

Timeline of U.S. American Indian Policy and its Impacts

Source: Dr. Angela A. Gonzales and Melanie A. Stansbury (2006).
Forthcoming journal article on the impacts of American Indian casino gaming
on community development in Indian communities in New Mexico.

Department of Development Sociology, Cornell University
320 Warren Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-7801

E-mail: aag27@cornell.edu and mas297@cornell.edu

Period	U.S. Government Policies	Impacts and Outcomes
Early Indian/U.S. Relations (1776 - 1810s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Northwest Ordinance (1786) ▪ Commerce Clause added to the U.S. Constitution (1789) ▪ First Indian agents assigned under the Department of War to negotiate treaties with tribes (1789) ▪ Indian Trade and Intercourse Act (1790) 	U.S. government treats some Indians as sovereign nations; makes treaties with some; makes war with others; establishes federal jurisdiction in dealings with Indian people; promises to protect them from settler encroachment; an era of incredible wholesale expropriation and physical violence.
Eastern U.S. Wars, Removal, and Relocation (1820s – 1848)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indian Office established in the Department of War (1824) ▪ Indian Removal Act (1830) ▪ <i>Johnson vs. McIntosh</i> (1823) ▪ <i>Cherokee Nation vs. Georgia</i> (1831) ▪ <i>Worcester vs. Georgia</i> (1832) ▪ <i>Seminole Nation vs. U.S</i> (1842) 	Forcible relocation of Indian tribes of the Eastern states to west of the Mississippi River; opening of Indian lands for colonization; Indian title to lands extinguished; Indians become wards of federal government as “domestic dependent nations;” Federal government assumes trusteeship of Indian lands, resources, and affairs.
Western U.S. Removal, Reservations, Wars and Treaty Making (1849 - 1870s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oregon Trail Opens (1847) ▪ End of Mexican American War (1848) ▪ Indian Office shifted to newly created Department of Interior (1849) ▪ Settlement of Native people on reservations became common practice (1849) ▪ Systematic military campaigns to destroy subsistence base of Plains people (1850s-70s) 	Massive Western migrations of U.S. settlers beginning in late 1840s leading to horrific violence between colonizers and Native people; U.S. uses military might and treaties to forcibly relocate Indian people to Indian Territory or onto reservations and expropriates their lands; Indian Affairs is transferred to the Dept. of the Interior which manages public lands expropriated from Native people.
Allotment and Civilization/Assimilation Projects (1870s-1934)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Military agents stationed to live on, surveillance, and oversee welfare disbursements and assimilation policies on reservations (1870s) ▪ Regular Congressional appropriations for Indian education and assimilation begin (1870s) ▪ Treaty making abolished (1871) ▪ Indian Police Force created (1878) ▪ “Civilization Regulations” outlaw Native religions, healing practices, and leaving of reservations (1880) ▪ Dawes Act (1887) 	Congress abolishes treaty making with Indian nations, turns to Congress and Executive to make unilateral decisions concerning Indians and their resources; Indian lands and resources are expropriated at unprecedented rates and redistributed to settlers; large-scale attempts are made to dismantle tribes and assimilate Indian people into the “mainstream” through land reform (Dawes Act), forced reeducation, outlaw of their cultures; results in widespread poverty, loss of lands/resources, abuse and neglect; most communities take culture and languages underground
Reform and Tribal Reorganization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indian Citizenship (1924) ▪ Miriam Report (1928) 	Indians are granted citizenship in most states; allotment ended; poverty is recognized;

(1920s-1945)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indian Reorganization Act (1934) 	<p>Western style constitutional forms of government are imposed that displace traditional tribal social and political organization and leadership; great authority given to Secretary of Interior as trustee to oversee development of Indian people.</p>
Termination & Relocation (1945-1961)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indian Land Claims Commission Act (1946) ▪ House Concurrent Resolution 108 (1953) ▪ BIA Direct Employment Program 	<p>Post-WWII political backlash against Indian New Deal, difference, and perceived “communism;” government attempt to rapidly assimilate Indians into mainstream by terminating special status, reservations, and public services; Congress terminates federal trusteeship over 100 tribes deemed to be “civilized” and ready to be “on their own;” opens reservations for economic exploitation by private companies; relocates over 100,000 Native people to urban areas away from reservations to supposed job training and placement programs; reservation poverty deepens; pan-Indian identity and activist movement gains momentum.</p>
Civil Rights and Self-Determination Era (1960s – 1970s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Development and War on Poverty (1960s) of Pres. Kennedy and Johnson ▪ Indian Civil Rights Act (1968) ▪ Indian Education Act (1972) ▪ Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (1975) ▪ American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978) ▪ Indian Child Welfare Act (1978) ▪ <i>Santa Clara v. Martinez</i> Supreme Court Decision (1978) ▪ Federal Acknowledgment Project (1978) 	<p>An end to the more coercive forms of displacement; government first under Kennedy admin. turns to economic development on Indian reservations to deal with Indian poverty; federal government under Nixon officially renounces termination policies and declares self-determination with federal assistance and protection; trust status and public assistance programs reinstated and created; many tribes assume control over programs and education previously administered by federal government intended for assimilation; courts recognize Indian tribal sovereignty; legislation recognizes religious freedom; Indian people form national civil rights organizations and activism sweeps the country; quality of life indicators on reservations improve through the 1970s; cultural revitalization programs undertaken by most tribes.</p>
New Era of Economic Development and Indian Nationalism (1980s – Present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indian Mineral Development Act (1982) ▪ <i>Seminole Tribe v. Butterworth</i> Supreme Court Decision (1982) ▪ <i>California v. Cabazon</i> Supreme Court (1987) ▪ Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (1988) ▪ Native American Languages Act (1990) ▪ Indian Arts and Crafts Act (1990) ▪ Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) ▪ Native American Free Exercise of Religion Act (1994) ▪ Executive Order on Indian Sacred Sites (1996) 	<p>Cutbacks in government programs under the Reagan administration causes increased unemployment and hardships for tribes; tribes undertook new economic development strategies in 1980s to bring in badly needed revenue including gaming enterprises; Clinton admin. in 1990s showed renewed interest in strengthening tribal sovereignty and self-determination and supported a slew of legislation that strengthened tribal control over their own affairs; 1990s – present many tribes, especially those with gaming enterprises have undertaken massive community development programs; become economically prosperous; and gained access to a political machinery that had worked to exclude and marginalize them for over two hundred years.</p>