

American Indians

Native Americans have had an important part in American history. Such figures as Pocohantas, Geronimo, and Crazyhorse have captured the attention of popular America. These figures, however, are only a small sample of important Native American figures.

Throughout the short history of the United States and the colonies, Native American people have suffered mistreatment from the government of the United States and also from individual settlers in the American colonies and in the American west. Under the constitution of the United States, native American tribes were identified as independent nations, that can rule themselves and make their own laws. However, they were placed on reservations much smaller than the land they were used to inhabiting. The reservations were located on the least valuable land that could be found, therefore, many tribes did not have a means to support themselves with food and other necessities. So they became dependent upon the United States government for money and support.

The tribes, which were previously governed by chief and elders, now were governed by tribal governments. This is only one example of how the United States government forced their own ideas upon the Native American population. The US government did not understand that the Native American population did not have the same values and ideas as the white settlers. They had their own belief systems. Tribal governments were a huge adjustment for Native Americans. Another way that the thought systems of the US government and the Native American population have been in conflict, is over the idea of capitalism. The US government, as we know, is centered on money and property. Native American thought does not include ideas such as this. An example of this struggle can be illustrated in the Black Hills area, which was sacred land to the Lakota Sioux, once gold was discovered there. The US government tried to pay the Native American tribe \$20 million for the land in the Black Hills. The tribe refused the money, because they wanted the land back. The US government was surprised by the actions of the Lakota Sioux. In fact, this struggle surrounding the Black Hills is still going on today.

In recent Native American history, many Native Americans have taken a stand against the federal government, seeking rights and property that were stolen from them in the past. These figures have created an arena for modern Native American political figures. Another way that Native Americans are influencing the public and gaining support is through influential writers such as Leslie Marmon Silko and others. Silko deals with political issues in her writing as well as revealing the emotions of the Native

Americans.

Since the discovery of the American continent, Native Americans have been involved in a struggle between European settlers and themselves. The ideas of these two cultures conflict in almost every way. Without patience and understanding on both sides, these conflicts may never be resolved.

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