

Historic Trauma & Unresolved Grief: The Indian Removal Act of 1830

Cameron Smith

Senior Division

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When you look in the mirror, what do you see? For as long as I can remember, I have been taught to see nothing less the beautiful diversity that lives inside of me. I am, what some would refer to as, mixed race or mixed ethnicity as my mother is caucasian and my father is African American and Native American. Growing up, the lessons on race that have been shared with me have been both engaging yet daunting. Chronicled are the stories of family hardships, historical events of intolerance and injustices, and the countless lessons of discrimination. Yet within this dark retelling of history there are stories of triumph, success, and perseverance. It is within the space between these contrasting stories that my life's lesson and purpose begins to take shape.

Last year, my siblings and I applied and received status as members of The First Nations People. We now join my father and the rest of the family in being recognised as Indigenous People of Canada. With this application, I have solidified my place in both the history and future of the First Nations Peoples.

Intrigued by this process and wanting to know more about how my African American ancestors, who were descendants of slaves, blended with my Chippeqas and Iroquois descendants in Canada, I began to explore the migration of the Native Americans northward. Concurrently, through NHD, I was given the opportunity to explore turning points in history. These are the moments, events, and cases that mark a pivotal change in the course of history. So although my first thought was to examine the migration of the Native American north through Michigan- Related- Treaties, I soon realized the real turning point was the forced migration of the Native Americans in the south. Thus leading me to The Indian Removal Act of 1830.

When I went online, I found that The Indian Removal Act of 1830 had profound and lasting effects on Native American tribes. Displacement, loss of culture, socioeconomic challenges, intergenerational trauma, land rights, and sovereignty struggles are all part of the legacy of this act. Through my years of education, I learned about the westward movement of

whites, settlements and expansion, these were the positive stories of a growing nation.

However, what we can see today is that the cost of such economic prosperity and growth came at the heavy cost of Native Americans. As a result, Native Americans today face the devastating reality of historical trauma.

I knew from the beginning that I wanted to create a website for this project. I felt it was the perfect way to provide for a visual representation chronicling the history of Native Americans leading up to, during, and following the passage of The Indian Removal Act of 1830. Impacted by the limited number of student generated words allowed for website submissions, these projects require a tremendous amount of research and the blending of primary and secondary sources to help narrate the topic. Therefore, in my opinion the information found on the website can be viewed more objectively than if the topic were presented as a performance or exhibit, where personal creativity and abstract thinking may be celebrated.

Lastly, this website submission reflects my personal preference of how I wish to learn about my own deep, ancestral history; through a lens of objectivity. By conducting one's own research one can explore and learn historical events which have helped shape our understanding of cultural groups. However, it becomes the responsibility of the student to further their understanding by making meaning of, and applying lessons learned, from these studies to their own life. For me, meaning comes with the hope of preserving, revitalizing, and ensuring that my cultural heritage endures, and that I, through personal life choices, can add to the stories of triumphs for people like me.