

## Displacing Indigenous People

### Sources

- Oral History of natives
- Historical and fiction work written by natives
- Galleries and Museums of native art
- *Why Weren't We Told?* by Henry Reynolds

### EUROPEAN IMPARTATION

- The American empires of Spain and Portugal did not expand after the seventeenth century.
- During that time other countries like France, Holland and Britain began to extend trade activities and establish colonies in America, Africa and Asia.
- Ireland also was virtually a colony of England, as the landowners there were mostly English settlers.
- Prospect of profit drove people to establish colonies.
- Nature of the control on the colonies varied.
- Trading companies became political power in South Asia, defeated rulers, retained administrative system.
- Collected taxes and built railway to make trade easier, excavated mines and established big plantation.
- Africa was divided as colonies among Europeans.

### Names given by Europeans to Countries of the 'New World'

'AMERICA'	First used after the publication of the travels of Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512)
'CANADA'	from <i>kanata</i> (= 'village' in the language of the Huron-Iroquois, as heard by the explorer Jacques Cartier in 1535)
'AUSTRALIA'	Sixteenth-century name for land in the Great Southern Ocean ( <i>austral</i> is Latin for 'south')
'NEW ZEALAND'	Name given by Tasman of Holland, who was the first to sight these islands in 1642 ( <i>zee</i> is Dutch for 'sea')

The *Geographical Dictionary* (pp 805-22) lists over a hundred place-names in the Americas and Australia which begin with 'New'.

### Settlers & Natives

The word '**Settler**' is used for Dutch in South Africa, the British in Ireland, New Zealand and Australia and Europeans in America.

The **native** people led a simple life. They did not claim their rights over land.

### NORTH AMERICA: The Native Peoples

- The inhabitants might have come from Asia through a land bridge across the Bering straits, 30000 years before.
- They used to live in groups along river valley before the advent of Europeans.
- They ate fish and meat, and cultivated vegetables and maize.
- Goods were obtained not by buying, but by gifts. They believed in subsistence economy.
- They spoke numerous languages but those are not available in written form.
- They were friendly and welcoming to Europeans.
- The Europeans gave them blankets, iron vessels, guns, which was a useful supplement for bows and arrows to kill animals, and alcohol in exchange of local products.

- The natives had not known alcohol earlier, and they became addicted to it, which suited the Europeans, because it enabled them to dictate terms of trade. (The Europeans acquired from the natives an addiction to tobacco.)

## **Comparative Study between American natives and Europeans**

### **(a) Natives**

- They were uncivilized 'noble savage'.
- To the natives, the goods they exchanged with the Europeans were gifts, given in friendship.
- They were not aware of the market.
- They were not happy with the greed of the Europeans.
- The natives were afraid that the animals would take revenge for this destruction as the Europeans slaughtered hundreds of beavers for fur.
- They identified forest tracks invisible to the Europeans.
- Accounts of historical anecdotes were recorded by each tribe.

## Encounters with Europeans

Different terms are used in English for the native peoples of the 'New World'

*aborigine* – native people of Australia (in Latin, ab = from, origine = the beginning)

*Aboriginal* – adjective, often misused as a noun

*American Indian/Amerind/Amerindian* – native peoples of North and South America and the Caribbean

*First Nations peoples* – the organised native groups recognised by the Canadian government (the Indians Act of 1876 used the term 'bands' but from the 1980s the word 'nations' is used)

*indigenous people* – people belonging naturally to a place

*native American* – the indigenous people of the Americas (this is the term now commonly used)

*'Red Indian'* – the brown-complexioned people whose land Columbus mistook for India

*A woman of the Winnebago tribe of Wisconsin. In the 1860s, people of this tribe were moved to Nebraska*



### (b) Europeans

- They were civilized in terms of literacy, an organised religion and urbanism.
- Gift, were commodities which they would sell for a profit.
- They assessed everything with the value in the market.
- To get furs, they had slaughtered hundreds of beavers.
- They killed wild animals to protect farms.
- European imagined the forest to be converted into green cornfields.

### THE GOLD RUSH AND GROWTH OF INDUSTRIES

- In the 1840s, traces of gold were found in the USA, in California. This led to the 'Gold Rush', when thousands of eager Europeans hurried to America in the hope of making a quick fortune.

- This led to building of railway lines across the continent.
- Industries developed to manufacture railway equipment.
- To produce machinery which would make large-scale farming easier
- Employment generation led to growth of towns and factories.
- In 1860, the USA was an undeveloped economy, but within 30 years, in 1890 it was the leading industrial power in the world.

### **Natives Constitutional Rights in North America**

**\*\*British colonies in America declared a war against England in 1776 to gain independence. The War of Independence of the colonies continued till 1783.**

- Democratic Rights: The 'democratic spirit' which had been the rallying cry of the settlers in their fight for independence in the 1770s, came to define the identity of the USA against the monarchies and aristocracies of the Old World. The natives were denied the democratic rights (the right to vote for representatives to Congress and for the President), because it was only for white men.
- Right to Property: The concept of private property emerged and people wanted that their constitution included the individual's 'right to property', which the state could not override. But this right was exclusive only to the Whites.

Indians under British rule	Taxed arbitrarily; seen as not equal (rationalisation – not <i>ready</i> for responsibility of representative government)
Natives in America and Australia	Not seen as citizens; not equal (rationalisation 'primitive' as in no settled agriculture, provision for the future, towns)
African slaves in America	Denied personal liberty; not equal (rationalisation – 'Slavery is part of their own social system', black people are inferior)

### **Winds of change**

- From 1920s, things began to improve for the native peoples of the USA and Canada.

- White Americans felt sympathy for the natives. In the USA, the **Indian Reorganisation Act of 1934**, which gave natives in reservations the right to buy land and take loans.
- In the 1950s and 1960s, the US and Canadian governments thought of ending all special provisions for the natives in the hope that they would 'join the mainstream'.
- In 1954, in the '**Declaration of Indian Rights**' prepared by them, a number of native peoples accepted citizenship of the USA.
- In Canada, the Constitution Act of 1982 accepted the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the natives.
- American President Abraham Lincoln played a key role in the abolition of the slavery.

## **AUSTRALIA**

### **Background:**

- Dutch explorer Williem Jansz reached Australia in 1606.
- A.J. Tasman followed the route of Jansz and found New Zealand. The Tasmanian islands are named after him.
- British explorer, James Cook, reached the island of Botany Bay in 1770 and named it New South Wales.
- The 'aborigines' (a general name given to a number of different societies) began to arrive from New Guinea, which was connected to Australia by a land-bridge on the continent, over 40,000 years ago.
- In the late eighteenth century, there were between 350 and 750 native communities in Australia each with its own language.
- There is another large group of indigenous people living in the north, called the Torres Strait Islanders. The term 'Aborigine' is not used for these as they are believed to have migrated from elsewhere and belong to a different race.

### **Early Settlers:**

- Early settlers were convicts deported from England.
- When their jail term ended, were allowed to live as free people in Australia on condition that they did not return to Britain.
- Since they had no other alternative but to stay there, they felt no hesitation about ejecting natives from land they took over for cultivation.

- Natives were employed in farms under conditions of work so harsh that it was little different from slavery.
- Later, Chinese immigrants provided cheap labour but they did not want to depend on non-whites for they banned Chinese immigration.
- Till 1974, such was the popular fear that 'dark' people from South Asia or Southeast Asia might migrate to Australia in large numbers that there was a government policy to keep '**non-white**' people out.

### Things changed

- In 1968, people were electrified by a lecture by the anthropologist **W.E.H. Stanner**, entitled '**The Great Australian Silence**' – the silence of historians about the aborigines.
- From 1974, '**White Australia**' policy ends, Asian immigrants allowed entry. Since then a 'multiculturalism' has been official policy in Australia, which gave equal respect to native cultures and to the different cultures of the immigrants from Europe and Asia
- In 1992, the Australian High Court declares that *terra nullius* was legally invalid, and recognised native claims to land from before 1770
- In 1995, the National Enquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families.
- Agitations led to a public apology for the injustice done to children in an attempt to keep 'white' and 'coloured' people apart. On 26 May, 1999 'a National Sorry Day' was observed as an apology for the children 'lost' from the 1820s to the 1970s.

**Keywords:** Terra Nullius (a policy that implies that recognizing one's right over a given piece of land), colonial, gold rush, aboriginals, natives, indigenous, multiculturalism.