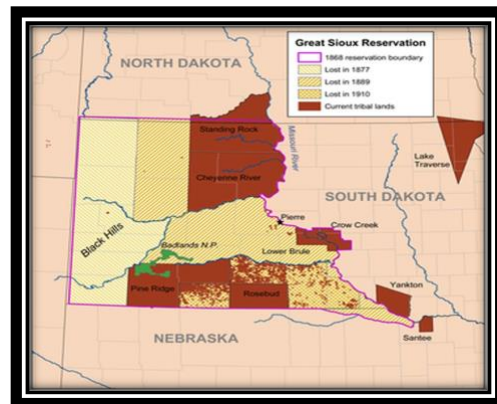


## DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE UNIT 3: RESOURCE SET 2; INTRODUCTION

### AMERICAN INDIAN RESERVATIONS

#### White Settlers and Assimilation

English colonists arrived in North America in the 1600s, and they soon began **displacing** American Indians from their ancestral lands. This was often done under the **guise** of **treaties**.<sup>1</sup> American Indians were forced to move to areas called reservations. These parcels of land were often smaller and less favorable than the land on which they previously had lived. The reservations were supposed to have clear boundaries. However, the U.S. government would break treaties whenever it was convenient for the expansion of U.S. territory.



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By the 1800s, American Indians had significantly less land. President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which forced American Indians to move west of the Mississippi River. Even at the time, the Indian Removal Act was very controversial, and the House of Representatives only narrowly passed the bill, by a vote of 103 to 97.<sup>2</sup> Between 1830 and 1850, the U.S. government forced 60,000 American Indians to march hundreds of miles in harsh conditions to their new reservations in present-day Oklahoma. Historians estimate that 4,000 American Indians died during this journey. The Cherokee Indians, who endured heavy snow and freezing temperatures, described the event as “the trail where they cried,” or “the Trail of Tears.”<sup>3</sup> As the Mvskoke Indians recalled:

*“Many fell by the wayside [on the journey], too faint with hunger or too weak to keep up with the rest. The aged, feeble, and sick were left to perish by the wayside. A crude bed was quickly prepared for these sick and weary people. Only a bowl of water was left within reach, thus they were left to suffer and die alone. The little children piteously cried day after day from weariness, hunger, and illness.”*<sup>4</sup>

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#### U.S. Policy and Reservations

The U.S. government promised to support American Indians living on reservations. In reality, they faced extreme hardship, poverty, and starvation. Sometimes, government officials put more than one tribe on the same reservation, even if those tribes were enemies.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/stories/articles/2015/5/25/how-american-indian-reservations-came-be>

<sup>2</sup> Louis P. Masur, *1831: Year of Eclipse* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 119.

<sup>3</sup> Cave, A. A. (2003). Abuse of Power: Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act of 1830. *Historian*, 65(6), 1330 – 1353; <https://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/trail-of-tears>; <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2959.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in David Lewis, Jr., and Ann T. Jordan, *Creek Indian Medicine Ways: The Enduring Power of Mvskoke Religion* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 12.

The U.S. government decided that **appeasing** White settlers' desire for more land was more important than American Indians' safety and well-being.<sup>5</sup> As one Navajo speaker explained:

*"Because we were brought here [to their reservation], we have done all that we could possibly do [to survive], but found it to be labor in vain...this land does not like us, neither does the water...I think now it is true what my forefathers told me about crossing the line of my own country. It seems that whatever we do here causes death."*<sup>6</sup>

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The U.S. government also used reservations to assimilate American Indians into White American culture. The Dawes Act of 1887 allowed the federal government to break up tribal lands, selling plots of land to individual American Indians without approval from their tribal community. The Dawes Act also prohibited many American Indian cultural traditions. American Indians were expected to **assimilate** to White American ideals like individualism and strict gender roles. General Richard Henry Pratt, the founder of the Carlisle Indian School, famously said, "Kill the Indian, save the man." Many White Americans felt that American Indians needed to be saved from themselves.<sup>7</sup>

### Life on Reservations

American Indians had successfully lived off the land for thousands of years. However, it was very difficult to survive on the new reservation lands. Many reservations had bad soil, and American Indian families experienced poverty and starvation. Poor quality food and water caused many people to have health problems. In 1884, on the Blackfoot reservation in Montana, one quarter of the people died from starvation. Black Elk, a leader of the Oglala Lakota, reportedly said, "In sorrow I am sending a feeble voice, O Six Powers of the World. Hear me in my sorrow, for I may never call again. O make my people live!"<sup>8</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Justice Raymond D. Austin, "Dine Sovereignty, a Legal and Traditional Analysis," in *Navajo Sovereignty: Understandings and Visions of the Dine People*, edited by Lloyd L. Lee (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2017), 35.

<sup>7</sup> Blansett, Kent (2015). *Crutchfield, James A.; Moutlon, Candy; Del Bene, Terry (eds.). The Settlement of America: An Encyclopedia of Westward Expansion from Jamestown to the Closing of the Frontier*. Routledge; Grande, Sandy (2015). *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought, 10th Anniversary Edition*. Rowman & Littlefield; Adams, David Wallace. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*. University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS; Bentley, M. (2010). *Playing White Men: American Football and Manhood at the Carlisle Indian School, 1893-1904*. *Journal of the History of Childhood & Youth*, 3(2), 187 - 209.

<sup>8</sup> Black Elk, "The End of the Dream" (1932). First printed in Black Elk, *Black Elk Speaks* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1932). Reprinted as Black Elk, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux: As Told Through John G. Neihardt (Flaming Rainbow)* (New York: Pocket Books/Bison Books, 1972), pp. 224-30; Neihardt, J. G. (1996). *Black elk speaks*. Dramatic Publishing.

American Indian people were also now forced to be dependent on the government for basic supplies like food and farming equipment. These supplies were given out as rations, using a ticket system. Sometimes the government would withhold food from men who refused to cut their hair. This was another way that the U.S. government forced many American Indians to choose between starvation and assimilation.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 1:** Map of the Great Sioux Reservation.

**Figure 2:** 1905 ration tickets from Wind River Reservation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-stark-reminder-of-how-the-us-forced-american-indians-into-a-new-way-of-life-3954109/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://centerofthewest.org/2015/12/14/center-of-the-west-scores-two-slots-on-wyomings-most-significant-artifacts-list/>