

The American Indian

For America's Indians, the U.S. Supreme Court has become a major source of redress. During the last term alone, the Justices handed down seven rulings in cases involving the country's oldest ethnic group; at issue were land claims, fishing rights, and mineral leases. The upsurge in Indian litigation signals a change in tactics by leaders of Indian organizations; they have largely abandoned the violent takeovers and sit-ins epitomized by the 1973 siege at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. Most Indian spokesmen assert that their broader goal is to maintain a distinct "Indian way of life." Yet how to do so is a matter of deep disagreement. How isolated from America's larger society can Indians afford to remain? How much development of the natural resources on Indian reservations should be permitted? Members of the nation's 506 Indian "tribal entities" now debate such questions, even as they suffer from high rates of poverty, alcoholism, and unemployment. Here, our contributors examine the Indians' current dilemmas, their long history, and the ways in which various Indian tribes have or have not adapted to the white man's world.

HERE TO STAY

by Patricia Nelson Limerick

"Tragic Death Ends Sad Lifestyle Shared by Many Indians." So said a headline in the *Denver Post* on December 9, 1984.

It seems that Anthony Patton Burton, an Arapaho-Cheyenne, had walked into the Denver town house of lawyer Robert Calt and removed "something shiny and metal" from a bag. Calt shot the intruder, killing him instantly. In the dead man's hands was a can of spray paint, whose vapors he had been inhaling. Burton, 28, was an alcoholic and a jobless transient. A police spokesman concluded that he "probably just didn't know where he was."

Anthony Patton Burton was by no means a typical Indian, but

his difficulties were similar to those that afflict many of America's estimated 1.4 million Indians. A survey in Denver revealed that 78 percent of the city's 20,000 adult Indians were chronically unemployed. Some 69 percent had incomes below the poverty level. Between 60 and 80 percent were addicted to drugs or alcohol, or were "affected by a family member's problem." At the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota, home to nearly 10,000 Sioux, the statistics tell a similar story. Seven out of 10 Rosebud Sioux of working age are unemployed. Roughly one-half of all Rosebud Sioux adults, male and female, are alcoholics.

As they have been throughout modern memory, American Indians are beset by troubles. Nearly 500 years after Christopher Columbus, the aftershocks of conquest are still being felt. That should not, really, be surprising. The most striking fact about Indians in 1986 is that, despite all that has happened to them, North America's aboriginal inhabitants remain visible and distinct in our midst.*

No one really knows how long human beings have lived in North America. Ten thousand years? *Forty* thousand years? Archaeologists disagree. Whenever they arrived, the first people on the continent were migrants from Asia who voyaged across what is now the Bering Strait. That, at least, is the prevailing theory among scholars. In the view of many Indians, this assertion represents yet another imposition: It contradicts the Indians' own histories, and it diminishes the Indians' claims to be *Native Americans*—the country's original inhabitants—by making them into just another variety of immigrant.

Indian people spread throughout the Western Hemisphere and adapted to widely varying local environments. North of the Rio Grande there existed nine major language groups, each divided into numerous, mutually unintelligible dialects. The Indian peoples were nearly as diverse in religion as they were in language. And, while scores of tribes traded with one another, they also fought wars and maneuvered for territory and power.

Most Europeans, note James Olson and Raymond Wilson in

*The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines aborigines as "natives found in possession of a country by Europeans who have gone thither as colonists." Other surviving aboriginal groups include the Aborigines of Australia, who number some 45,000, or 0.35 percent of the population; the Maori in New Zealand, 250,000 strong, or nine percent of the population; and the San of South Africa, whose 45-50,000 members are now scattered across Botswana, the western Kalahari, and Namibia.

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Europeans easily justified their conquest of the Indians: "This savage people," wrote Plymouth Colony's John Winthrop, "ruleth over many lands without title or property; for they inclose no ground, neither have they cattell to maintain it."

Native Americans in the Twentieth Century (1984), "insisted on viewing Native American culture through a single lens, as if all Native Americans could somehow be understood in terms of a few monolithic assumptions." Yet on the eve of its discovery by the Europeans, Indian America was as heterogeneous as Renaissance Europe, perhaps more so.

Life in the Northeast meant summers growing crops of corn, beans, and squash, and gathering berries and roots. Tribal groups, perhaps several dozen, dispersed during the fall and winter for a long season of hunting deer, then assembled in the summer to grow corn, pumpkins, and squash. Like Indian tribes elsewhere, the Wampanoag, Narragansett, and others of the Northeast invested the natural world with supernatural significance; animals and human beings were one in a larger spiritual community. Groups such as the Huron and Seneca placed great store by the interpretation of dreams.

On the other side of the continent, in the Pacific Northwest, Indians lived in coastal villages of roughly six to 12 families, isolated by mountains and distance from farming communities further inland. The waters yielded an abundance of salmon, otter,

seal, and walrus. The forests and meadows were flush with berries and game. Among the Kwakiutl, Kitamat, and similar groups, this cornucopia inspired a respect for wealth and its accumulation. At the core of their religious practice lay the famous "potlatches," when, at great feasts, host groups of Indians would bestow lavish presents on visitors.

In the Southwest, several different ways of life coexisted. The Pueblo Indians lived in compact adobe villages (some with as many as 1,500 inhabitants), farmed intensively (beans, corn, and squash), and carried on an elaborate and demanding religious life. In the same dry part of the continent, the seminomadic Apaches lived as hunters and gatherers, sometimes raiding and sometimes trading with the Pueblos.

On the Great Plains, most Indians inhabited villages clustered along the rivers that drain the interior. The Plains Indians lived by growing corn and beans, supplementing this diet from time to time by hunting buffalo (on foot). Few Indian groups relied overmuch on the buffalo or hunted the animal year-round.

The notion of early pan-Indian unity flourishes only in myth. Indeed, the diversity and sheer dispersion of the Indian tribes—their varied interests and cultures, their assorted alliances and enmities—virtually foreclosed any attempts to unite and expel the first Europeans.

The Europeans arrived, to stay, in 1492. Mistaking the Caribbean islands for "the Indies," Columbus called the Arawak Islanders who greeted him "Indians." The misnomer was soon applied to all of the native inhabitants of the New World.

Furs for Firearms

In both North and South America, the arrival of the Europeans produced an abrupt demographic disaster. The populations of the Old World had had centuries, even millenniums, to adjust to Old World diseases and to develop immunities. When carried to the New World, these same diseases—chicken pox, measles, influenza, malaria, yellow fever, typhus, tuberculosis, and, above all, smallpox—met little resistance. Mortality rates in village after village ran as high as 80 or 90 percent.

Scholars still quarrel over the exact rate of depopulation, but no one questions its significance in weakening and demoralizing the natives and enhancing the power of the invaders. White Americans would come to view their relations with Indians as an inevitable contest between stronger and weaker civilizations. Writing in 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville summed up the prevailing white opinion of Indians: "Heaven has not made them to be-

come civilized; it is necessary that they die." Die many of them did. But the Indians' supposed cultural inferiority had nothing to do with it. Microorganisms and unprepared immune systems certainly did.*

Beyond microorganisms, the exchange between Indian and European involved the movement of plants, animals, and technology. Long before the arrival of the Europeans, the small, primeval horse that once roamed North America—*eobippus*—had met with extinction. The buffalo took its place on the Great Plains. The Spaniards reintroduced horses into the New World. Meanwhile, from the French in Canada and the Mississippi Basin, the Indians first acquired firearms—in exchange for furs.

Exchanging Friendship

The combination of horse and gun made the buffalo easy prey and aided expansionist tribes—the Comanche, the Cheyenne, and the Sioux—in their conquest of the Plains. Moving westward from the Great Lakes, the Sioux dispossessed or subjugated scores of other tribes. As historian Richard White has noted, to many Indians in the West, the Sioux, not white people, "remained their most feared enemy." Most American history books focus on the rearrangements of power during the 17th and 18th centuries among the French and English colonies along the Atlantic seaboard; during the same period, a parallel rearrangement occurred in Indian country, beyond the Europeans' ken.

Ironically, when American whites finally encountered the Plains Indians during the 19th century, they mistakenly regarded the hard-riding, buffalo-hunting, war-bonneted warriors as survivors of a pristine, pre-Columbian society. Painter George Catlin described the Plains Indians he saw as "noble" and "uncantaminated," living in "fearless freedom" with a "soul unalloyed by mercenary lusts." It was not the first time, nor would it be the last, that white men would attempt to construct for themselves a naive *image* of Indianness.

One other crucial exchange took place between Indians and Europeans: the exchange of friendship. Time after time in their initial encounters, the Europeans received a friendly welcome in the New World, even though the Indians at first held decisive advantages over the invaders—in numbers and in control of local food supplies. "The Indian," observed historian Alvin Josephy,

*During the early 20th century, American anthropologists estimated that no more than one million persons lived in North America before the arrival of Columbus. In 1966, Cornell's Henry Dobyns revised that estimate upwards by a factor of 10. Dobyns's numbers are still disputed, but most scholars agree that the figure of one million is far too low.

“made possible the Europeans’ first precarious footholds in every part of the Americas.” It was the Europeans who *needed* the Indians. The Indians did not, at the outset, need the Europeans. Before long, they did.

One reason was the fur trade. When French mariners and fishermen set up their first outposts on the North American coast, Indians began trading beaver pelts and deer hides for metal knives, kettles, and ornaments; the French eventually pushed the fur trade deep into the American interior. At the same time, the Dutch, later supplanted by the English, carried on the fur trade in New York and elsewhere on the East Coast.

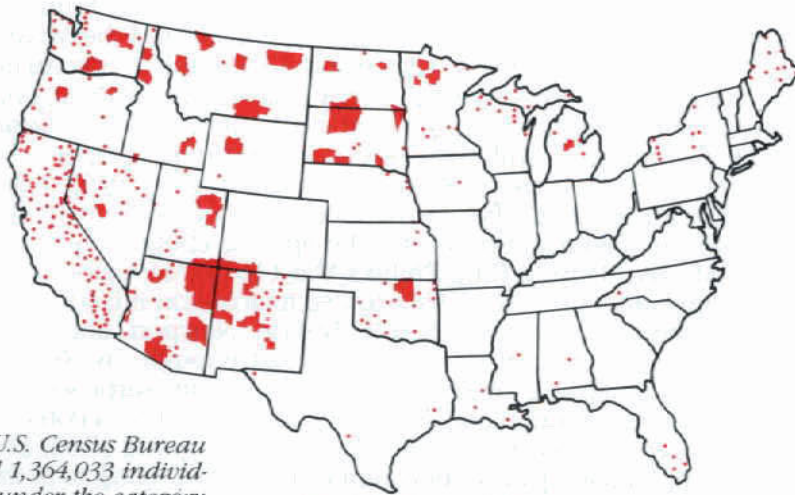
A Wolf by the Ears

During its opening phase, throughout most of the 17th century, Indian participation in the fur trade was not only voluntary but seemed tactically astute. In what is now upstate New York, the six tribes confederated into the League of the Iroquois—the Seneca, Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, and Tuscarora—became early participants in the trade. When their homelands became overhunted, the Iroquois pooled their forces and expanded into neighboring territory.

But the fur trade had an insidious consequence. It slowly led powerful, self-sufficient tribes into dependence on European manufactured goods; the availability of such goods brought on a decline in native know-how and self-reliance. Certain items—especially alcohol—created an unlimited demand. Unlimited demand prompted purchases on credit. Indians were soon hunting in one season to pay off last season’s debts.

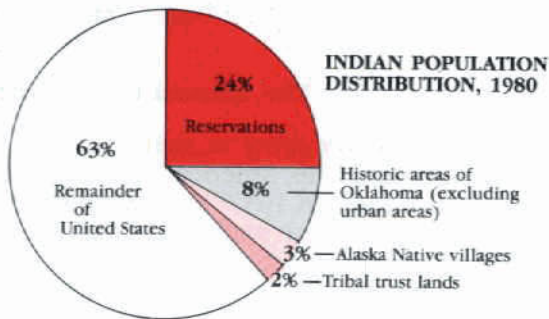
The trade tie was the crucial development in Indian-white relations. Once the pattern of trade was established, Indians were trapped—held by chains of debt and credit. By the early 19th century, groups such as the Iroquois in the North and the Choctaw in the South had discovered that, while the fur trade brought a temporary upsurge in affluence (and influence), it came at a sobering price. “We have a wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him nor safely let him go,” Thomas Jefferson said of American slavery in 1820. American Indians could have said the same thing about the fur trade.

With loss of Indian self-reliance came loss of Indian land. Contrary to popular belief, the dispossession of the Indians was not the result of a steady sequential assault on one tribe after another. Rather than a “tide” or “wave” of white people rolling west, a more appropriate metaphor for Euro-American expansion would be a lake pelted intermittently with hailstones—multiple



FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED INDIAN RESERVATIONS

The U.S. Census Bureau listed 1,364,033 individuals under the category "American Indian" in 1980—72 percent more than in 1970. Why the sudden increase? Partly better counting, partly because expectations of new federal benefits influenced respondents' "self-identification." Today, only slightly more than one-third of all Indians live on reservations, on tribal trust lands, or in Oklahoma's "historic areas" (reservations dissolved shortly before statehood in 1907). Most reservations—where the highest rates of Indian poverty and disease prevail—are home to fewer than 1,000 people; ironically, most also count more non-Indians than Indians as residents.



	Unemployment	Median yrs. education*	Median family income	Life expectancy at birth
BLACK	11.8	12.0	\$12,674	68.0
WHITE	5.8	12.5	\$21,904	74.4
INDIAN	13.2	12.2	\$13,700	71.1
HISPANIC	8.9	10.8	\$14,716	N.A.

SELECTED SOCIAL INDICATORS 1980

*For ages 25 and over.

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Indian Health Service; Bureau of the Census; National Center for Health Statistics.

events sending out concentric rings of consequences. With the Spanish in the Southwest, the French in Canada and the Mississippi Valley, the Russians in Alaska, and the English on the Atlantic coast, North America was deeply involved in trouble borrowed from Europe. Intertribal feuds combined with European rivalries to produce shifting alliances and periodic warfare.

None of the early colonial powers could take Indian acquiescence for granted. After nearly a century of Spanish rule, the Pueblos in 1680 rose up to drive the Spanish completely out of New Mexico. During King Philip's War (1675–76), colonists in New England found themselves forced to abandon inland settlements and retreat to the safety of Boston, Newport, and other towns nearer the coast. Even that was not enough. In 1675, at Medfield, less than 20 miles from Boston, Indians surprised and slew sleeping residents and set houses and barns afire. A contemporary account reported "fires being kindled round about [the people of Medfield], the enemy numerous and shouting so as the earth seemed to tremble, and the cry of terrified persons very dreadful." Such incidents, not surprisingly, established a fearful new image in the white imagination: Indians as "murtherous wretches," as depraved barbarians rather than noble savages.

The Utmost Good Faith

Indian power grew in significance as various tribes found Europeans (and later, Americans) to be useful allies against common Indian foes. In 1637, in New England's first major war, the Narragansetts joined with the English in bloody campaigns against the Pequots. After the Spanish reconquest of New Mexico and Arizona (1692–96), most of the Pueblos would join the Spanish in their fight against raiding Apaches.

The powerful tribes of the Mississippi Valley played a key role in the French and Indian War—on both sides. The war brought home to England's authorities, once again, the importance of Indian good will. To mollify potentially troublesome tribes along the Appalachian frontier, London sought to preclude white settlement in the continental interior, "which cannot fail of being attended with fatal consequences," in the words of the British Board of Trade. In its Proclamation of 1763, the British government formally prohibited white settlement beyond the crest of the Appalachians.

Like many later "solutions" to the problem of Indian-white friction, the Proclamation of 1763 set out to forestall potential conflict by separating the antagonists. But the border could not be policed. Down the Ohio River or through the Cumberland

Gap, the white settlers breached the Appalachians and set out to claim the wilderness.

Leaving behind their Indian allies, the British departed the 13 colonies in 1783. Americans soon discovered that victory in the War of Independence entailed assuming Britain's administrative burdens. Unfortunately, the young government of the United States inherited England's inability to control the frontier. Nevertheless, displaying a cheerful confidence, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and their colleagues took the high road. The new government declared that, in the words of the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, the Indians would be treated "with the utmost good faith." The United States would enter into treaties with neighboring Indians, formerly Crown subjects, as it would with a foreign power, and it would adhere to the treaties it made. These treaties, beginning with the Treaty of Fort Stanwix (New York) in 1784, affirmed Indian title to their lands and gave tribes a unique legal status under the Constitution. To this day the tribes retain that status, its complexities and contradictions frequently addressed by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The new Republic's lofty ideals were no sooner proclaimed than they began to clash with reality. The galvanizing issue: insistence by the Indians living in the Northwest Territories that the Ohio River mark the northern boundary of American settlement. American farmers and land speculators, infiltrating across the Alleghenies, paid no attention. When new treaties were ratified to distinguish between white and Indian lands inside the Territories, settlers again ignored the distinction. The Indians—Wyandot, Delaware, Shawnee, and several other tribes—went to war.

Happy Osages?

The Indian coalition scored some impressive early victories against local militia. On one occasion, in 1791, on the border between what are now Indiana and Ohio, Indians ambushed a force led by Ohio's territorial governor, Arthur St. Clair, killing 630 men. This, according to historian Randolph C. Downes, "was the worst defeat ever suffered by [an] American army in proportion to the numbers engaged." It took a federal expeditionary force and Gen. "Mad Anthony" Wayne, a Revolutionary War hero, to buy a measure of peace in the Ohio Valley. Wayne defeated the Northwest tribes at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, near the western tip of Lake Erie, in 1794. Under the Treaty of Greenville, the survivors ceded to the United States two-thirds of Ohio and a large chunk of Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan.

Two decades later, in 1811, the Ohio Valley was again

King Philip's Pequots and other Indians launched attacks on 52 Massachusetts towns in 1675–76. Atrocities by both sides marked all Indian wars.



wracked by war as Tecumseh's short-lived confederacy of Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Shawnee, and other woodland tribes rose up in revolt. By then, calls in Congress for a new kind of Indian policy were becoming increasingly frequent. As politicians such as James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, and Andrew Jackson saw it, with a certain grim logic, the Indians would inevitably stand in the way of white settlers until they were physically moved *out* of the way. "The hunter or savage state," Monroe wrote to Jackson in 1817, "requires a greater extent of territory to sustain it than is compatible with the progress and just claims of civilized life and must yield to it."

"Voluntary removal," at government expense, got under way during the 1820s and proceeded in fits and starts. All along the frontier, from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico, one tribe after another was escorted beyond the Mississippi River to reservations in what was then the far West.

Removal encountered the strongest Indian resistance in the Southeast. There, despite a century of white encroachments, a number of cohesive tribes—the Cherokee, the Creek, the Choctaw, the Chickasaw, and the Seminole—had failed to melt away. On the contrary, many of them had adopted American practices: private land ownership, commercial farming, even slave-holding. Many of the Indians were literate, and often devout Christians. In 1827, using a writing system devised by the Cherokee intellectual

Sequoia, the Georgia Cherokees went so far as to produce a written constitution. White "friends of the Indian" encouraged the civilizing process with missionaries and money. They spoke of moving the Indians into the American mainstream, where they would lose their distinctive identity and cease to trouble sensitive consciences. "Yes—happy Osages," wrote Thomas McKenney, the first U.S. Superintendent of Indian Affairs, in 1820. "The days of your gloom are about to close."

The peaceful Southeastern tribes embraced much of European civilization but continued to cherish their independence and their ancestral lands. Protected by treaty, both were deemed an affront by white Southerners. Georgia, in the words of one governor, would never "submit to the intrusive sovereignty of a petty tribe of Indians." It was particularly galling when gold was discovered on Cherokee lands. Citing their treaty rights, the tribes refused to move and won backing from John Marshall's Supreme Court in 1832. Georgia held to its course, appropriating Indian land by legislative fiat and encouraging white settlement.

Andrew Jackson, sympathetic to Southern whites and loathe to fracture the Union over the issue of Indian rights, chose to ignore the Supreme Court. Throughout the 1830s, the Army forcibly removed some 100,000 Indians from the Southern states. Ironically, many Northern humanitarians supported the policy of removal, believing that only on faraway reservations would Indians at last be safe from white hostility.

Postponing the Inevitable

The proud Cherokees, in 1838–39, were the last to march along the 900-mile "Trail of Tears" from Georgia to new Indian lands in what became Oklahoma. Trying to save money, the federal government provided inadequate supplies for the long exodus. Thousands of Indians in detention camps succumbed to malnutrition and disease. Many lost their possessions along the way to plundering whites. "The whole scene," wrote Gen. John E. Wool, who was entrusted with removing the Cherokees, "has been nothing but a heartrending one, and such a one as I would be glad to get rid of as soon as circumstances will permit." Some 4,000 out of 18,000 Cherokees died on the Trail of Tears.

Of the Southeast's Five Civilized Tribes, only the Creek and Seminole resisted by taking up arms. The bloody Second Seminole War in the Florida swamps (1835–42) claimed the lives of 2,000 U.S. soldiers and reduced the Seminole population to 500.

Removal made it clear that Washington—not white squatters or speculators but the U.S. government itself—was prepared to

violate treaties with Indian nations. The new, trans-Mississippi Indian territories were meant to be permanent enclaves, but few doubted that the business of drawing up "permanent" borders was merely postponing the inevitable. "In a few years," predicted one Choctaw leader, "the American will also wish to possess the land west of the Mississippi." The sanctity of the new Indian territory rested, after all, solely on the authority of Congress. What Congress had given, Congress could also take away.

During the 1830s, most Americans saw the Great Plains as a kind of desert, unsuitable for white farming and thus ideal as an Indian refuge. That perception was not to last. By the early 1850s, the white migration to Oregon and the California gold fields had drawn tens of thousands of pioneers through Indian territory. Further mineral discoveries prompted an influx of prospectors into Nevada and Colorado in 1859 and into Montana and Idaho during the Civil War. With American settlement on the Pacific Coast, the need for a transcontinental railroad became plain. Mile after mile of track began edging westward, opening up the interior. Meanwhile, a succession of "rushes"—after gold, silver, copper—dispersed the white newcomers thinly over the land, in a way guaranteed to provoke maximum friction with Indians. Recognizing their precarious position, settlers clamored for federal protection from the "savages."

Good-bye to Sitting Bull

The Indian wars of the last half of the 19th century followed the pattern of the earlier wars. Again, this was no simple wave of conquest by the white man but a muddled sequence of agreements, defaults, evasions, postponements, misunderstandings, and fluctuating alliances and enmities—punctuated by bloodshed. The Army, undermanned and underfinanced, did as best it could, accused by settlers of coddling the Indians and by Eastern liberals of needless cruelty. "We are placed between two fires," Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman once complained, "a most unpleasant dilemma from which we cannot escape." Federal troops sought repeatedly to keep whites and Indians apart, usually without success.

The long, fierce Sioux War, which stemmed like the others from an irreconcilable conflict over territory, was triggered in 1854 when an Indian at Fort Laramie, Kansas, shot a white man's cow. A young Army lieutenant, John Grattan, set out to arrest the culprit. Thanks to the work of an inept interpreter, a misunderstanding ensued and a band of Sioux slew Lieutenant Grattan and 30 of his men. The war was on.

In 1866 the Sioux War took an unsettling turn when the Indians succeeded in closing the Bozeman Trail through Wyoming, a main route to the Montana gold fields. After vain attempts to maintain a string of protective outposts, the Army's field commanders gave up. Ten years later, in 1876, at the Little Bighorn in Montana, the Sioux annihilated six troops of cavalry and their commander, Gen. George Armstrong Custer—266 men in all. But Chief Sitting Bull's comment after that episode ("We have won a great battle but lost a great war") proved prescient. Bit by bit, white Americans wore down Sioux resistance. That same year, the Sioux went on to suffer a stunning military defeat at Slim Buttes, South Dakota; Sitting Bull fled to Canada.

Creating the Ghost Dance

The prolonged, often dramatic U.S. wars with the Apache and the Sioux loom largest in the textbooks, but these conflicts were accompanied by many "silent conquests," losses of territory and independence as effectively accomplished by treaty and negotiations as by war. Groups such as the Pawnee and the Crow never fought against the U.S. Army. Indeed, disliking the Sioux and the Cheyenne as much as Custer did, their warriors enlisted as Army scouts. But in the end, they suffered the same fate as the aggressively hostile tribes.

First the Indians of the southern Plains, then those of the North, were pacified and confined to reservations. Their treaty-making powers were abolished. On the reservations, agents of the Interior Department's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) kept watch on their wards and, because the buffalo herds were gone, distributed rations.* To BIA agents, the opportunity for profiteering—in purchasing and transporting supplies, in leasing or sale of reservation timber and grazing land—was often the most appealing aspect of the job.

The Indians themselves, often deprived of their traditional way of life, fell into frustration and despair. On Sioux reservations the Ghost Dance soon appeared, promising the demise of the white man and the resurgence of the Indian. A new messiah, proclaimed a believer from the Rosebud Sioux reservation, "is going to cause a big cyclone or whirlwind by which he will have all the white people to perish."

Most whites believed that the end of the Indian wars meant

*In 1800, an estimated 60 million buffalo roamed North America, providing numerous Indian tribes with food, clothing, shelter, and tools. As white settlement advanced westward, buffalo came to be hunted not only for food but for sport. A popular pastime on the Kansas-Pacific Railroad was shooting at buffalo from car windows; carcasses were left to rot. By the 1890s, fewer than 20 wild buffalo remained. Today, some 75,000 buffalo exist in the United States, primarily in private herds and in zoos and parks.

an end to the Indian problem. The notion of the "vanishing Indian" had been well established by the early 19th century; the Seventh Cavalry's massacre of nearly 200 Sioux men, women, and children at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1890 fixed a date for the final, symbolic disappearance. Confined to their reservations, Indians were certainly out of the public eye. Their numbers—some 250,000 in 1900—were at a historic low. But the Indians were not vanishing, neither as individuals nor as tribes. White desire for Indian land had not vanished either.

The establishment of the reservations had reformulated, but had not resolved, the old questions. What was the future for Indians? Would the reservations remain as permanent Indian tribal enclaves? Or would Indians be assimilated? And if so, would assimilation be voluntary or coerced?

From the 1880s until the present day, presidents and members of Congress would grapple repeatedly with those questions. Pushed and hauled by contrary pressures, Washington would discard the old answers, come up with new ones, return to the old ones, and then ask the questions anew. The policies that resulted were sometimes well intentioned and sometimes not. Today, in 1986, one fact emerges with ironic clarity: A century after peace came to the Great Plains, the conquest of the North American continent remains incomplete.

The treaties made with the Indians, honored in the breach, are still part of the record, still available as a basis for lawsuits. The status accorded by Chief Justice John Marshall in 1832 to Indian tribes—"domestic dependent nations"—is their legal status today. There is still a Bureau of Indian Affairs, the only federal agency devoted to the needs of a single ethnic group. In ways great and small, in ways that fully satisfy no one, Indians have, in effect, become *institutionalized* in American society.

The conquest doomed generations of Indians to a life of dependence, and many to a life of misery. When Indians lost territory, they lost their traditional means of making a living. But the reservations and U.S. law ensured that the Indians would never just fade away, that they were here to stay.

