

# A Short History of the U.S. Government's Relationship with Native Americans

Relations between Native Americans and the U.S. government have been full of tension. The history began when Native Americans extended an uneasy welcome to the first European settlers. They worried that the newcomers would take their land, and many did.

Many tribes sided with the British during the Revolutionary War. After the United States won its independence, the government was free to take Native American lands. It signed treaties with the tribes. These agreements defined the boundaries of tribal lands. They also stated how much the government would pay the tribes for taking their land.

## Unauthorized Treaties Meaningless Treaties

Sometimes, the representatives of Native American tribes who signed the treaties were not authorized to do so. William McIntosh was the chief of the Muskogee-Creek Nation. He signed the Treaty of Indian Springs in 1825. The agreement gave away nearly all of the tribe's land in the state of Georgia. The tribe's members said they had not authorized McIntosh to sign it, and later killed him.

In 1903, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Congress could override the land treaties. Many treaties made before then, however, remain in force. One is the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1868, which was signed by the U.S. government and the Sioux Nation. In it, the government pledged that the Great Sioux Reservation would be for the "undisturbed use" of the tribe. The land included the Black Hills, a small mountain range in western South Dakota that is holy to the Sioux.

Neither side ever fully obeyed the treaty, however. When gold was discovered in the Black Hills, the United States tried to buy back the land. The Sioux rejected the offer, resulting in the Black Hills War. One of the war's most famous battles happened along the Little Bighorn River. General George A. Custer led a group of soldiers against the Sioux. Custer and his men were killed, and later the battle became known as Custer's Last Stand.

The United States continued its battle against the Sioux until reclaiming the Black Hills in 1877. In 1923, the Sioux sued, saying that the land had been unlawfully taken. Sixty years later, the Supreme Court agreed. It ruled that the government had to pay the tribe for the land. As of 2018, the amount due is around \$1 billion. The tribe has refused to accept the money, however, because it is still seeking return of the land.

## Taking the Land Gov't Laws controlling Natives

In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, which allowed the government to remove Native Americans from their tribal land and settle them elsewhere. The main targets were tribes in the Southeast, such as the Cherokee. Resettlement was supposed to be voluntary. However, it turned out not to be. Thousands of Native Americans were forced from their homes and sent west of the Mississippi River. The forced relocation became known as the Trail of Tears.

In 1887, the U.S. government passed another law called the General Allotment Act. It let the government divide tribal land into small lots for members. The goal was to pressure Native Americans into becoming farmers or ranchers. Lawmakers thought this would help tribal members fit in with society. The government bought back land that was not used and sold it to white settlers. Native Americans lost a lot of land.

A new approach was undertaken with the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. The law stopped the dividing of tribal land into small lots. It also ended the sale of Native American land. After World War II, however, some lawmakers avored closing reservations. A number were closed, including one belonging to the Menominee tribe in Wisconsin.

The civil rights movement in the 1960s influenced government policy with Native Americans. In 1975, it passed the Indian Self-Determination Act. This law allowed tribes to self-govern and manage more of their affairs independently.

In 1987, the Supreme Court ruled on casinos operating on tribal land. It said that states cannot oversee them. This decision led to a new law, which governs casinos on reservations.

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Location.	Acres.	Average Price per Acre.	Location.	Acres.	Average Price per Acre.
Colorado	5,211.21	\$7.27	Oklahoma	34,664.00	\$19.14
Idaho	17,013.00	24.85	Oregon	1,020.00	15.43
Kansas	1,684.50	33.45	South Dakota	120,445.00	16.53
Montana	11,034.00	9.86	Washington	4,879.00	41.37
Nebraska	5,641.00	36.65	Wisconsin	1,069.00	17.00
North Dakota	22,610.70	9.93	Wyoming	865.00	20.64

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<b>CALIFORNIA:</b> Hoopa. COLORADO: Ignacio. IDAHO: Lapwai. KANSAS: Horton. Nadeau.	<b>MINNESOTA:</b> Onigum. <b>MONTANA:</b> Crow Agency. <b>NEBRASKA:</b> Macy. Santee. Winnebago.	<b>NORTH DAKOTA:</b> Fort Totten. Fort Yates. <b>OKLAHOMA:</b> Anadarko. Cantonment. Colony. Darlington. Muskogee. Pawnee.	<b>OKLAHOMA—Cos.</b> Sac and Fox Agency. Shawnee. Wyandotte. <b>OREGON:</b> Klamath Agency. Pendleton. Roseburg. Siletz.	<b>SOUTH DAKOTA:</b> Cheyenne Agency. Crow Creek. Greenwood. Lower Brule. Pine Ridge. Rosebud. Sisseton.	<b>WASHINGTON:</b> Fort Simcoe. Fort Spokane. Tekoa. Tatalip. <b>WISCONSIN:</b> Oneida.
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