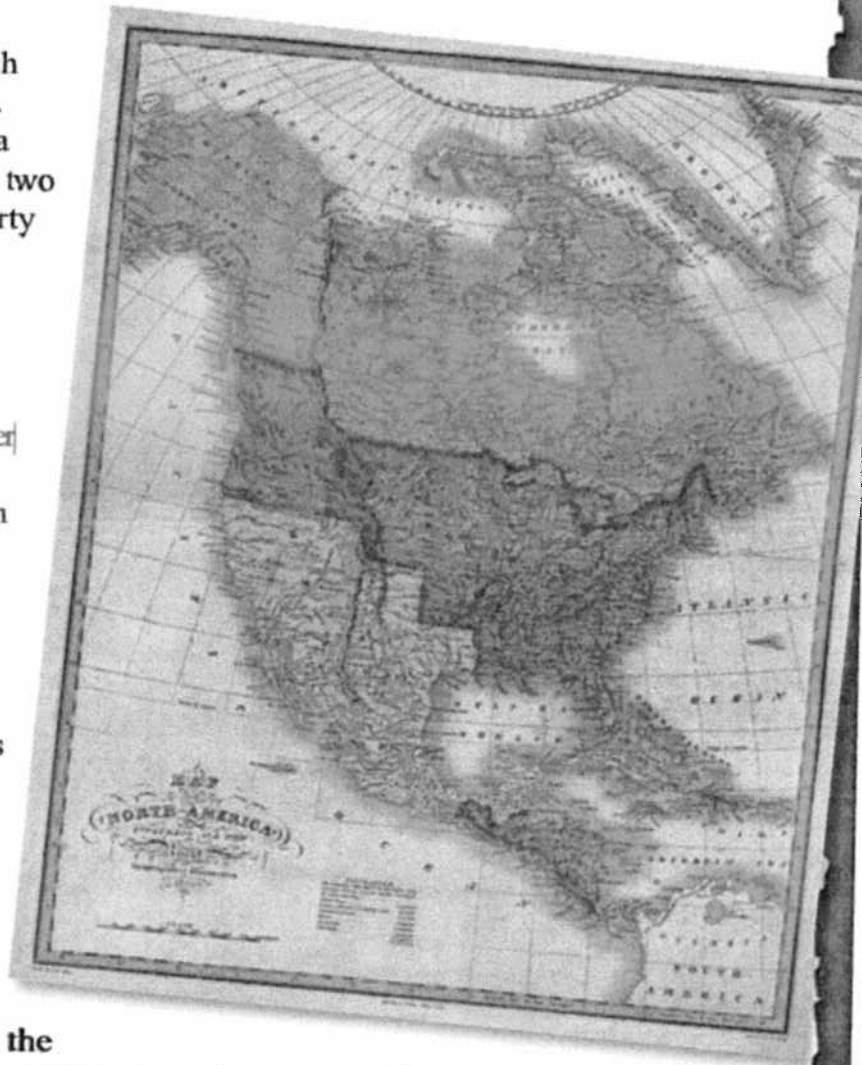


# American Indians in the 1800s

During the 1800s, white settlers wanted land on which American Indian tribes lived. These tribes did not believe a person could own land. The two groups viewed life and property differently, and getting along became a struggle.

Treaties with Indians were common. The government would buy their land and offer different land in exchange. But, there were problems with these treaties. Sometimes more than one tribe would claim ownership of an area. And since chiefs were offered gifts to sign treaties, a chief might agree without his tribe's consent (permission).

In 1814, the United States government decided to move five of the biggest tribes out West. Treaty after treaty was signed, but the tribes refused to move. They signed the documents just to make the ~~government agents go away~~. In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, which gave the president the right to force the tribes to move west. It affected all tribes east of the Mississippi River. Indian Territory (TAIR-uh-tor-ee) was the land on the west side of the Mississippi River. This was the land reserved, or set aside, for Indians. The United States government promised that white settlers would never move there.



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The government gave the Cherokee (CHAIR-uh-key) Indians two years to move. But since many of them had not agreed with the treaty, they refused to leave. One day, troops came to remove them. They did not give the Cherokee people time to gather their belongings. They forced them to walk hundreds of miles in a march that is remembered as the Trail of Tears.



The first Indian reservations (rez-uh-VAY-shuhnz) were large pieces of land on which the tribes could do as they pleased so long as they stayed within the assigned areas. Later, reservations were set up as small communities. Agents were in charge of distributing the food and supplies sent by the government. Although they were also supposed to protect and assist the tribes, many of these agents were not honest men. They deliberately hurt the tribes instead of helping them.

Today, tribe members run Indian reservations. They are sovereign (SOV-ruhn) nations and independent of the United States. Most have constitutions that outline their laws.

### Comprehension Question

Why did American Indians not trust the treaties that the U.S. government made?