



By the Kansas Historical Society

American Indian Response to Removal from their Homelands

Each tribe reacted differently to being forced from its homelands. No tribe liked the idea. Some resisted, others cooperated. At times there was disagreement among tribal members. Some tribes, like the Potawatomi, split apart over the stress of removal. Some Indians felt the Americans had already caused them to compromise their traditional lifestyles. No one was happy.



Traditional homelands of
these American Indian tribes

Tecumseh, Shawnee leader, 1810

*Sell a country! Why not sell the air, the clouds and the great sea,
as well as the earth? Did not the Great Spirit make them all for the
use of his children?*

Metea, Potawatomi, circa 1821

*My father, we have sold you a great tract of land already; but it is
not enough! We sold it to you for the benefit of your children, to
farm and to live upon. We have now but a little left. We shall want
it all for ourselves. We know not how long we shall live, and we
wish to leave some land for our children to hunt upon. You*



Tecumseh (Shawnee)

are gradually taking away our hunting grounds. Your children are driving us before them. We are growing uneasy. What lands you have you may retain. But, we shall sell no more.

Senachwine, Potawatomi, 1830

For more than seventy years I have hunted in this grove and fished in this stream, and for many years I have worshipped on this ground. Through these groves and over these prairies in pursuit of game our fathers roamed, and by them this land was left unto us as a heritage forever. No one is more attached to his home than myself, and none among you is so grieved to leave it. But the time is near at hand, when the red men of the forest will have to leave the land of their nativity, and find a home toward the setting sun. The white men of the east, whose numbers are like the sands of the sea, will overrun and take possession of this country. They will build wigwams and villages all over the land, and their domain will extend from sea to sea.

In my boyhood days I have chased the buffalo across the prairies, and hunted the elk in the groves; but where are they now? Long since they have left us; the near approach of the white man has frightened them away. The deer and the turkey will go next, and with them the sons of the forest.

Resistance to the aggression of the whites is useless; war is wicked and must result in our ruin. Therefore let us submit to our fate, return not evil for evil, as this would offend the Great Spirit and bring ruin upon us. The time is near when our race will become extinct, and nothing left to show the world that we ever did exist.

Chief John Ross, Cherokee, 1836

We are overwhelmed! Our hearts are sickened; our utterance is paralyzed, when we reflect on the condition in which we are placed, by the . . . practices of unprincipled men . . . The instrument in question is not the act of our Nation; . . . it has not received the sanction of our people. The makers of it sustain no office nor appointment in our Nation, under the designation of Chiefs, Head men, or any other title, by which they hold, or could acquire, authority to assume the reins of Government, and to make bargain and sale of our rights, our possessions, and our common country.



Na Se Ka (Potawatomi)

