
Background Information: Post 1845

MHA and TAT

The Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara (MHA) today are known as the Three Affiliated Tribes (TAT). This is the name given to them by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the United States government agency designated to deal with Native Americans. The TAT refer to themselves as the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation but continue to use the name “Three Affiliated Tribes.” Of the total 10,000 enrolled members 4,000 reside on the reservation.

of their original territory. The United States through the following actions reduced the size of the MHA lands to its present day boundaries.

The Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara people reside on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, encompassing approximately one million acres of land, of which approximately half is owned by the tribe and its members (the remainder is primarily owned by non-Indians with the U.S. Government owning a small share). In the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie, the original size of the MHA territory agreed to by the Three Affiliated Tribes and representatives of the United States government included 12.5 million acres. Thus, the Three Tribes have lost over 92%



Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis's 'The North American Indian': the Photographic Images*, 2001.

Executive Order of 1870:

The actual Fort Berthold Indian Reservation was established under this order. The U.S. Government however reduced the Southern boundary of the MHA territory because the Sioux claimed it. In the early reservation days, people of the MHA were forbidden by the federal government from practicing their Native religion.

Executive Order of 1880:

The U.S. Government further reduced the MHA lands to the present day boundaries of the reservation. When the Three Tribes received a court settlement years later on December 1, 1930, it was determined by the court that from 1851 the amount of lands taken from the MHA without compensation was 11,424,512.76 acres.

1845

Agreement at Ft. Berthold

1866: At the urging of the U.S. Government, the MHA agreed to grant rights-of-way to railroads and settlers who wanted more land. Congress, however, added additional lands onto the agreement without the consent of the MHA. The treaty was never ratified but Congress refused to recognize that the lands belonged to the Tribe.

General Allotment Act of 1887:

This act was supposedly passed to assist tribes in adopting the lifestyles of non-Indians; however, the actual intent was to gain control over more Indian lands. The act succeeded in the latter with the Indians losing over 90 million acres of their lands. The Three Tribes alone lost 1,600,000 acres as a result of the Executive Order of 1891 which provided for allotment of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. The allotment was carried out with 160 acres going to each head of a family; 80 acres going to each individual over the age of 18 not heading a family; and 40 acres to each child. The most fertile farmland on the reservation was retained by the government as “surplus” lands.

Act of June 10, 1910: Against the wishes of the Three Tribes the government again forced them into selling the surplus lands on their reservation. The Homestead Act opened up the northeast quadrant of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation for settlement by white immigrants taking over 200,000 acres from the Tribe. This was the most fertile land on the reservation for agriculture.

1950

1944 Flood Control Act: This legislation sought to control the upper Missouri primarily to prevent flooding of downstream states. Other features of the act included water use for irrigation and recreation. The dam sites were located where Indian lands were affected. The Three Tribes fared the worst of any tribal group. The floodwaters of the Garrison Dam essentially destroyed the whole socio-economic infrastructure of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara, their homes, communities, hospital, centralized school system, Tribal headquarters, sawmills, and connecting roads were all destroyed. The tribal peoples tried earnestly to prevent the destruction of their homelands; however, they lacked the political clout to stop the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. Floodwaters of the completed dam were already covering the ancestral homelands, possibly occupied for millennia, when the Tribal Chairman, George Gillette, tearfully signed the document turning the flooded land over to the government.

Pre-Garrison Dam

Prior to the flooding of their lands, the Three Tribes had been doing quite well. A study conducted in the mid-1980's to determine just how much the Garrison Dam had impacted the Three Affiliated Tribes in the early 1950's showed that only six families on the entire reservation had been receiving any type of state or federal assistance (welfare). Only a few people on the reservation used alcohol. The people generally lived an industrious life style in the early reservation days. They continued to successfully hunt, fish, garden, and now planted some grain crops. People harvested the many varieties of wild fruits and berries; they continued to preserve their garden produce and dried meat for use in the winter, engaging in what is sometimes referred to as a subsistence economy. The Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara essentially lived off the land. They were largely an independent community. The inundation of the MHA homelands brought new challenges to the Three Tribes.

Post-Garrison Dam

The Three Tribes had been promised by the United States that the lost infrastructure would be rebuilt; however, neither the hospital nor the bridge connecting Twin Buttes (South Segment) and White Shield (East Segment) was ever replaced. Schools were not in place for children to attend necessitating that children as young as five years of age be sent off to schools run by the government or religious organizations. Agriculture was difficult to practice on the glacially tilled soils of the bench lands which were made up of rocks and heavy clay. Oftentimes, water was not available at sites where individual families were relocated. Many hauled their water from long distances using a team and wagon. Worst of all, the people changed from a highly active lifestyle to being very sedentary. When gardens refused to grow, gone was the abundant

harvesting of the natural foods. Families now relied almost entirely upon commodities, i.e., surplus foods of the government. Such foods were extremely high in fats and carbohydrates, which seriously affected the health of tribal members.

Health

Today at least 89% of the tribal members can expect to have some form of diabetes by the time they reach age 55. Diabetes is attributed in part to a sedentary life style and to a diet high in fats and carbohydrates. Symptoms of the disease include loss of limbs, loss of vision, loss of teeth, kidney failure, mental confusion, and an early loss of life. The tribal government, using its own resources and with the help of federal funds, has built a dialysis clinic to assist the large number of diabetics on the reservation. A health education program is operated to assist in the care and prevention of diabetes. Many of the adults with diabetes today spent years attending federal Indian boarding schools or mission schools where the daily meals were provided from commodities (government issued foods often containing excessive fat and carbohydrates).



NPS

Education in Boarding Schools

As early as 1869, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara children were sent to Indian boarding schools in Virginia and Pennsylvania. The idea behind this removal of the children was to remove all traces of their Indian culture and turn them into white people. In the 1860's, the United States government was wondering what to do with the Indians. Less than 3% of the 10 million Indians in this country at the time of contact remained. Concerned people in the Eastern part of the United States suggested the Indians be schooled in an attempt to assimilate them into the white culture. Thus, approximately 32 children of the Three Tribes were taken to Hampton Institute in Virginia, and the Carlisle Industrial School in Pennsylvania. More followed over the years. Indian boarding schools sprang up in North and South Dakota, and in many other states west of the Mississippi. Children of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara were scattered throughout many of these institutions.

Impacts of the Schools

More than the health of the children sent away to schools was affected. Children's communication with family members was guarded in that both their incoming and outgoing mail was opened, read, and censored. Letters deemed unacceptable were torn up and discarded. In the institutionalized school settings, children had their hair cut short. They were stripped and treated with chemicals to ensure they carried no body lice. They were not allowed to speak their Native language or practice any Native ceremonies. Their Indian clothing was removed and they were garbed in European-style clothing.

Children were beaten if they failed to follow the school mandates. Some of the children did not see their parents or family members again for up to 8 years or more. Institutionalizing the children meant that they did not grow up within a normal family setting. They did not learn how to parent from within the family. They learned that it was acceptable to beat your children. This was in direct conflict with the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara values used in raising children. Tribal parents did not beat their children. It was customary for parents to invite an uncle to come and talk to a recalcitrant child so as not to damage the child-parent relationship in any way.

Treating Historical Trauma

In recent years, concerned tribal members have addressed the impacts of the boarding schools. Healing workshops are offered dealing with the intergenerational cycles of abuse caused by such schools. After years of remaining silent about their traumatic experiences, tribal members are finally able to express their grief over having been sent to the schools. They are finally able to understand that what happened to them was not their fault and that they did not deserve to be mistreated as children. Traditional methods of healing are employed in the workshops.

Education Today

Today, K-12 education on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation takes place in schools within the communities. There are three tribal schools that operate under both the state and federal government: Twin Buttes, Mandaree, and White Shield. There are two public schools: New Town and Parshall. An alternative school is also located in New Town. Each of the six districts have Headstart programs which children may attend prior to elementary school. The Fort Berthold Community College (FBCC) is located in New Town and has satellites in White Shield, Mandaree, and Twin Buttes. Adults of all ages attend this tribal college where they can earn Associate Degrees or Vocational Certificates choosing from 34 programs of study. The FBCC also collaborates with other institutions to offer bachelors or masters degrees. The education philosophy of the TAT professes that education begins with the unborn and continues throughout life, which reflects the type of organized learning that existed 300 years ago in the earth lodge villages. The Tribal Business Council, which is the governing body of the MHA Nation, requires that all students must stay in school until they graduate or reach the age of 18. Even so, there is a high dropout rate. However, most dropouts eventually earn a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) through the Adult Education program at the FBCC.

Current Culture

Some of the old societies for men and women still exist today. Individuals belonging to the societies continue to carry on ceremonies and social traditions of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara. For example, the Black Mouth society was recently reorganized. The Crazy Dog Society continues to meet. The Antelope Society plans, organizes, and directs the annual Little Shell Pow Wow, which is the

largest event on the reservation. Clans that existed during the Knife River village days are still in place. People are born into a clan or can be adopted into a clan. Membership in a clan is passed down through the mother.

Women and men continue with some of the same activities that occurred at the Knife River Villages. Families and individuals continue to plant gardens. Women annually dry corn so they can make corn soup, a traditional food. Wild berries are still picked and dried for use in traditional foods. Earthlodges are still being built (for display and use) on the reservation using materials from the area. Today it is the men who are building the lodges with assistance from the women, whereas the women built the lodges with assistance of the men in the days of Knife River.

Native Spirituality Today

Congress passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act in 1978 allowing Native Americans to once again practice their spiritual beliefs; however, many individuals on Fort Berthold continued to practice their way of life even during the years it was prohibited. Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara people today continue to build and use sweat lodges in their daily lives. When an individual is sick in body or spirit, a person considered to be a healer is contacted to run a sweat for the ailing individual. Tribal members believe that a sacred sweat can bring an afflicted person back in balance.

The sweat lodge is a dome-like willow structure covered with blankets, canvas, and tarps. It is similar to a sauna in that heated rocks are placed in a pit inside the lodge. As they enter the lodge, participants sit in a circle around the pit. Water is poured on the rocks

to create steam. When the door closes, the participants are in the spirit world. Prayers and songs are offered from the time the fire is prepared to heat the rocks until the sweat lodge has ended. The sweat lodge is often used for purification to prepare for other ceremonies. Continuity of Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara spirituality includes tribal members praying with their sacred bundles.

Individuals continue to receive their Indian names, some of which are passed down from their ancestors. The Mandan still have their turtle medicine bundles and carry on the *O-kee-pa* ceremony; the Hidatsa continue to carry on the ceremonies of the clans. Ceremonies, are still practiced today such as the Sun Dance. The Arikara continue to pray with their sacred bundles. The teachings of Mother Corn are still practical and taught to the young. The Mother Corn bundles continue as a part of Arikara family traditions. Men and women continue to go out on a hill to fast and pray. Native American spirituality with roots to the Knife River days thus continues on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation.

