

Reference

A SELECTIVE TIMELINE OF AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS, POST-1865

(by Tracey Watts)

Source: <http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~watts/>

1884: The first of the **Religious Crimes Codes** was passed, forbidding traditional tribal religious practices.

1885: Congress transferred Native American **judicial power** to federal district courts. John Collier's 1934 plan proposed the creation of a Court of Indian Affairs, which would establish its own rules and could hear appeals from local tribal courts that would also be established. Judges from the court would be appointed regionally and would travel to that region, and rights such as trial by jury would be extended to the accused. Congress did not accept the proposal.

1887: **The Dawes Act**, or General Allotment Act, subdivided reservation land into parcels distributed to tribal members as follows: Each head of family would receive one-quarter of a section (120 acres); each single person over 18 or orphan child under 18 would receive one-eighth of a section (60 acres); and other single persons under 18 would receive one-sixteenth of a section (30 acres). The federal government, who opened the lands to white settlement, then purchased the remaining reservation lands.

Supervision of tribal lands soon became an important issue in the federal government, allowing for the growth of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, especially as approximately 90 million acres of land were taken from Native Americans between the passing of this act and the reform act of 1934. (read *One Thousand Million Acres* by Karen Ducheneaux)

Late 1880s: **The Ghost Dance** movement gained popularity among Native Americans. It was led by a Paiute Indian named Wovoka and promised the return of the buffalo, the return of dead ancestors, and the renewal of creation. (This dance is still practiced in Utah and Surrounding states.)

1890: Over 300 Minneconjou Sioux led by Big Foot, were massacred at **Wounded Knee** on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota while seeking safety from Army harassment. They were Ghost Dancers. (Wovoka, a Paiute, spread word of a ritual called the Ghost Dance. Tribes were ordered to stop dancing by the U.S. military or more Ghost Dancers would be killed. The Ghost Dance created fear in expansionists.)

1900s: Indians were **losing many of their resources** to the U.S. government, to businesses, and to individuals. Not only were they divested of their lands, but of their natural resources (oil, minerals, timber, etc.) as well. Work policies on some reservations failed to allow American Indians to use what natural resources they did have. For example, land better suited for logging was designated as

farmland by the government, and the Indians had to follow those rules. Hence they fell further and further behind the larger, prospering American economy. Native American poverty increased, as tribes remained dependent on government rations for survival. The situation continued to worsen.

1902: *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* ruled that **Congress had the highest power** to decide what would happen in Indian affairs. This meant that Congress would determine land rights and treaty rights. This seemed to be an injunction of treaty rights in itself – as a treaty is, by definition, an agreement *between independent nations*. This act assumed that there was only one independent nation now in charge of the other’s resources and rights.

1908: The **buffalo** were rounded up on the Flathead Reservation. Their population had been in decline for some time; by the 1880s there were only about 1,000 buffalo left. Today, you can visit 300 – 500 buffalo roaming at the National Bison Range on the reservation. It’s near Ravalli, MT. (Only one tourist has been gored there, rangers say.)

1910: People were **imagining Indians** in ridiculous ways. Arthur C. Parker wrote an article called “Lure of the Woods: Joys of Camp Life on an Indian Reservation: Put your troubles in your pipe: Be an Indian, forget work, go back to nature and true happiness.” Has he been keeping up with things? His ignorance may be indicative of a larger national sentiment. People had begun to romanticize American Indians by this point, because many non-Indians assumed that the American Indians were vanishing. Indeed, the American Indian population had been decimated, but the culture hadn’t died. The problem here is that non-Indians were locating American Indians in the past, as a dead culture, which they could romanticize as ideal, instead of learning about the real, present tense conditions of American Indians.

1911: Ishi, the “**last wild Indian,**” was discovered in California and taken to Berkeley, where he died in 1916.

1911: **The Society of American Indians** was founded as a reformist organization that supported assimilationist ideology. This way of thinking contended that absorbing American Indians into the more dominant American cultural lifestyle was the most beneficial way to solve problems. It was under this theory that children were sent to boarding school, and ceremonies, such as the Sun Dance, became prohibited. Also banned were tribal governments. U.S. policymakers, however, underestimated the power of tribal traditions, which persisted and undermined assimilationist efforts. – (These negative groups still exist today who would like American Indian rights to be dismantled.)

1912: The **Alaskan Native Brotherhood** was founded as a group that worked for civil rights, such as the right to vote and the right for public education. The Brotherhood began fighting a land case over the taking of the Tongass Forest in 1929, and then won the case (for a payment of 7.5 million dollars) in the 1950s.

1916: Jeannette Rankin of Montana became the **first woman** elected to the House of Representatives. This was four years before women had the right to vote. She was the only member of the House to vote against U.S. entry into WWI in 1917.}

{1917-18: The U.S. was involved in **WWI.**} – (Numerous American Indians fought for American in this war) (Wovoka offered to freeze the Atlantic Ocean to help stop this war.)

1918: The **Carlisle Indian Industrial School** closed. It had been running since 1879, under the motto of its founder, Richard Henry Pratt, “Kill the Indian and save the man.” Often, children were taken from their homes by reformers whose interests were to destroy the children’s links to their culture. Food deprivation and whippings were common punishments for children who chose to speak their languages. Only in 1990 did Congress pass the Native American Languages Act for the preservation and promotion of Indian languages.

1924: The **Indian Citizenship Act** was passed. The act allowed tribal members a sort of dual citizenship, granting full U.S. citizenship but stating, “such status does not infringe upon the rights to tribal and other property that Indians enjoy as members of their tribes.” In the language of the act, Indians were not to lose their U.S. civil rights because of tribal identity, nor were they to lose their tribal rights because of their American identity. However, the U.S. government has not always preserved this sort of sovereignty. Many states would still not allow American Indians to vote.

1927: Ella Cara Deloria, a Yankton Sioux, had finished her **education** at Columbia University and was working with Franz Boas to translate Sioux texts.

1927: Laurence Schmeckebier published *The Office of Indian Affairs*, a careful **analysis and criticism** of that bureau.

1928: Lewis Meriam published *The Problem of Indian Administration*, more commonly called the **Meriam Report**. It was perhaps not as well researched as Schmeckebier’s text, but it offered recommendations for some of the problems with the contemporary policies and got published in an election year, so it became more popular.

1930s: Native American **texts were being published** with greater frequency. John G. Neihardt’s *Black Elk Speaks* and D’Arcy McNickle’s *The Surrounded* are two of these.

1934: John Collier’s proposal for what became the 1934 **Indian Reorganization Act** outlined a plan intended to promote tribal self-government IRA constitutions. Collier proposed that tribes or tribal members could organize as a business and draw up a constitution and bylaws. However, Congress did not approve Collier’s plan. What did happen, though, included a sort of sneaky legal event: the final bill supposed *inherent* tribal power, so that Congress approved an act that did not *delegate* tribal power, but recognized it as a sovereign right. Collier had also sought other rights, many intending for the preservation of Indian lands. He sought to have allotted lands returned to the tribe upon a member’s death, a practice that would gradually work toward land consolidation. While Congress did not approve this proposal, it did terminate allotment and guarantee the return of surplus land to tribal control. The IRA also acquired land for landless Indians, developed a credit system for Indian economic development, gave tribal governments greater responsibility and powers of self-government, and preserved Indian land under the control of Indian nations. Goshute are a traditional tribal government and not IRA.

1941-45: During **WWII**, over 25,000 Native American men and women joined the services, and others at home participated in various ways. A group of Navajo created a code based on the Navajo language, which was never broken by the Japanese.

1944: The **National Congress of American Indians** was founded at a meeting in Denver, CO. The group formed to defend Native American civil rights and to promote the preservation of Indian cultures, reservations, and lands.

1949: The **Hoover Commission** suggested that federal aid and protection given to Indians should be cut. Many in Congress supported the idea, as Indian lands still contained resources of major interest to non-Native corporations.

1950s: The government began the **relocation** program, which aided Indians moving from reservations to urban areas, in the interest of assimilating Native Americans into mainstream American life. 35,000 Indians relocated by 1960, but one third returned to life on the reservation.

1953: Some states received the **power of jurisdiction** over reservation

1954-62: Congress adopted the **termination** policy, a plan to dissolve federal responsibility to Native Americans. What Utah Tribes were terminated? During this period some bands of the Paiute tribe were terminated but have been recognized again. Tribal sovereignty and health care could be sacrificed under this plan. Over 100 tribes were terminated during this time, and they lost U.S. protections and aid. The N.C.A.I. fought this policy, which was itself terminated during the Kennedy administration.

1961: The **National Indian Youth Council** formed, as an activist organization that challenged more traditional advocacy groups in the interest of Native American civil rights.

1966: The Navajo created the Rough Rock Demonstration School, the **first school** to be completely tribally controlled.

1967: The **Indian Claims Commission** gave 12.2 million dollars to 8 Sioux tribes as recompense for land divested of them through fraudulent treaties in the 1800s.

1968: LBJ addressed Congress about the problems suffered by Indians, and he recommended that termination be rejected as federal policy, in favor of **self-determination**. LBJ stressed freedom of choice for Native Americans regarding where they live, and he lobbied for the improvement of Native Americans' standards of living.

The next month, Congress passed the American Indian Civil Rights act, which gave Indians civil rights in relation to their own tribal authorities, just as the US constitution grants rights to citizens in relation to state and federal authorities. Not all tribes supported the act, as some feared it would change their traditional institutions.

1968: Dennis Banks and Russell Means founded the **American Indian Movement** (A.I.M.) in Minneapolis. The group was formed to improve the social conditions of urban Indians, doing so by arguing for improved social services and decreased police harassment.

1969: The Navajo nation opened Navajo Community College in Arizona. It was the **first modern Indian-run College**.

Also, N. Scott Momaday received a Pulitzer Prize for his novel *House Made of Dawn*. It was the **first Pulitzer** awarded to an American Indian.

Also, Dartmouth College in New Hampshire adopted a new **mascot** to replace the former Indian one, in response to student protest. Also, the **median income** for Indian families was \$5,832. The national average was \$9,590.

1969-71: American Indian Movement members **occupied Alcatraz** Island. They offered to buy the island from the U.S. for \$24 worth of beads.

1970: **Jane Fonda was arrested** with 13 Indians after trying to take over Fort Lawton, near Seattle; to us it was an Indian cultural center.

Also, Nixon approved the **Taos Land Bill**, which returned 48,000 acres of land to the Taos Pueblo. It was the first legislative act to return land to Indian ownership.

1971: The US census reported that the Indian **population had increased** by more than 50% since 1960.

1972: A.I.M. marched on Washington, D.C. in an effort called the **Trail of Broken Treaties**.

The group occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs building and presented a list of 20 civil rights demands.

Also, Stanford University dropped its Indian **mascot**.

President Nixon refuted termination and reaffirmed self-determination.

1973: **Wounded Knee II** occurred. 200 A.I.M. members returned to the site of the 1890 massacre, near Pine Ridge in South Dakota, where they held siege for 70 days in protest of the corrupt government of the Pine Ridge tribal chairman, Dick Wilson.

1975: The **Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act** increased tribal control over reservation institutions and allotted the funding necessary for the construction of public schools. This was an important act, as it strived to cut federal dependency.

1976: **Anna Mae Aquash** was killed. Aquash was an active leader in the A.I.M. movement whose death was eventually designated a homicide, but the case remains unsolved. Aquash is remembered as a powerful symbol of Native activism.

1978: The **AIRFA American Indian Religion Freedom Act** was passed. Although Indians had obtained formal U.S. citizenship in 1924, the practice of Native religions was not allowed until this time.

1980s: Native Americans worked to **gain authority** over their own resources and institutions that had been managed by the B.I.A. Called 638 contracting. They sought control of their own governments, resources, and education. Federal funding to reservations also declined.

1990: The **Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act** was passed. Perhaps most importantly, this allowed Indians to request that sacred items displayed in museums be returned to them. Ceremonial items, which had been subject to theft since