

Reservation Era 1871 – 1928

1. US policy change from extermination to Assimilation and Dependency.
2. Methods: ¹
 - Removal from and the taking of traditional Indian lands
 - Creation of reservations: usually far from traditional lands and frequently in dry, unsustainable climates which created dependency in order to survive.
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs: To supervise reservations, settle disputes, provide food and other necessities of life for American Indians. Contributed to the effort to make Indians dependent on the government for their existence.
 - Dawes Act of 1887: Allowed the Federal Government, after taking, to sell those tribal lands to American settlers and others.
 - US citizenship granted to all American Indians
 - Systematic removal of children from Tribal homes: The Carlisle Indian School, founded in 1879, was the first established boarding school for Indian children.. Carlisle’s model of instruction emphasized religion, academic training and institutional labor, and was adopted by other boarding and mission schools in years to come.
 - 1879-1950s: Creation of government run boarding schools and support of Christian mission schools.

¹ Halverson, K, Puig, M, Byers, S (2002) “Culture Loss: American Indian Family disruption, Urbanization, and the Indian Child Welfare Act” Child Welfare League of America, Vol. LXXXI. March-April 2002 (319-336)

Pre-Reservation Era 1789 – 1871

Prevalent sentiments of the dominant culture viewed American Indian values, beliefs and practices as outside of and incongruent with the advancement of US economic and political goals, and values.

The “Indian Problem vs. Euro-American Problem”

For four centuries non-Indians in North America have had an “Indian Problem”. In its most basic form this problem has had three aspects:

1. Economic: How best to secure access to Indian resources, land in particular.
2. Cultural transformation: How best to accomplish the cultural transformation of Indians into non-Indians.
3. Political: How to maintain an effective control over Indian groups so that the problems of 1 and 2 above could be more satisfactorily resolved.

Indians, on the other hand, have had what might be called a “Euro-American problem”. In its essence this problem seems to have been made up of tribal survival, the maintenance of particular sets of social relations, more or less distinct cultural orders, and some measure of political autonomy in the face of invasion, conquest, and loss of power.

The working out of these two conflicting agendas has given context and shape to Indian-White relations. ¹

Results: The US policy focused on the extermination and assimilation of all American Indians.

Methods: The US government based this and future policies on their recognition that American Indian cultural values, behaviors and identity rely on cross-generation parenting and socialization. US policies and practices were designed to disrupt family childrearing practices and to eliminate custom and cultural among American Indian families.

¹ Cornell, S, (1988) The Return of the Native American Indian Political Resurgence, New York: Oxford Press, (6-7)

Indian Adoption Era

1950s – 1970s

The Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Child Welfare League (CWLA) established an interstate clearinghouse for the placement and adoption of American Indian children with non-Indian families

Result – 25% to 35% of all American Indian children were removed **permanently** from their families.

Indian Child Welfare Act **(ICWA) 1978**

Federal Law reaffirming the right of American Indians to be and remain Indian,
and to suspend current practices of out of home,
non-Indian placement.

Adoption & Safe Families Act (ASFA) **1997**

Federal Law implementing expansion of
Best Interest of the Child to a
standard focus on child safety,
child well-being, and permanence.