Native American Church, for example) were added; most Indigenous languages survived and are now being taught in schools and colleges; and economic conditions have improved in some places, in part because of gaming. And along the way great athletes like Jim Thorpe, singers like Buffy Sainte-Marie, and artists like Oscar Howe have emerged from Indian cultures to enrich the overall fabric of Plains, and national, life.

Finally, it cannot be emphasized too much that over time Indians have endowed the

viii physical environments of the Plains with great sacred significance. This is a consecration of environment and place that is generally missing among other populations of the region. The Indians' traditional religions were place-based, the very names of the months in their native languages chronicling changes in the local environment throughout the year. Unlike most European Americans, who moved in and then quickly moved on, Indians were bound to specific places—homelands—by their religions, and by their histories, which were expressed spatially rather than temporally, each place a reminder of something that had happened in the past. The whole environment was revered, but certain landmarks—Bear Butte, for example, to the Lakotas and Cheyennes, and Pahuk, or “Mound on the Water,” to the Pawnees—stand out on the sacred map. This is a different, deeper form of regional consciousness, and it is celebrated throughout the encyclopedia.

The organization of the encyclopedia is straightforward: following the introductory essay, entries are presented in alphabetical order. Authors' names and affiliations are given at the end of each entry, and most entries are also followed by suggestions for further reading. A comprehensive index lists the entries in bold lettering, while other information that is presented within entries appears in normal lettering.

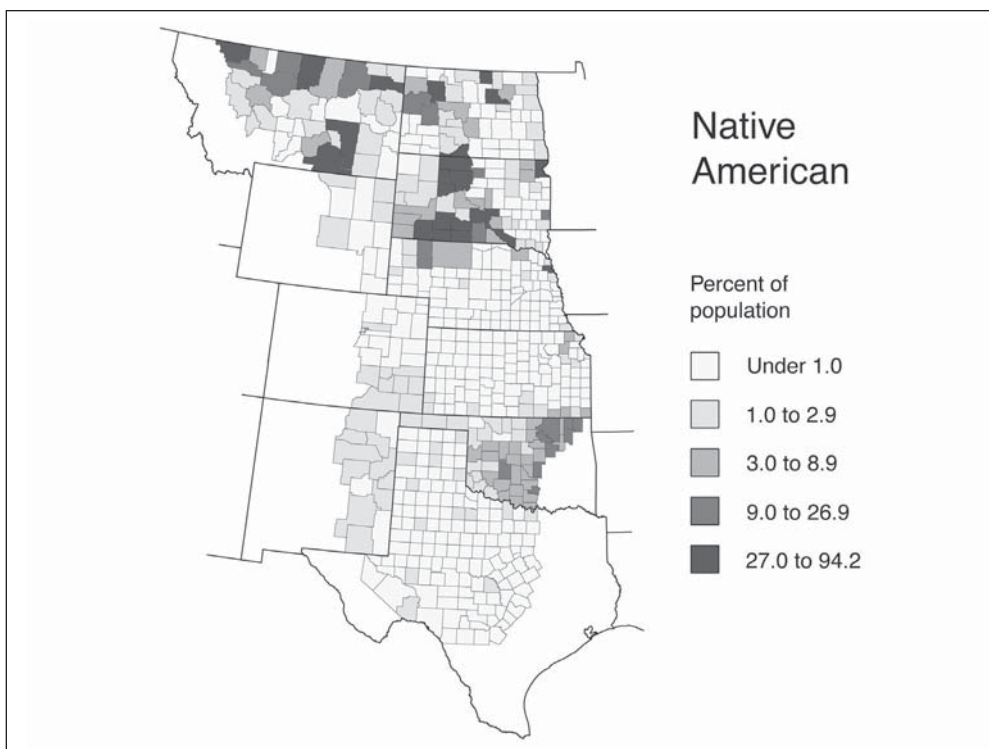
Our hope is that the information and analysis included in this encyclopedia will confirm in Plains Indians' minds their right to be proud of their longevity and accomplishments in the Great Plains, while reminding others of the centrality of Indians to life in the region, both in the past and ongoing.

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Introduction

The Plains Indian has been one of the most important and pervasive icons in American culture. Imagine him, for example, as a young man on horseback. Almost without effort, the image conjures up full-blown narratives of buffalo hunts and mounted warfare. Make the “he” into a young woman and imagine romantic tragedies of forced marriage and unrequited love. Make the Indian a wizened elder and see if you don’t think of spiritual wonder and almost superhuman ecological communion.

But don’t forget that real people peer up from the depths of such timeless images. And while the images can be easily moved to the Hollywood backlot, those real people are not so easily detached from the Great Plains themselves, for this difficult environment framed ongoing historical transformations in Native political organization, social relations, economy, and culture. Along with the nomadic bison hunting popularized in the movies, Native Americans engaged in raiding, trading, pastoralism, agriculture, diplomacy, politics, religious innovation and syncretism, warfare, migration, wage labor, lawsuits, lobbying, and gaming. Through these adaptive strategies, the Plains peoples worked to protect and enhance their political power and their ability to sustain themselves economically, and to maintain their cultural distinctiveness.



Native American population in the U.S. Great Plains as a percentage of total population, by county in 2000



Rally marchers leave Pine Ridge, South Dakota, on their way to Whiteclay, Nebraska, on June 26, 1999. The demonstration by Native Americans protested the sale of alcohol and unsolved murders in Whiteclay.

Longevity in the Plains

Although some peoples came to the Plains earlier than others, Native Americans have lived there for a long time. Evidence from the Agate Basin site in eastern Wyoming, for example, indicates that humans lived in the Plains at least as early as 8500 BC. Radiocarbon dating of material from the Lewisville site near Dallas, Texas, suggests Indians and their precursors may have been in the Plains for at least thirty-eight thousand years. The oral histories of some tribes refer to long-extinct mammoths and other megafauna. “Star charts” suggest that the Lakota Sioux have associated parts of the Black Hills in South Dakota with astrometrical phenomena since ancient times. Some scholars assert that the Sioux peoples originated in the Great Lakes region and only began moving onto the Plains in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Many Lakotas, however, trace the origins of their people to Wind Cave in the Black Hills and suggest that they were simply in the middle of a long, slow migration home after living elsewhere for a time. Clarity on this issue will probably not be forthcoming.

Environmental Adaptations

Their extended tenure in the Plains allowed Native peoples to experience significant alterations in the environment. Between 11,500 and 11,000 BP, precipitation declined, the range of temperatures increased, and free-flowing streams began to turn into small lakes and marshes, eventually becoming part of the expanding grassland. Species adapted to the wetter world—such as mammoths, camels, and horses—died out, opening ecological niches in the Plains grassland. Most of these niches were filled by bison, which were becoming smaller and more mobile, characteristics more effective in the drier climate.

Plains peoples adjusted to these changes as well. Around the time that the larger game disappeared, nomadic hunters shifted from Clovis-style spear points and arrowheads to the smaller Folsom points and heads, which were used until about 8000 BC. Like more recent Native peoples, Folsom hunters and their successors depended heavily upon the bison and relied upon the more sophisticated social organization necessary for group hunting. Such organization allowed for the creation and use of “buffalo jumps,” a large funnel of trees, rocks, poles, and people designed to channel stampeding bison over a cliff. Plains hunters used buffalo jumps like the Head-Smashed-In site in southwestern Alberta as early as 5,500 years ago. Along with the bison, Indian hunters’ prey included deer, elk, and other smaller game.

Plains residents began experimenting with pottery and more sedentary villages at least as early as two thousand years ago. Ancestors of the Mandans and Hidatsas eventually settled in fortified villages along the Missouri River, where they raised corn, beans, and squash. These villages generally ranged in size from ten to ninety lodges and were built from bracing poles and packed earthen cover. Between spring planting and fall harvest, the villagers probably left the river’s bottomland to hunt bison.

Some of the crops these villagers grew became part of the extensive trade networks that linked the horticulturalists with Plains hunters and with peoples outside the Plains. The Caddo and Wichita trade networks included some of the Pueblos in present-day New Mexico, Cahokia (a city built by the Illinois people near the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers), Hiwasee Island on the Tennessee River, Etowah near the Chattahoochee River, and the Platte River Pawnee communities. The Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras traded with peoples from what is today the American Southwest and with more nomadic Plains hunters like the Crows, Assiniboines, Plains Crees, Cheyennes, Arapahos, Kiowas, and Comanches. Both material goods (agricultural products, dried meat, flint, and animal hides) and cultural products (songs and dances) traded hands.

Migrations

While the rise of sedentary villages and agriculture stood out as a key way that Plains peoples adapted to and shaped their environment, migration played an equally important role in the lives of many Indians. It seems that Plains societies were both amalgamating and splitting apart, and that mobility constituted a common response to both social and environmental factors. The groups that came to be known as Apaches, for example, separated from people in the Northern Plains as early as 600 AD. They moved south, sojourning in Nebraska before moving into the Southern Plains between 1450 and 1525. By the late 1600s they and their Kiowa allies had staked out a territory ranging from northwestern Texas to Wyoming and the Black Hills. At the same time, Shoshones moved east from the Great Basin to eastern Montana. Separating from the Hidatsas and Missouri River horticulture, the Crows migrated west to the Montana-Dakota area.

Such migrations accelerated after 1700, as some groups left the Plains and others entered the region. Moving from what is now eastern Montana, a branch of Shoshones that would come to be known as Comanches swept the Apaches south and by 1775 forced them from the Plains entirely. Cheyennes and Arapahos migrated west from

- 4 the Great Lakes region. Crees and Assiniboines gradually moved into the Canadian Prairies. Iowas, Missourians, Omahas, Osages, Otoes, Poncas, and Quapaws all came to the Plains after living for some time in what is today Arkansas, Missouri, and Iowa.

Horses, Guns, and Diseases

Migrations also brought Europeans to the Plains, beginning in the sixteenth century. The newcomers brought both opportunities and perils for the Plains peoples in the forms of trade and disease. Horses and firearms were the most important European trade items. The Spanish reintroduced horses into the Plains, in part through trading networks that connected Plains peoples with the Pueblos and Apaches. (Horses had existed in the Americas at one time, but they had become extinct.) Indians acted as middlemen and traded horses to more distant Plains peoples. By the late 1600s, for example, Kiowas and Kiowa Apaches traded horses to the Caddos. Comanches often acquired horses by raiding Spanish and Apache settlements and then traded the animals to other tribes. Utes, Cheyennes, and Arapahos moved horses to the north. Because Spanish law forbade the selling or trading of firearms to Natives, the Plains peoples turned to the English and French for guns, and middleman relationships developed with both mobile traders and trade centers in the Arkansas, Missouri, and Red river valleys.

Access to horses and weaponry came at a high cost. European traders brought European epidemic diseases to which Plains Indians had not been exposed and to which they had limited immunity. Even Natives who had never met a European became ill as a result of contact with Native middlemen in the trade who inadvertently exposed them to smallpox, measles, whooping cough, and many other diseases. Regardless of the source, European diseases spread through the Plains and decimated Native populations, especially those concentrated in villages. Epidemics during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reduced the Arikaras' population by an estimated 80 percent. The Hidatsas, Mandans, Omahas, Poncas, and other relatively sedentary tribes also suffered great losses.

The combination of European diseases and trade items had a complex impact upon the Plains. Access to horses allowed for the more effective killing and transportation of bison. Consequently, many tribes—such as the Lakota Sioux—rejected a sedentary and horticultural lifestyle and devoted less time to trapping beaver and more time to the hunting of bison. Tribes with the greatest access to horses and firearms could expand their territory and power at the expense of those tribes with fewer guns and horses. The Osages' access to both guns and horses, for example, helped to make them the main power in the region between the lower Missouri and lower Red rivers by the mid-1700s. The Comanches' control of the horse trade and their alliance with the Kiowas gave them command over the area between the Arkansas and Red rivers by the end of the eighteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Sioux, aided by the Arapahos and Cheyennes, dominated the region bounded by the Minnesota and Yellowstone rivers in the north and the Republican River in the south. The relative power of the nomads was actually increased by disease: they suffered losses, of course, but their dispersed lifestyles made them less vulnerable to epidemics than the concentrated village populations.

Europeans

Unlike their horses, guns, and pathogens, Europeans themselves initially had a relatively limited presence in the Plains. The Spanish first penetrated the region between 1540 and 1542 looking for “cities of gold.” When they failed to find the riches they expected, they withdrew and only slowly established missions and colonies in New Mexico and Texas during the seventeenth century. Spain did sponsor an expedition to the Plains under Pedro de Villasur in 1720, but it suffered a military defeat at the hands of the Pawnees and Otoes.

The French expanded into the Southern and Central Plains by the early eighteenth century from bases in the Mississippi Valley. They negotiated commercial and military agreements with Plains tribes. Through these agreements, the French traded with Indians for furs, while using Plains peoples as a defense against rival Europeans and Indians. Few in number and often nomadic themselves, the French posed no threat to Indian autonomy.

In the late eighteenth century, British fur traders from Canada pushed into the Prairie Provinces. Unlike the individualistic French traders, the large British companies built numerous trading posts among the Assiniboines, Plains Crees, Blackfoot, and Gros Ventres, drawing them into market relations. Alcohol, the credit system, and intermarriage created strong linkages and dependencies, but the number of the British and the volume of their trade were too small to dramatically alter the Native cultures. Like the other Plains groups, the Indians of the Canadian Prairies managed to keep their subsistence, political, and cultural systems largely intact until the second half of the nineteenth century.

Americans

When the British, French, and Spanish entered the Plains, they tended to seek peaceful relations with Indian people. In truth, Europeans lacked the power to do otherwise. The same cannot be said, however, of the Americans. U.S. expansion into the Plains in the nineteenth century involved the purposeful or incidental destruction and control of those Plains resources upon which Native Americans depended. To be sure, Plains people adopted various responses to the Americans’ actions. Nevertheless, by the end of the century, Native peoples had seen their populations decline precipitously, had lost control over much of their land and other economic resources, and faced the prospect of seeing their societies and cultures forcibly annihilated by outsiders.

Fur traders were the first Americans to enter the Northern and Central Plains in significant numbers in the first four decades of the nineteenth century. In the 1840s large numbers of emigrants passed through the Great Plains on their way to Oregon, Utah, and the California goldfields. The construction of railroads across the Plains after the Civil War made accessible a region with limited navigable rivers, and the Homestead Act of 1862 and other laws drew settlers to the Plains by providing land at a relatively small cost.

The influx presented significant problems for the Plains peoples. Many migrants took old Indian routes across the Plains and codified them for other Americans as

- 6 “trails”—the Overland or Oregon Trail, which traced the Platte River, and the Santa Fe Trail, which ran along part of the Arkansas River. Migration along these trails destroyed the ecosystems of the Platte and Arkansas valleys. The emigrants drove the bison away, churned the grasslands into mile-wide dust swathes, stripped wood from river bottoms, and polluted water sources—often with diseases such as cholera. Native peoples who depended upon the resources of these areas, such as the Sioux and Pawnees in the north and the Comanches and Kiowas in the south, demanded compensation for this damage and sought substitutes for the lost game. The Comanches and Kiowas, for example, took to raiding for cattle and other items. This led to an escalating series of threats, a cycle of raids, and occasional reprisals by whites.

Treaties, Diplomacy, and Dispossession in the United States

Throughout much of the nineteenth century the U.S. government sought to deal with the conflicts between Indians and non-Indian migrants and settlers through treaties that restricted Native peoples to certain areas. In 1825 the federal government created a Permanent Indian Frontier. Encompassing much of modern-day Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma, it was to serve as a home for displaced eastern tribes. Tribes already in the area, such as the Kansas, Wichitas, Osages, and Pawnees, ceded lands to make room for tribes removed from the east, such as the Delawares and Kickapoos. But this was not a Permanent Indian Frontier. In 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened up vast areas for American settlement. In a flurry of treaty signing in the second half of the 1850s many Indigenous groups ceded their ancestral lands, retaining only small reservations.

On their reservations Plains Indians were placed under great pressure to change. They experimented with new strategies of resistance but enjoyed limited success. Pawnees in Nebraska and Osages in Kansas, for example, found their livelihoods threatened by Sioux raids and by non-Indian migrants who drove off game. The Indians responded by trying to levy tolls of sugar and coffee on emigrants and by occasionally resorting to harassment and cattle raids. American settlers, crowding in around the reservations, called for the Indians' removal. By the mid-1880s the Pawnees and many of the other Native peoples in Kansas and Nebraska had been relocated to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), the remnant of the Permanent Indian Frontier.

Many Plains peoples engaged in diplomacy with the United States and other tribes as a strategy to deal with the American newcomers. In 1851, at Fort Laramie, federal agents negotiated a treaty with the Arapahos, Arikaras, Assiniboines, Cheyennes, Crows, Hidatsas, Mandans, Lakota Sioux, and others. Two years later the government entered into a treaty with the Comanches, Kiowas, and Kiowa Apaches at Fort Atkinson. In 1855, along the Judith River, representatives of the Bloods, Piegans, Siksikas, and Gros Ventres made their agreements with the United States. These treaties called for peaceful relations, delineated which tribes got which lands, and stipulated that tribes would be given supplies and services to make up for the destruction of game by non-Indians.

Wars

The treaties did not end threats to Indian lifeways and thus failed to forestall violence for long. The Americans' destruction of game intensified competition among

the tribes for the remaining bison and other animals. The U.S. military fought several engagements with the Lakota Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahos in the mid-1850s. In the two years after the 1858 discovery of gold in Colorado, thousands of gold seekers flocked into Arapaho territory, violating the 1851 treaty. Some Arapahos responded by moving north of the Platte. For the southern bands who remained, relations with the trespassers deteriorated, and on November 29, 1864, white militiamen massacred Black Kettle's and White Antelope's Cheyennes and Arapahos at Sand Creek, Colorado. In response, members of these tribes, along with some Sioux, Comanches, and Kiowas, resorted to war. They launched a series of attacks against posts along the immigrant trails. Relative peace was restored when the Southern Arapahos, some Cheyenne bands, Comanches, and Kiowas agreed in 1865 and 1867 to treaties that would confine them to reservations. In exchange, federal officials guaranteed that the Indians would be protected from attacks by settlers and soldiers and that they would receive goods to offset the destruction of the bison and other game. When the Comanches and Kiowas resumed raiding because the government failed to provide adequate rations, the army destroyed the Indians' winter camps and forced them back to their reservation along the Red River.

In the Central and Northern Plains, bands of Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Lakota Sioux also waged war to protect themselves. The discovery of gold in Montana in 1862 brought large numbers of non-Indians into and through the area. When the federal government built forts to protect the settlers and the route to the goldfields, the Bozeman Trail, Native Americans laid siege to the forts and forced the United States to negotiate a settlement. In the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie, federal negotiators agreed to evacuate the forts, to provide a large reservation (the "Great Sioux Reservation") in South and North Dakota, and to guarantee Indian hunting rights.

Nevertheless, the Sioux and their allies ultimately suffered the same fate as the Comanches and Kiowas. When Americans discovered gold in the Black Hills area of the Great Sioux Reservation in 1874, the federal government unsuccessfully attempted to get the Sioux to sell or lease the land. War broke out between the army and the Sioux and Northern Cheyennes in 1876. The Indians, led by Gall and Sitting Bull (both Hunkpapa Sioux), defeated forces under Gen. George Armstrong Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn, but the military's winter campaign of 1876–77 forced most of the Sioux and Cheyennes to return to their reservations or to flee to Canada. Among the latter, those led by Sitting Bull returned to the reservation in 1881, while some others settled in Canada permanently. By the time of Sitting Bull's return, all of the Plains peoples had been settled on reservations.

The army's successes over some Plains tribes stemmed in large measure from the assistance of other Plains Indians as scouts and auxiliaries. Pawnees, Arikaras, and Crows helped the American military fight against the Lakotas, while Pawnees, Caddos, and Wichitas allied with the United States against the Comanches. Military service represented a means for some Indians to adapt to changing conditions. By serving as a scout or auxiliary, an Indian could provide himself and his family with material benefits, including extra rations, food, money, and horses captured in battle. Some Plains Natives saw the United States as a lesser threat than tribes like the Sioux. Service in the

- 8 army also provided an avenue of escape, albeit temporary, from reservation life and an opportunity to gain honor and status through combat. Similar motivations would later prompt Plains Indians to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces in subsequent conflicts, such as World Wars I and II, Korea, and Vietnam.

Treaties, Dispossession, and War in Canada

On the Canadian Prairies, the fur trade remained the principal medium of interaction between the Indians and whites until the late 1860s. A “middle ground” emerged there between the Blackfoot, Gros Ventres, Assiniboines, and Plains Crees on the one side, and fur traders on the other. Interchange of ideas reduced racial prejudices, gifts created fictive kinship ties, intermarriage bonded companies and bands together, and sexual interaction produced a large Métis (persons of mixed Native, French, and British heritage) population. This cultural accommodation came to an end with the decline of the fur trade in the 1860s. In 1870, after years of deteriorating resources and decreasing profits, the Hudson’s Bay Company sold Rupert’s Land to the Dominion of Canada.

Like their counterparts in the United States, Canadian officials wanted to move Plains Indians and Métis out of the way of non-Indians who settled the Prairie Provinces in greater numbers following the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Hoping to learn from the United States and avoid a series of financially costly wars, Ottawa officials negotiated a series of seven numbered treaties with the Plains peoples between 1871 and 1877. The Natives agreed to the treaties after a movement led by Métis Louis Riel to establish an independent Métis government in 1869 was crushed and because they wanted government aid to offset the loss of the bison. Plains groups with which the government signed treaties included the Red River Anishinaabes (Chippewas), Plains Crees, Plains Anishinaabes, Siksikas (Northern Blackfoot), Bloods, Northern Piegiens, Sarcees, and selected Assiniboines. Generally, the treaties stipulated that the Natives would agree to accept reserves and individual allotments of land in exchange for government aid and assistance in agriculture.

Like their counterparts farther south, Canadian Plains peoples found diplomacy did not produce desired results. Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway destroyed most of the Blackfoot’s hunting territory. Canadian officials often failed to provide adequate aid and sometimes withheld promised aid as punishment for those who called for alterations to treaty provisions. Efforts by leaders such as Crowfoot (Siksika Blackfoot) and Big Bear (Cree) to keep the peace between Natives and whites ultimately proved unsuccessful. In 1884 starving Indians robbed government storehouses and killed several local officials. Crees, Assiniboines, and Métis fended off an attack by troops at Cut Knife Hill, but several key Indian leaders were later arrested.

Troops also crushed the North-West Rebellion of Métis. In March 1885 in Saskatchewan a group of Métis, led once again by Louis Riel, took control of the village of Batoche, arrested the Indian agent, and declared the existence of a new government for the area. Hundreds of Crees and Assiniboines under Big Bear and Poundmaker joined Riel. Government troops recaptured Batoche and eventually forced many of the Métis and Indians, including Riel, Poundmaker, and Big Bear, to surrender (although some escaped to Montana). After a series of trials, the Canadian government hanged Riel and eight others.

Reservations, Allotments, and Assimilation

As a result of the loss of economic resources and military defeats, Plains peoples found themselves confined to reservations in the United States and reserves in Canada. Reservation life represented a radical departure from the Indians' prior existence. Some groups, such as those Cheyennes and Arapahos who had been resettled in Oklahoma, found themselves far from their homelands, where the environment was unfamiliar and adjustment was difficult. Even for those who remained in relatively familiar territory, the mobility integral to their bison-hunting way of life had been lost. Even if Indians were allowed to leave the reservation or reserve to hunt, their main prey, the bison, was virtually extinct by the early 1880s. For the Caddos, Wichitas, and other Plains peoples who depended on agriculture, the reservation lands often proved inadequate for cultivation. Plains peoples, who had once drawn their existence from the soil and the bison, had in many ways become economically dependent upon the United States and Canada.

For all of the problems with the reservations and reserves, however, they represented homes for peoples and contexts for their cultures. In the United States especially, humanitarian "reformers" worked to take away even this single saving grace. These reformers and their advocates in the government argued that Americans had an obligation to "civilize"—assimilate—Indians by breaking down tribal bonds and absorbing them into white society as individuals.

Several factors helped reformers win support for their ideas. In the context of the Plains Wars and expanding white settlement, absorbing Indians into white society seemed to be the only way to prevent their extinction. Evangelical Christians' desire to create a "righteous Empire" in the United States made conversion of the "red heathens" an important goal. Industrialization and increasing immigration of eastern European Catholics and Jews seemed to threaten traditional rural Anglo-Saxon values and fueled a desire to "Americanize" the First Americans. Reformers also felt that assimilation would end the dependence of many Native Americans upon government rations and annuities.

The 1887 General Allotment Act (along with subsequent acts and amendments) ultimately became the vehicle through which reformers sought to eradicate Indian cultures and societies. Sponsored by Massachusetts senator Henry Dawes, the act provided for ending the tribes' communal landownership and allotting reservation land into individually owned plots. Dawes and the reformers argued that the legislation would sever the peoples' bonds with their "backwards" tribal cultures and societies while forcing them to become hardworking farmers. Unallotted reservation land would then be sold as "surplus lands" to non-Indians. This would further facilitate assimilation by reducing the land available for Indians to use for hunting and would allow Indians to learn from their white neighbors.

Allotment did not become such a significant (and damaging) aspect of Indian policy in Canada. The 1869 Indian Act granted band councils the right to assign full title of specific reserve lands to individuals, who subsequently were allowed to sell, rent, or lease their land only to other band members. Hence, non-Indians simply did not have the same opportunities to buy nonallotted "surplus" lands or to eventually gain access to allotted lands.

10 Canadians did follow the Americans' lead in using education as a means of assimilation. By the mid-1890s both the U.S. and Canadian governments funded a network of Indian day and boarding schools to foster assimilation. These schools provided academic and vocational education while forbidding students from engaging in such Indian cultural activities as speaking Native languages and practicing Native religions.

Officials in Washington and Ottawa suppressed Plains Indian cultural practices in other ways as well. In Canada, the 1876 Indian Act (with subsequent amendments) outlawed traditional tribal and band governments and banned various religious and cultural practices such as the Sun Dance and Thirst Dance. In the United States, federal agents forced Native Americans to attend Christian services, to adopt "citizens" clothing and hairstyles, to follow only federally approved Indian leaders, and to abstain from such cultural practices as the Sun Dance and polygamy.

Cultural and Economic Adaptations

Native Americans did not passively accept such strictures, and they found many ways to resist. Sometimes such resistance led to violence, as when conflict with some Lakota Sioux over the Ghost Dance religion ended in the Wounded Knee Massacre in December 1890. Emerging in the late 1880s, the Ghost Dance religion anticipated the destruction of the Earth and the creation of a new world occupied by abundant game and deceased relatives. Many Lakotas, including Sitting Bull, embraced the Ghost Dance and began performing the requisite songs and dances. Some believed that certain "Ghost Shirts" would protect them from harm. Fearing that the dances portended an uprising, the Indian agent at Standing Rock Reservation ordered the arrest of Sitting Bull, who had remained a powerful advocate of Lakota resistance. During the arrest an intense fight ensued, and Indian policemen killed the respected leader. Fearing more violence, Miniconjou leader Big Foot and his band fled south to the Pine Ridge Reservation. There, on December 28, 1890, at Wounded Knee Creek, soldiers attempted to disarm the Indians, and gunfire was exchanged. Who pulled the trigger first remains unclear, but the army's superior firepower turned the encounter into a massacre: from 150 to 250 Sioux men, women, and children died, as did 25 soldiers. Still, the Ghost Dance continued to attract adherents from the Plains, including Oklahoma Kiowas and Comanches, Saskatchewan Sioux, and Wyoming Shoshones.

Some Plains Indians accepted at least some white ways and policies. Big Tree, a Kiowa war leader imprisoned for a time for his raiding activities, converted to Christianity and became a farmer on his Oklahoma allotment. Others resisted assimilation while adapting to the new world that was being thrust upon them. Omaha half-siblings Susette and Francis La Flesche attended white educational institutions and used their education to conduct a campaign to win public support for allowing the Poncas to return to their home in Nebraska. Susan La Flesche graduated from medical school (making her one of the few American women and the only Native American woman in the nineteenth century to do so) and used her training to treat her people.

Religion was a primary means of preserving cultural distinctiveness. Many Indians became involved with peyotism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Involving the ingestion of the peyote plant, peyotism is a syncretistic belief system that combines aspects of Christian and traditional Indian spirituality. A Caddo expression

of peyotism, the Big Moon ceremony (later known as Cross Fire ritual) incorporated Jesus Christ, the Bible, and other Christian elements.

Multitribal gatherings pointed toward new “pan-Indian” identities that coexisted with more discrete tribal identifications. Native peoples in the Plains came to share certain kinds of cultural display. The Grass Dance, originating with the Pawnees, became a regular part of the growing number of intertribal gatherings across the Plains. Native peoples in the United States and Canada got permission to perform the dance on their home reservations by billing it as a “tribute” to the nation on American Independence Day (July 4) or Canadian Dominion Day (July 1).

Economically, Plains Indians’ adaptations varied. The Osages and a few other tribes generated income from oil or other mineral resources. A growing number depended upon seasonal and wage labor. Some Indians reconciled wage labor with more traditional economic enterprises. Cheyenne women, for example, continued to produce moccasins for other Indians and non-Indians, just as they had since before Lewis and Clark. By the end of World War I Cheyennes and Arapahos served as seasonal agricultural laborers harvesting Oklahoma wheat. Many Sioux helped harvest potatoes in Nebraska. Plains peoples experimented with cattle ranching, which looked to be on the path to success until agents and other non-Indians pressured Indians to sell off their herds during World War I. The Gros Ventres, Pine Ridge Sioux, Comanches, and other Indian ranchers sold or leased much of their land to whites.

The Indian cattle industry temporarily fared better on the Canadian Prairies. In an effort to diversify Native economies, Ottawa officials encouraged the Prairie groups to become stock raisers by issuing large numbers of cattle to them. The cattle industry was well established on the Prairie reserves by 1900, but a long dry spell in the 1920s, together with extensive leasing of grazing lands to non-Indians, subsequently decreased the importance of ranching.

The Indian New Deal in the Plains

By the end of the 1920s many Americans had concluded that allotment and assimilation had not been successful. Nationally, the sale of surplus lands and allotments from 1887 to 1934 reduced the Indian’s land base by two-thirds, from 138 million to 52 million acres. Ironically, a policy designed to foster self-support produced dispossession and dependency instead. Such economic devastation undoubtedly helped account for Indians’ low incomes and high rates of infant mortality and disease.

The growing recognition of these failures led to a shift in U.S. Indian policy that once again changed the environment in which Indians operated. The new changes, like the old ones, created both opportunities and problems for Indians. In 1933 John Collier, a New York social worker and longtime critic of federal Indian policy, became the commissioner of Indian affairs. Collier believed that white society had become too individualistic and had much to learn from Native Americans’ community-oriented cultures. He came to office determined to reverse the assimilation policy and to restore an Indian economic base. Collier’s reforms, contained in the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), ended allotment, increased tribally owned land, and authorized tribes to organize constitutional governments empowered to negotiate with their federal, state, and local counterparts. The act also allowed greater access to