

## FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY VOCABULARY

**ASSIMILATION** The absorption of people from one culture into the dominant culture. Many federal government officials, including several presidents, felt that by leaving their native culture American Indians could become part of the dominant white society. This often led to policies that attempted to destroy Native American cultures and lifeways.

**RELOCATION** This term can refer to two different efforts by the federal government. The first, which occurred from the beginning of United States history through the nineteenth century, was an attempt to push Native Americans off of lands desired by non-Indian settlers, initially by moving them west and then by forcing them onto reservations. A later program in the twentieth century sought to move Native Americans off of reservations and into major cities throughout the western and midwestern United States with the goal of forcing them to assimilate into the dominant American culture.

**RESERVATION** Areas that are defined by treaties or other agreements between the federal government and a particular Indian tribe or tribes for the use of that group. Today, reservations serve as important land bases for the exercise of tribal economic and cultural sovereignty.

**SOVEREIGNTY** The ability, right, and power of a governing body to control its territory, and the actions therein, free from external influence.

**TREATY** A contract or binding agreement between two nations. From 1778–1881, the United States signed treaties with individual groups of Native Americans. These treaties usually dealt with the transfer of land to the United States in exchange for certain rights and/or goods, including other land, monetary compensation, and/or continued rights to the use of land for hunting, fishing, and other practices. Throughout the nineteenth century the United States consistently failed to fulfill its treaty obligations to Indian nations.