

Chapter 10

Who and What Are American Indians?

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American Indians today are descendants of the pre-Columbian inhabitants of the Americas. The term "Indian" was a misnomer by Christopher Columbus, who thought he had reached Asia. The various groups living in the Americas when Columbus arrived were culturally and linguistically different from each other, did not see themselves as sharing a common identity, and did not share a common culture. Together they are considered the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas, and they lived by farming, hunting, fishing, and/or gathering various wild plants. Some lived in larger cities, as in the Aztec and Inca Empires; some in small adobe pueblos, as they still do in current-day New Mexico and Arizona; and some led a nomadic existence.

American Indian cultures, each group's distinctive way of life, were built around the land they lived on, the sustenance it provided them, and the many different narratives they possessed to explain their origins and the world in which they lived. While archaeologists point to a distant Asian ancestry for American Indians, their own traditional religious beliefs confirm origins in the Americas, although sometimes indicating a long history of migration. The vast diversity among the original inhabitants of the Americas is beyond the human mind to fully know, so people simplify things to understand them. In that process, they can dehumanize people as they focus on a few superficial or exotic differences that separate

different groups, with skin color being one of the most historically prevalent of these simplifications. In addition, media often portrayed the physical characteristics of nonwhite races in an exaggerated fashion that made them seem less human.

Because Indians shared some superficial characteristics, especially skin color, that made them look different from people in Europe, Asia, and Africa, they were grouped in the common mind and by early scientists as a separate race of human beings. However, modern genetic studies show that these differentiating characteristics are superficial and that the bulk of genetic variation is between individuals, not between so-called races. It is culture, not race, that divides us as we speak different languages, practice different religions, eat different foods, dress differently, and so on. Racism is a form of ethnocentrism, the preference that individuals have for people who are similar to them in looks and culture. Ethnocentrism leads to a devaluing of people who look and/or behave differently. However, while racial and ethnic classifications have no biological/genetic basis, this does not mean that they do not affect people's lives. Laws in the United States, such as those that supported slavery and segregation and banned interracial intermarriage, have greatly affected the lives of many people. In Latin America, Spanish *encomienda* laws tied Indians to specific lands, where they were forced to work for the benefit of colonists. In addition, many countries have official religions and/or languages, giving preference to one religion and/or one or more "national" languages. Religions and languages of ethnic and racial minorities in these cases can be devalued or even banned.

DIVERSITY

To understand the great cultural diversity of the pre-Columbian inhabitants of the Americas, one only needs to look at the languages they spoke and still speak. Linguists estimate that 1,000 different languages were spoken before the arrival of Columbus, with around 300 of them in North America. They divide North American indigenous languages into six or more major language phyla (large related groups of languages). Languages in different phyla can be as different as English is from Chinese. Languages included in a specific language phyla, and even in the smaller language families, these phyla are often mutually unintelligible languages. The phyla include Eskimo-Aleut languages, such as Inuit and Yupik and the Aleut family in the far north, and Na-Dené or Eyak-Athabaskan languages, with over 40 Athabaskan languages extending from Alaska to Apache and Navajo (Diné) in the southwestern United States. Salishan languages are spoken by Pacific coastal groups from British Columbia to Oregon as well as Flathead, Kalispel, and Spokane in Idaho and Montana. Cochimi-Yuman languages are spoken in California and Arizona and include Havasupai, Walapai, Yavapai, and Mojave.

Aztec-Tanoan languages include Uto-Aztecan, one of the largest language families spoken from Oregon to Panama, and also include Comanche, Shoshoni, Hopi, and Nahuatl (the language of the Aztecs) as well as the Kiowa-Tanoan family. Macro-Siouan languages include the Siouan family of Assiniboine, Catawaba, Dakota, Ho Chunk (Winnebago), Crow, and Mandan; the Iroquoian family, including Cherokee, Seneca, and Mohawk; and the Caddoan family, including Caddoan, Pawnee, and Wichita. Macro-Algonkian languages are made up of the Algonquian family spread across North America and include Arapaho, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Cree, and Ojibwa and the Gulf Branch families, including Alabama, Chicksaw, Choctaw, and Seminole.¹ In addition, there are isolate languages, such as Zuni spoken by a Pueblo Indian tribe in New Mexico, that resist classification into the larger American Indian language groups. While there have been attempts to link some American Indian languages to current European and Asian languages, including Welsh and Japanese, these efforts have been rejected for lack of compelling evidence by most linguists.²

In 1999, James Estes listed 154 indigenous languages still spoken in the United States: Navajo, having the most speakers with 148,530, followed by Ojibwa with 35,000 speakers, Dakota with 20,355, Choctaw with 17,890, Apache with 12,693, and Cherokee with 11,905. Seven languages were listed with only 1 speaker left. They are Coos and Kalapuya in Oregon, Eyak in Alaska, and Coast Miwok, Plains Miwok, Pomo, and Serrano in California.³

Linguists who study American Indian languages see the many languages of today as evolving from one or more early languages that began to differ as groups repeatedly divided and went their separate ways, populating the Americas. Some linguists attempt to roughly date when separations occurred by the amount of difference between languages. It is difficult to date these hypothesized separations. For instance, some groups are more ready to borrow words from their neighbors' languages than others. However, the vast differences that occur even in one language phylum, or even one language family, indicate that the people who spoke these languages have lived in the Americas for many thousands of years.

Many speakers of American Indian languages see them as very important, and "people from tribes who have few remaining speakers" can be "perceived as less authentically Indian."⁴ The connection between language and culture and how language shapes the way people understand the world they live in has received much discussion. Many see language as embodying culture. This point of view is expressed by a Cheyenne elder:

Cheyennes who are coming toward us are being denied by us the right to acquire that central aspect of what it means to be Cheyenne because we are not teaching them to talk Cheyenne. When they reach us, when they are born, they are going to be relegated to being mere husks, empty shells. They are going to look Cheyenne, have Cheyenne

parents but they won't have the language which is going to make them truly Cheyenne.⁵

Some tribal members question if one can be truly Indian if one does not speak one's heritage tribal language because of its close tie to their traditional culture. However, fewer and fewer Indians in the United States and Canada are speaking those traditional languages because of English-only schooling and the breakdown of isolation as reservation roads were paved and mass media, especially movies and television, became readily available.

In Arizona, the Pascua Yaqui Tribal Language Policy states that "our ancient language is the foundation of our cultural and spiritual heritage."⁶ However, other tribes say what "they really want to teach is identity, and language [only] serves as part of that identity."⁷ Some tribes, including the Hopi and Mono tribes, see language as less important. You are a tribal member not "by virtue of speaking an ancestral language but by participating in Native activities, including festivals and funerals, and by assisting their family and friends within the group."⁸

Today in Canada there are some 200 mostly small Indian reserves where only "status" Indians can own land. In the United States there are more than 550 federally recognized Indian tribes on 310 Indian reservations, mostly small and in the West because of Indian removal. The largest is the 27,425-square-mile Navajo Reservation in northeastern Arizona, southeastern Utah, and northwestern New Mexico. When reservations in the United States and reserves in Canada were first set up as a system of apartheid, often by treaty in the 19th century, Indians needed to get passes from government-appointed Indian agents to leave. That era is now long gone, and today more Indians live off Indian reservations and reserves than live on them. More people identify themselves as American Indians in New York City in the 2010 census than in the whole state of Montana, which has seven Indian reservations.⁹

The tremendous diversity of Indian tribes can be seen in museums across the continent that are full of pre-Columbian artifacts as well as the works of contemporary Indian artists. Some of particular note include the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma; the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona; the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver; and the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma in Norman.

COLONIZATION

European immigrants often treated the various indigenous groups populating the Americas in the same way, creating a common experience of colonization that set them apart. This common experience included

genocide, where men, women, and children were killed, and ethnocide, where ethnocentric colonists sought to forcefully assimilate Indians into European cultures. Virgin ground epidemics, the trauma of forced removal (ethnic cleansing) from their lands, and forced assimilation, including outlawing religious practices such as the Plains Indian Sun Dance and the Northwest Indian Potlatch, contributed to a sharp decline in population. Especially traumatic were the forced removal (ethnic cleansing) of southeastern U.S. Indians over the Trail of Tears to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) in the 1830s and the Navajo Long Walk in the 1860s, during which thousands of tribal members died. Forced English-only assimilationist schooling in the United States and Canada further disrupted American Indian communities. A stark statistic on this cultural and linguistic disruption comes from a study of data from 150 First Nations communities in British Columbia that found that communities with less conversational knowledge of their native language had suicide rates six times greater than those with more knowledge.¹⁸

It was not until 1978 that President Jimmy Carter signed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (PL No. 95-341, 92 Stat. 469). This act gave Indians freedom to worship through ceremonial and traditional rites, including the use and possession of objects considered sacred. And it was not until 1990 that the Native American Languages Act (PL 101-477) made it the policy of the U.S. government to promote, preserve, and protect American Indian languages.

One common experience of different Indian tribes was their youths being mixed together in missionary- and government-operated boarding schools. In addition, intermarriage helped to create a common Pan-Indian identity. Because of interracial as well as intertribal mixing, who can be called an American Indian and how they are legally identified is a complex matter. Intergroup mixing has been going on since time immemorial, and mixing with non-Indians has occurred since Columbus's sailors set foot in the Americas. Fergus Bordewich (1996) notes that in 1980, half of all Indians were married to non-Indians.¹⁹ This race mixing went on throughout the years despite racial prejudice and antimiscegenation laws, with some of these laws dating back to the 17th century. It was not until 1967 that the remaining 16 antimiscegenation laws were struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in its *Loving vs. Virginia* decision. One of the first laws against intermarriage was passed in Virginia in 1661. Although mostly aimed at people with African ancestry, even sometimes one drop of African blood, antimiscegenation laws also often included American Indians and other nonwhites.²⁰

In the United States today, tribal membership is determined by each tribe using its own definition of what qualifies someone for membership. Enrollment in the Cherokee tribe, the largest in the United States, is based on being able to trace one's ancestry to someone on the Dawes Final Rolls

of Citizens of the Cherokee Nation that was compiled between 1899 and 1906. The racial intermixing of the Cherokee tribe can be seen in that its school for girls (which opened in 1851) served only tribal members, although some had as little as 1/128th Cherokee blood. Less than 10 percent of the students were full bloods, and one-third of the students were 1/16th Cherokee or less. An English-only assimilationist education was provided in this school.¹³ For the Navajos, the second largest tribe in the United States, tribal enrollment is based on being able to prove at least one-fourth Navajo ancestry. While the United States has relinquished control over who can be a member of a given Indian tribe to the tribal groups, its Bureau of Indian Affairs in the U.S. Department of the Interior still maintains a requirement of one-fourth or more of Indian ancestry to participate in some of its programs.

The U.S. government's Indian Health Service (IHS) provides free medical service in hospitals and clinics across Indian Country and requires patients to be members of a federally recognized Indian tribe. In the United States, Indians living and working on their tribe's reservation have to pay federal income taxes, but they do not have to pay state income taxes and are exempt from state sales taxes for purchases made on their reservation. There is a vast field of Indian law dealing with Indian rights, including the right to religious freedom, exemption from state taxation, and tribal sovereignty.

There have been cases of ethnic fraud where someone claims Indian heritage with no proof in order to take advantage of programs designed for American Indians, such as IHS medical care and affirmative action at universities and other institutions trying to increase diversity among their employees and, in the case of universities, also among the student body. In addition, The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 (PL 101-644) is a truth-in-advertising law prohibiting misrepresentation in selling American Indian and Alaska Native arts and crafts products. It is illegal in the United States to sell any art or craft product that falsely suggests it is Indian produced or a product of a particular U.S. Indian tribe.

CITIZENSHIP AND SOVEREIGNTY

When the U.S. Army tried to force Standing Bear, a Ponca chief, to return to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), he renounced his tribal affiliation and successfully argued in a U.S. district court in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1870 that Native Americans are "persons within the meaning of the law" and have the right of habeas corpus.¹⁴ In addition to schooling, the U.S. government promoted the cultural transformation from tribal membership to individualism and U.S. citizenship through the General Allotment Act of 1887 (24 Stat. 388, ch. 119, 25 USCA 331). This act was designed to break up tribal communal landholdings into small separate

farmsteads, with "surplus land" being sold to non-Indians. Millions of acres of Indian lands were sold off, further impoverishing Indians. In 1924 Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act (43 Stat. 253, ante, 420), making Indians U.S. citizens, but many, as with African Americans of the time, often still could not vote in elections.

In 1934, the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act (PL 73-383) that ended the allotment of remaining tribal lands on Indian reservations and provided a framework for tribal self-governments. Tribal members could elect a tribal council or business committee. These tribal governments set up tribal courts and police forces. A major legislative victory for the policy of Indian self-government in the United States was the passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act of 1975 (PL 93-638), which provided a way for Indian tribes to contract for or get grants to operate schools and other services previously administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.⁵³ However, the bureau still operates some Indian schools and police forces.

After World War II there was an effort by the U.S. Congress to terminate Indian reservations "to set Indians free" and make them just the same as other U.S. citizens. Unfortunately, the result was further impoverishment for many members of the few tribes that accepted termination. A decade later these tribes, less the land they had lost, were "unterminated." In the 1960s there was a reaction to termination and a move toward a government policy of self-determination, which today includes the right of tribes to determine their own membership. In neighboring Canada, Indian bands gained control over their membership in 1985.⁵⁴

A downside in the United States to sovereignty has been large-scale disenrollment of members of some tribes that are more prosperous because they run gambling casinos. These tribes make per capita payments to their members, and by cutting tribal membership, payments are increased for the remaining members. Gabriel S. Galanda and Ryan D. Dreveskracht declared in an *Arizona Law Review* article that "Tribal disenrollment is now of epidemic proportions."⁵⁵ However, large tribes, such as the Navajos and Cherokees, that do not provide per capita payments to their members have few if any dis-enrollments and make it relatively easy for anyone meeting membership requirements to enroll.

Starting with the short-lived Society of American Indians founded in 1911, members of various tribes started working together to let their views be known to the U.S. government. In 1944 the National Congress of American Indians was formed, which still operates today to give voice to American Indian concerns. The American Indian Movement (AIM) was founded in 1968; its militant demand for Indian rights somewhat followed the demands of the Black Panther and Brown Beret groups. However, AIM and other Indian groups usually focused on treaty rights and their rights as the original inhabitants of the Americas rather than on civil

rights. Treaty rights are based on the provisions of hundreds of treaties negotiated between tribes and the U.S. government before Congress ended treaty making with Indian tribes in 1871.

In a special message to Congress on Indian affairs in 1970, President Richard Nixon articulated a policy of Indian self-determination:

The story of the Indian in America is something more than the record of the white man's frequent aggression, broken agreements, intermittent remorse and prolonged failure. It is a record also of endurance, of survival, of adaptation and creativity in the face of overwhelming obstacles. It is a record of enormous contributions to this country—to its art and culture, to its strength and spirit, to its sense of history and its sense of purpose.

It is long past time that the Indian policies of the Federal government began to recognize and build upon the capacities and insights of the Indian people. Both as a matter of justice and as a matter of enlightened social policy, we must begin to act on the basis of what the Indians themselves have long been telling us. The time has come to break decisively with the past and to create the conditions for a new era in which the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions.¹⁹

Nixon appointed Louis Bruce, a Mohawk-Sioux founder and executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, as his commissioner of Indian affairs.

IMAGES OF AMERICAN INDIANS

A few Europeans had positive views of the people they met. For example, Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas wrote that "God created these simple people without evil and without guile. They are the most obedient and faithful to their natural lords and to the Christians they serve. They are the most submissive, peaceful, and virtuous. Nor are they quarrelsome, rancorous, quarrelous, or vengeful. . . . They neither possess nor desire to possess worldly wealth. Surely these people would be the most blessed in the world if only they worshipped the true God."²⁰ However, the more popular view of Europeans was negative, seeing them as naked heathen savages. In 1950 Spanish humanist, philosopher, and theologian Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda wrote that "They were making war continuously and ferociously against each other with such rage that they considered victory worthless if they did not satisfy their monstrous hunger with the flesh of their enemies."²⁰

In James Fenimore Cooper's classic 1826 novel *The Last of the Mohicans* and in many other novels and movies, the Indian allies of the fur trappers

and settlers are heroic and noble Indians—other Indians are villains. Herman Melville in his 1857 less simplistic novel *The Confidence-Man* described how settlers in the American West were brought up with “histories of Indian lying, Indian theft, Indian double-dealing, Indian fraud and perfidy, Indian want of conscience, Indian blood-thirstiness, Indian diabolism and an Indian is to be hated.”²¹ The editor of the *Kearny Herald* in Nebraska gave an example of this attitude in an 1866 editorial, writing that Indians “are destitute of all promptings of human nature, having no respect for word or honor.”²² Even into the 1960s signs could be found in store windows in towns bordering Indian reservations that read “No Indians and dogs allowed.”²³

Western cowboy and Indian novels and movies often featured Indians attacking wagon trains and threatening white women, although sometimes they also portrayed Indians more sympathetically as victims of evil white land grabbers. Popular author Zane Grey’s 1925 novel *The Vanishing American* featured a boarding school-educated Navajo Indian who marries a female white teacher. However, when the novel was made into a silent film the same year, the ending was changed—with the hero dying rather than marrying a white woman. Interestingly, in the film the white U.S. government Indian agent is portrayed as a corrupt stealer of Indian land.

There are thousands of books with American Indian characters who shape how people view American Indians. Some contain highly objectionable stereotypes, including some classics. For example, in Mark Twain’s 1876 classic *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, the villain is “Injun Joe”—a “murderin’ half-breed” who tortures women.²⁴ In Laura Ingalls Wilder’s 1935 *Little House on the Prairie*, “two naked, wild [Indian] men” who are “tall, thin, fierce-looking” with eyes that “were black and still and glittering, like snake’s eyes” visit the Ingalls’ homestead.²⁵ The fact that these men just visit and do no harm does not take away from the negative description of them. Books by authors who lived on the frontier and had extensive contacts with Indians (such as Mari Sandoz’s 1961 *These Were the Sioux*) provide positive images of Indians in contrast to authors who often had little or no contact with indigenous peoples.

Too often images of Indians are one-dimensionally positive or negative. The reality, or even the perception, of continuous long-term discrimination has led to the development of an oppositional identity among some Indians and other racial or ethnic minorities to the point where “what is depicted as the culture of native peoples represents the absolute opposite of what is thought of as ‘Western’ culture—it is the *Whiteman’s shadow*.”²⁶ At one pole is a modern version of the noble savage as the ecological Indian who takes care of the environment, while non-Indians desecrate Mother Earth (or some other planet, as in the very popular 2009 movie *Avatar*) with pollution.²⁷

Pre-1492 American Indians can be portrayed as living in an idyllic Garden of Eden without war and violence until the evil snake of the white

man entered.²⁸ A contrasting view presents a hell where some missionaries claimed that Indians spoke the "devil's language," all sorts of savagery was practiced, and life was "nasty, brutish, and short."²⁹ An example of the debate over what Indians were like is the one over scalping. Good evidence exists that some tribes practiced scalping before the arrival of Europeans, but colonists introduced the practice of paying bounties for Indian scalps. The English, on the other hand, took not only the scalps in their subjugation of the Irish but also the whole head.³⁰

Neither of these extreme images of Indians are supported by evidence. As Fergus Bordewich writes in *Killing the White Man's Indian*,

imagining that we see "the Indians," we often see little more than the distorted reflection of our own fears, fancies, and wistful longings. Meanwhile, live Indians are, in a sense, our national nightmare, figments of a guilty imagination, . . . reminders of a history that we would prefer not to remember and confusing our fantasies with real-life demands.³¹

Bordewich goes on to write that "Americans still prefer fictional Indians to real human beings."³²

RACE SCIENCE

At the start of the 19th century, the westward expansion by the United States was seen as the spread of democracy. By the 1850s it was seen, according to Reginald Horsman, as a superior race of American Anglo-Saxons bringing "good government, commercial prosperity, and Christianity to the American continents and to the world."³³ According to Horsman, white Americans came to view their country as "a white Anglo-Saxon republic; other races would be absorbed within the existing racial mass while non-white races would be rigorously excluded from any equal participations as citizens."³⁴ Indians constituted an inferior race blocking progress and would not and should not survive, hence the popular term "vanishing Indian" in the 1800s. Mexicans were often lumped in with Indians in this racist narrative. The genetic inferiority of Indians became a rationalization for ethnic cleansing. Many tribes living in the southeastern United States had their lands taken away and were forcefully removed to Indian Territory, now Oklahoma.

During the first half of the 18th century the "scientists" of the day disputed the religious idea of all people being descendants of Adam and Eve and found evidence that Indians and other nonwhite races were separate creations. The influential American scientist Samuel Morton studied the shape of skulls and meticulously measured them and, in the process, made systematic errors.³⁵ In *Crania Americana*, published in 1839, Morton

found that "In their mental character the Americans are averse to cultivation, and slow in acquiring knowledge; restless, revengeful, and fond of war, and wholly destitute of maritime adventure."⁸ However, further on in the same book he wrote that

It is usual to charge the Indians with treachery: but in most instances it will be found that they have only retorted the perfidiousness that has been heaped upon them by others. The annals of Indian history are ample evidence of this fact. A system of encroachment and oppression has been practised upon them since the first landing of Europeans on the shores of America: their lands have been seized upon the most frivolous pretenses, and they have had no redress at the hand of the white man: wars have been fomented among them to procure their mutual destruction; and when they have been weakened by the conflict, the common enemy has stepped in and seized upon their possessions. . . . [E]very art that cupidity could devise has been put in practice to deprive them of liberty and life. Is it surprising that a people thus oppressed should retaliate on their oppressors? Or shall we stigmatise them as treacherous when they have received so much treachery at our hands?⁹

Still, Morton found that

The intellectual faculties of this great family appear to be of a decidedly inferior cast when compared with those of the Caucasian or Mongolian races. They are not only averse to the restraints of education, but for the most part incapable of a continued process of reasoning on abstract subjects. Their minds seize with avidity on simple truths, while they at once reject whatever requires investigation and analysis. . . . Even in cases where they have received an ample education, and have remained for many years in civilized society, they lose none of their innate love of their own national usages, which they have almost invariably resumed when chance has left them to choose for themselves.¹⁰

By the 1850s, Horsman notes, "America's racial theorists were explaining the enslavement of blacks, the disappearance of Indians, and the defeat of the Mexicans in a manner that reflected no discredit on the people of the United States."¹¹ Sloppy science was used as a rationalization for prejudice and dispossession.

SCHOOLING FOR ASSIMILATION

Indians were often seen by European immigrants as savage heathens to be converted to Christianity and civilized. Indians were often quick to

adapt technology such as guns and metal knives and cookware but were much more reluctant to give up their religions, languages, and ways of life. Efforts to assimilate Indians into the dominant Euro-American culture often met with resistance. An Indian boarding school teacher remembered that the tribe she worked with had "a universal and decided aversion to using the English language," as it was "the tongue of their despised conquerors."⁴⁰ Schools for Indian students, even today, can be seen as places for becoming white.⁴¹ Albert H. Kneale, looking back on a 36-year career with the Indian Bureau that began in 1899, noted that

Every tribe with which I have associated is imbued with the idea that it is superior to all other peoples. Its members are thoroughly convinced of their superiority not alone over members of all other tribes but over the whites as well. . . . I have never known an Indian who would consent to being changed into a white man even were he convinced that such a change could readily be accomplished.⁴²

When he started teaching for the U.S. government's Indian Bureau (later renamed the Bureau of Indian Affairs) in 1899, Kneale found that "the Indian Bureau, at that time, always went on the assumption that any Indian custom was, per se, objectionable, whereas the customs of whites were the ways of civilization."⁴³ In contrast, John Wesley Powell, the first director of the U.S. government's Bureau of Ethnology, emphasized in a 1896 speech titled "The Need of Studying the Indian in Order to Teach Him" the necessity of meeting Indians as equals and for teachers to first be students learning about Indians and working to win over their elders. He noted the importance of understanding Indian customs before interfering with them, remarking that too often teachers began by affronting Indians and "unintelligently opposing the tribal beliefs and usages."⁴⁴ In regard to religion, Powell declared

that so few Americans yet realize that of all the people on this continent, including even ourselves, the most profoundly religious, if by religion is meant fidelity to teachings and observations that are regarded as sacred, are the American Indians, especially wherever still unchanged from their early condition, and this deeply religious feeling of theirs might, if properly appreciated, be made use of, not weakened or destroyed by premature opposition.⁴⁵

From the very first contacts, Christian missionaries worked to convert Indians to Christianity, often working at cross-purposes, as they not only saw Indian religions as the devil's but also saw other Christian denominations as, at best, misguided—if not also actively in league with the devil. The various Protestant denominations disputed among themselves as

well as with Catholics. One example of missionary efforts was a small school for "heathens" opened in Connecticut in 1817 with native Hawaiian, Cherokee, and Choctaw students. However, the school was forced to close a decade later after two of the Cherokee students married local white women.⁴⁶ The school's founders, like many evangelical Christians, thought that Indians and other non-Christians would rush to embrace Christianity so they could go to Heaven once they were introduced to it. Their goal was to convert the whole world to Christianity as part of bringing Christ's second coming. Some Indians did convert, but many others resisted.

One of the most famous educators of American Indians was U.S. Army officer Richard Henry Pratt, assigned to take the Indians held for the worst Indian war crimes from Indian Territory to Fort Marion, Florida. At Fort Marion Pratt got local white women to volunteer to teach his prisoners and advocated their release back to Indian Territory. When that release was accomplished, Pratt convinced some of the younger prisoners to further their education at Hampton Institute in 1878 (a school for former slaves in Virginia that was willing to take them in). African American educator Booker T. Washington in his classic autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, wrote:

On going to Hampton, I took up my residence in a building with about seventy-five Indian youths. I was the only person in the building who was not a member of their race. . . . I know that the average Indian felt himself above the white man, and, of course, he felt himself far above the Negro, largely on account of the fact of the Negro having submitted to slavery—a thing which the Indian would never do. The Indians, in the Indian Territory, owned a large number of slaves during the days of slavery. . . . I found that they were about like any other human beings; that they responded to kind treatment and resented ill-treatment. . . .

I have often wondered if there is a white institution in this country whose students would have welcomed the incoming of more than a hundred companions of another race in the cordial way that the black students at Hampton welcomed the red ones.⁴⁷

While Indians continued to attend Hampton for several decades after this first group, Pratt did not want American Indians to be grouped with Negroes and suffer the same prejudice. He successfully lobbied the U.S. government to set up the first off-reservation government boarding school for Indians in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1879. Pratt was in charge of the school, on detached duty from the army. One of the reasons he chose Carlisle as a location for his schools is because the local Quakers, Moravians, and Mennonites exhibited less racial prejudice than other groups. Pratt saw nothing of value in American Indian cultures and

promoted an assimilationist, English-only education. However, he was not a racist and felt that Indians could be equal to whites and even intermarry with them. As more boarding schools were established to assimilate American Indians, these schools were instrumental in breaking down tribal divisions as students from different tribes lived, studied, worked, and learned English together and even intermarried. As different tribes received similar treatment, they came to identify themselves as having similar goals.

Time and again government officials have overestimated the draw of "white civilization" on colonized people, including Indians, and the ease of assimilating them. It was often thought that if Indians were not racially inferior, they could be "civilized" by putting them in boarding schools for a few years.⁴⁶ This optimism was based partly on the apparent success of students at Carlisle. In 1885 the Indian Bureau's superintendent of Indian schools, John H. Oberly, predicted optimistically:

If there were a sufficient number of reservation boarding-school-buildings to accommodate all the Indian children of school age, and these building could be filled and kept filled with Indian pupils, the Indian problem would be solved within the school age of the Indian child now six years old.⁴⁷

Oberly complained that Indian agents were selecting inappropriate textbooks and called for the publication of a "series of uniform Indian school text-books" to be printed by the Government Printing Office. These textbooks would not "on one page represent the Indian as a monster, and on the next page represent him as a hero of romance."⁴⁸ While no textbook series like the one Oberly advocated was ever written, beginning in 1966, with Rough Rock Demonstration School and in 1969 with Navajo Community College, tribes began running their own schools. The curriculum included tribal history, language, and culture. A few small indigenous-language immersion schools were also started in the United States and Canada. These schools began instruction in all subject matters in the children's heritage language. Four bureau-run off-reservation boarding high schools were still operating in 2016 in the United States: Flandreau in South Dakota; Sherman in Riverside, California; Chemawa near Salem, Oregon; and Riverside in Anadarko, Oklahoma. These schools are still open because of the insistence of Indian tribes. In addition, the Bureau of Indian Education has turned one of the older high schools into Haskell Indian Nations University, which is located in Lawrence, Kansas.

The U.S. Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (PL 93-638) in an attempt to close the academic achievement gap between white students and Native American, African American, and Hispanic students that has continued to persist in the United States. This act put forward the

belief that if teachers were just “highly qualified” and used “scientifically proven” teaching methods, this gap could be quickly closed. However, similar to previous efforts, this new effort has been largely a failure.³¹ Before the civil service requirements were put in place at the end of the 19th century in the United States, one often got a government job, including as a teacher, by supporting the winning political party in the previous election. However, the civil service examination instituted in the 1890s, like the National Teachers Examination of the 1990s and similar current efforts, tested for general knowledge rather than for competencies specific to teaching Indian students. Estelle Brown took the civil service examination in about 1901, expecting “to be tested on [her] fitness to teach children of a savage race to whom the word education was unknown and who were without knowledge of a written language. No such test was given.”³² She had expected questions on tribal history and reservation conditions; she was not even told which tribe she was to teach. In effect, the civil service examination, like the teacher competency tests of today, was designed, at best, for teachers of mainstream students. This cultural bias excluded many potential Indian teachers as well as a few “incompetent” white teachers while letting through teachers with little or no knowledge of Indians or Indian education. Low salaries plus the isolation (from white communities) of many schools serving Indian students meant that teaching in them was often the last resort for teachers who could not find employment elsewhere.

In 1969, a special subcommittee of the U.S. Senate issued a scathing report on the poor quality of Native American education and the abuse of Indian students titled *American Indian Education: A National Tragedy, a National Challenge*, based on a series of hearings across the country.³³ This report helped lead to the passage of the American Indian Education Act in 1972 (Title IV of PL 92-318). This act provided some funding for supplemental programs for Indian students. In Canada, between 2008 and 2015 the government-established Truth and Reconciliation Commission documented through 7,000 interviews and 5 million documents a horror story of mental, sexual, and physical abuse in Canadian residential schools that were funded by the Canadian government and run by Catholic and Protestant religious groups, with the last schools closing in the 1990s.³⁴

In June 2008, Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper acknowledged in a speech to the House of Commons the ongoing, generational impacts of Canada’s residential schools for Indians:

We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow. . . . Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.³⁵

He concluded that "The government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of aboriginal peoples for failing them so badly."⁵⁶

Education plays a crucial role in affirming American Indian identity. Despite the lack of culturally appropriate education and terrible conditions in many schools, many American Indians have been academically successful. Over the years some have become successful doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. In addition, Indian authors have produced a vast library of Indian literature. Older works include Charles Eastman's 1902 *Indian Boyhood* and Luther Standing Bear's 1928 *My People the Sioux*. Newer works include N. Scott Momaday's 1969 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *House Made of Dawn*; Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which won the National Book Award for Young People's Literature in 2007; and many others. Nonfiction works include Vine Deloria Jr.'s *God Is Red* (1972). Indian newspapers include *Indian Country Today*, a weekly national newspaper, as well as tribal newspapers, such as the *Narajo Times*, that are available in print and on the Internet.

Schools today, including 35 tribal colleges, in the United States and Canada are working to instill positive indigenous identities.⁵⁷

CONCLUSION

The effects of colonization on American Indians was disastrous. Their population plummeted from estimates of several million to a little over 200,000, as recorded in the 1900 U.S. census; however, since then their population has recovered.⁵⁸ In the 2010 U.S. census 5.2 million people in the United States self-identified as American Indian and Alaska Native, either alone or in combination with one or more other races, with 2.9 million people identified as American Indian and Alaska Native alone. Almost half of the American Indian and Alaska Native population, or 2.3 million people, reported being American Indian and Alaska Native in combination with one or more other races. The American Indian and Alaska Native in combination population experienced rapid growth, increasing by 39 percent since 2000.⁵⁹ Some of this growth may be attributed to less stigma being placed today on being nonwhite in the United States as it has become an increasingly multiracial country.

Today indigenous people all over the world, including American Indians, are undergoing a renaissance. They have joined hands in advocating for their rights, including the right of self-government, the return of ancestral lands, and religious freedom. Their efforts led to the United Nations passing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, which affirms the right of self-determination for indigenous peoples. Only the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand voted against this declaration, with the first section of Article 26—"Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they

have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired”—being the most problematic for them, since this includes all of the Americas. Less problematic is Article 33, which declares that “Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions” and that “Indigenous peoples have the right to determine the structures and to select the membership of their institutions in accordance with their own procedures.”⁵⁰ Among other rights listed in this declaration is the right to control the education of their children. American Indian tribes as well as indigenous people around the world are setting up schools today where their children can be immersed in their tribal languages and cultures as well as be educated about other nations.

All four countries that voted against the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples have reversed their position, and on December 16, 2010, President Barack Obama declared,

And as you know, in April, we announced that we were reviewing our position on the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. And today I can announce that the United States is lending its support to this declaration.

The aspirations it affirms—including the respect for the institutions and rich cultures of Native peoples—are ones we must always seek to fulfill.⁵¹

While American Indians are often viewed and categorized as members of a single racial group, their unique histories and legacies speak to the rich diversity of this population. Today, they are pushing back against the assimilationist educational policies of settler colonialism that sought to erase their cultural identities. They are vigorously asserting their freedom to determine their own destinies, and they are protesting racist characterizations in sports, the media, and elsewhere. For example, in 2016 Navajo Nation tribal government officials filed an amicus brief with the Fourth Circuit court supporting the 2014 cancellation of the trademark for “Redskins” by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, which was previously owned by the Washington Redskins football team.⁵² American Indians’ desire for self-determination is encapsulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and its vision of a diverse world where different peoples and their cultures can flourish in settings of equality and respect.

NOTES

1. Adapted from Midgette (1997) and Campbell (1997).
2. See, e.g., Davis (2000).

3. Estes (1999).
4. Neely and Palmer (2009, 289).
5. Qtd. in Reyhner (1997, vii).
6. Qtd. in Reyhner (1992, 61–62).
7. Garcia, Avelrod, and Lachler (2009, 118).
8. Kroskity (2009, 194).
9. "The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010" (2012).
10. Hallett, Chandler, and LaLonde (2007).
11. Bordewich (1986).
12. Cruz and Berson (2001).
13. Mihesuah (1993).
14. Tibbles (1972).
15. "Public Law 93-638—Jan. 4, 1975" (n.d.).
16. Simpson (2006).
17. Calanda and Dreveskracht (2015, 386).
18. Nixon (1971, 565).
19. Qtd. in Berkhofer (1978, 11).
20. *Ibid.*, 12.
21. Melville (1971, 126–127).
22. Qtd. in Mandock (1971, 86).
23. Baint-Olsen (2003, 203).
24. Twain (1958, 87, 148).
25. Wilder (1971, 134–139).
26. Simard (1990, 333, italics in original).
27. Kreech (1999).
28. See, e.g., Cajete (2015); for an opposite view, see Widdowson and Howard (2008).
29. Hobbes (1994, 76).
30. Axtell and Starrevant (1980).
31. Bordewich (1996, 17–18).
32. *Ibid.*, 160.
33. Horsman (1981, 2).
34. *Ibid.*, 189.
35. See Gould (1981).
36. Morton (1839, 6).
37. *Ibid.*, 78.
38. *Ibid.*, 81–82.
39. Horsman (1981, 301).
40. Golden (1954, 10, 83).
41. Peshkin (1997).
42. Kneale (1950, 105).
43. *Ibid.*, 41.
44. Powell (1896, 110).
45. *Ibid.*, 112–113.
46. Dernos (2014).
47. Washington (1900, 97–99).
48. Hoxie (1984).
49. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1885, cxiii).

50. *Ibid.*, 101.
 51. Reyhner (2015a).
 52. Brown (1952, 48).
 53. Special Subcommittee on Indian Education (1969).
 54. National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (2016).
 55. Harper (2009).
 56. *Ibid.*.
 57. Reyhner (2015b).
 58. Thornton (1987).
 59. "The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010" (2012).
 60. "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (2007).
 61. "Obama Announces Support for Indigenous Rights Declaration" (2010).
 62. "Navajo Nation Officials Support Redskins Trademark Cancellation" (2016).

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