

Westward Expansion: Impact on American Indians

1860s - 1900s

Reasons for Conflict

Euro-Americans

- Want land for farming, ranching and mining
- Believe that uncultivated (un-farmed) land & land with no permanent homes is wasted
- Often believe that non-white people and non-Christians are inferior

Native Americans

- Want land for hunting and gathering
- Only some cultures farmed, and only some built permanent homes
- Are non-white and non-Christian

So what are they going to disagree about?

Indian Reservations

- US government forced Native American tribes to live in certain areas called Indian Reservations
 - Not the best land
- In exchange for living on the reservation, tribes were often paid some money called an annuity.
 - The annuities were usually not very much money
 - Government did not always pay them on time
- Native Americans usually had to spend their money buying food and supplies from white American traders

How will Native Americans feel about the reservations?



Destroying the Bison



- Bison ("buffalo") were the main source of food & clothing for Native Americans on the Great Plains
- US army, railroad companies & white settlers systematically set out to kill all bison

Why kill all the bison?



Military Conflict

- Many Native Americans hated living on reservations
- They were usually poor and often on the verge of starving



Dakota Sioux Uprising

- 1862: the Dakota Sioux in Minnesota weren't paid their annuity on time. The starving, angry people took revenge against traders who wouldn't give them food on credit, US troops, and in some cases innocent civilians
 - Hundreds were killed (Native American + white)
- More than 300 Dakota were sentenced to death in a military court, and others fled from the US troops

Assimilation: "Kill the Indian, Save the Man"

Assimilation is the process of one group of people being "absorbed" into another's culture

Goal of assimilation policy: for all Native Americans to live & behave like white Americans

Tools to achieve assimilation:

- Boarding schools for Native American children
- Killing bison (their main food source)
- Missionaries to introduce Christianity



Dawes Act (1887)

- Goal of the Dawes Act: to get Native Americans to live like white Americans
 - Reservations were broken up into "allotments" that were given out to individual families.
 - Families were supposed to farm and build homes on their allotment to support themselves
 - Land that wasn't given to a family was sold by the US government to white farmers
- It failed:
 - Some of the land was unsuitable for farming & ranching
 - Some refused to adopt a different way of life
 - Some sold their land to white settlers, but others were upset that their land was given away

Wounded Knee Massacre (1890)

- Members of the Sioux Tribe felt that their culture had been destroyed
 - Financially dependent on the US government for their annuities, unable to support themselves by hunting buffalo
- Ghost Dance offered hope
 - Believed that if everyone followed the Ghost Dance rituals that their culture and power would be restored and the white people would leave
- US troops felt threatened by large gatherings of Sioux men and their families
- US troops fired on a group of Sioux gathered for the Ghost Dance, killing dozens of men, women and children

