# Westward Migration Brought Settlers into Conflict with Native Americans. What was the U.S. Government's Policy toward Indians in the West, and How did it Evolve Over Time

Sarah Crowley

Beal College

HY 103: U.S. History 1965 to the Present

Ms. Ginger Glodowske

September 18, 2020

**Westward Migration Brought Settlers into Conflict with Native Americans. What was the U.S. Government's Policy toward Indians in the West, and How did it Evolve Over Time**

The United States Government's policy toward Indians in the west was one of complete control and forceful seizure of their homelands. The U.S. government slaughtered hundreds of Indians, staining the soil with blood and pollution. It wanted to "civilize" these savages, and made them live on land (reservations) that had no value or that was rendered nonproductive (Roark et. al., p 488). The land of the reservations had very limited resources and of poor quality. The Indians were forced into starvation were held captive on the reservations by the U.S. military, and became reliable on the government for their food and basic needs.

The Government signed treaties with the Native Americans to allow safe passage through sections of land that the Native Americans would give up in return the government promised that settlers would not trespass onto Indian land, thus the Native Americans hoped to preserve their culture and race (Roark et. al., p 467). The settlers that passed through destroyed many natural resources (cut down trees, over killed the bison herds, and polluted streams) and brough deadly diseases to the Native American tribes (Roark et. al., p 487). The government continually stole what they wanted from the Native Americans. The Native Americans attempted to fighting back winning some battles against the U.S. military. When they were outnumbered and could not protect their tribes, they surrendered to the military only to be massacred.

The remaining Native Americans that were forced to reside on the government reservations were made to learn "the white man ways". Their children were kidnapped and sent to boarding schools in order to "kill the Indian...and save the man" (Roark et. al., p 494) or to "get the Indian out of the blanket and into trousers" (Roark et. al., p 495). Children were taught the English language, punished for speaking their tribal language, made to wear civilized clothing, forced to

cut their hair, and to practice Christianity instead of their spiritual beliefs. The government believed that assimilation was the best way to make the Native Americans civilized and forgo their culture in exchange with filling their pockets with money of the working man. Thought the white man attempted to change beliefs of the children in these boarding schools, the children held on tight to their heritage and despite whippings.

Congress passed the Dawes Allotment Act in 1887. This allotment divided up reservations into parcels of land so that individual Native Americans could have a private property (Roark et. al., p 496). This act was to encourage individualism amongst Native Americans in an attempt to curtail tribal life. It worked as many “sold their allotments and moved to urban areas, where they lost touch with tribal ways” (Roark et. al., p 496). The act also reduced the amount of land that Native Americans inhabited from 138 million acres to 48 million (Roark et. al., p 496). By the 1890’s the U.S. government had unethically stolen more than 97.5 percent of the land that was previously occupied by Native American Tribes (Roark, et. al., 2020).

The U.S. government unlawfully stole, tortured, murdered, and deceived Native Americans all in an attempt for power, greed, property ownership, and to prove to be a superior race. When their attempts to assimilate Native Americans by separation and boarding schools failed to erase all “Indian ways” they promoted individuality among members of the tribes. The government measured success when members left for a life in urban areas leaving behind tribal ways (Roark et. al., 2020).