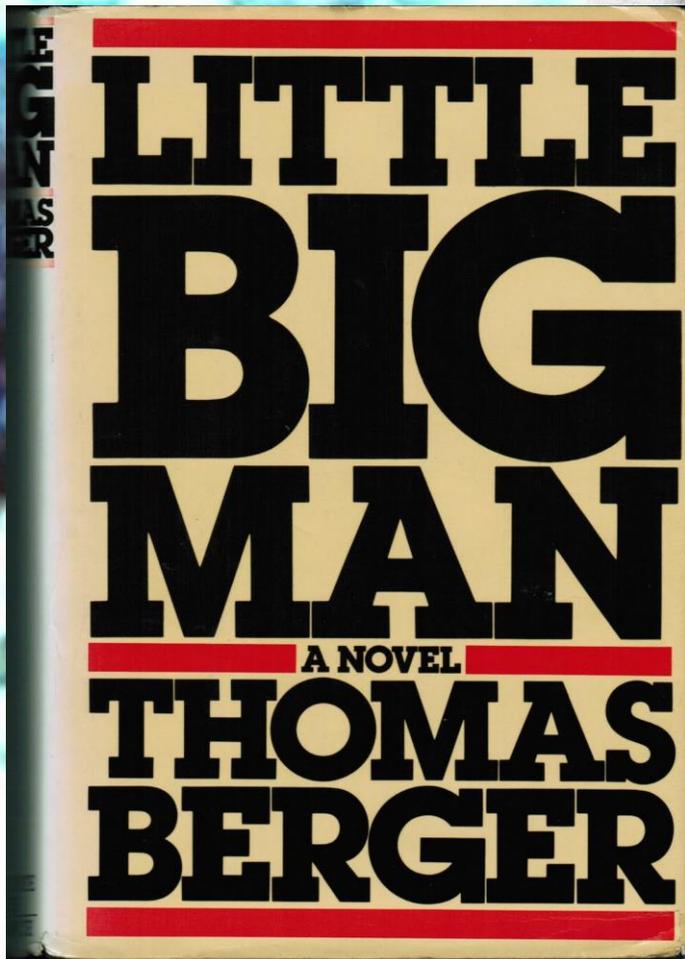


Little Big Man and the Quest for Civility

Travis R. Marker, JD, LLM
Scrivener's Quill





- In a fairer world, Thomas Berger, who died in July [2014] at the age of 90, would have lived to see his great novel, *Little Big Man*, reprinted on its 50th anniversary. But then, in a fairer world *Little Big Man* would be widely thought of as a contender for the Great American Novel, not merely the as inspiration for a popular 1970 film.

- — Allen Barra, *The Atlantic*, “When the Tall Tale Grew Bigger.”

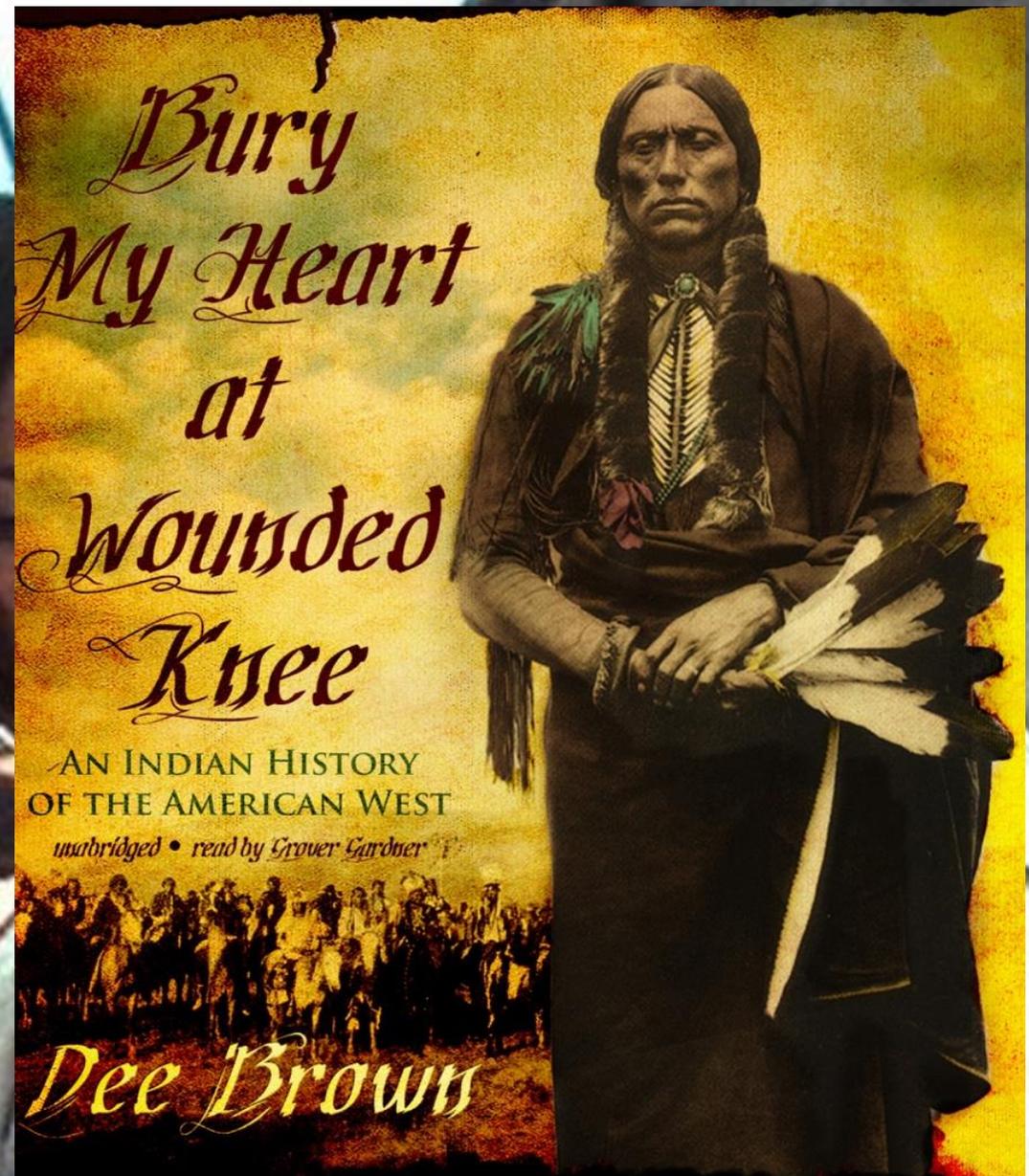


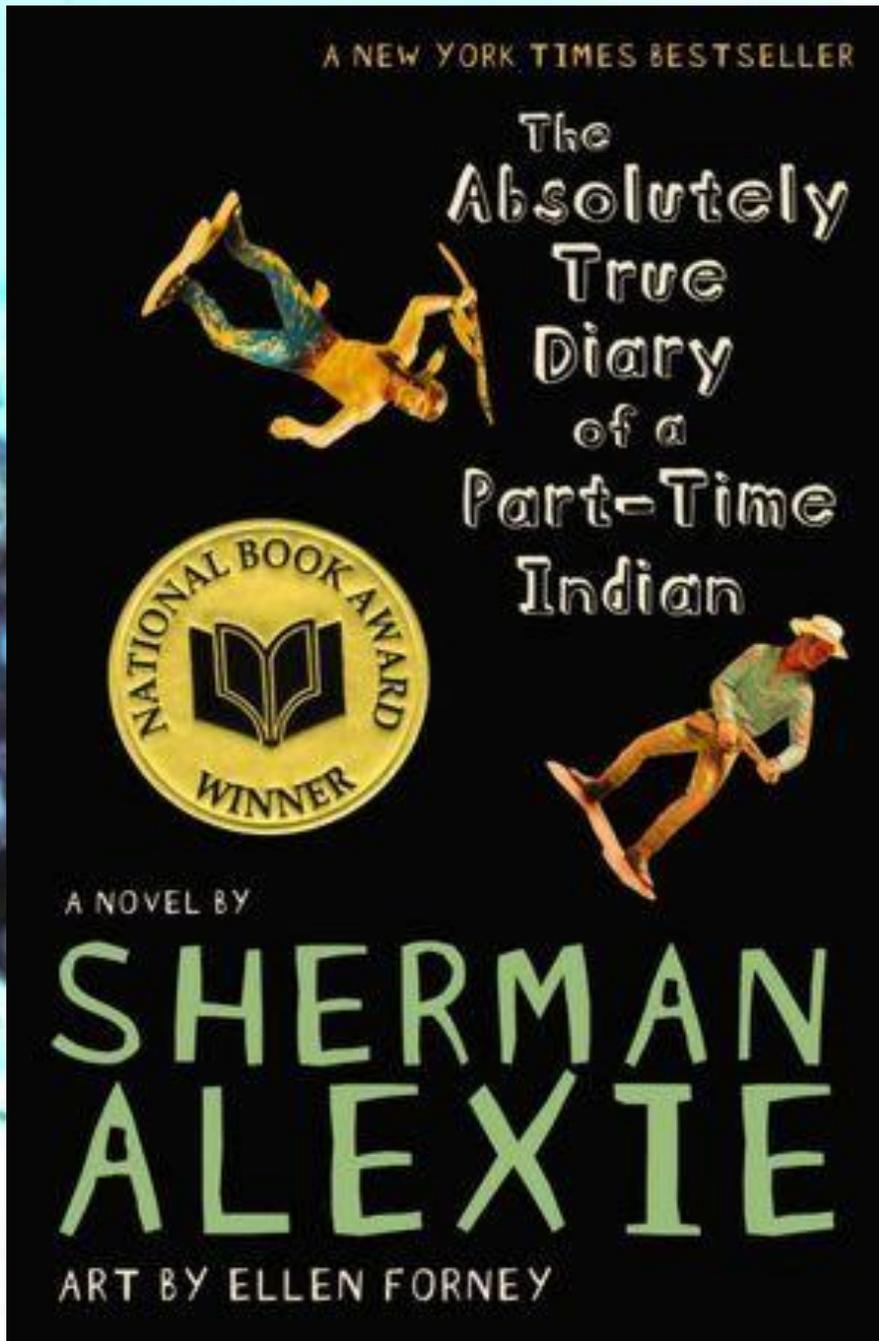
Mr. Brown was a librarian who was writing books after his children had gone to bed when "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee" was published by Holt. The book, which sold more than five million copies, told a grim, revisionist tale of the ruthless mistreatment and eventual displacement of the Indian by white conquerors from 1860 to 1890.

Some historians have since taken a more moderate view, but before Mr. Brown's portrayal of white beastliness and Indian saintliness entered the public consciousness, the history of Western conquest was usually told from a much more Eurocentric point of view, a perspective burnished by countless Hollywood movies.

Peter Farb, writing in *The New York Review of Books* in 1971, summed up Mr. Brown's new interpretation: "The Indian wars were shown to be the dirty murders they were."

- Douglas Martin, *The New York Times*, "Dee Brown, 94, Author Who Revised Image of West"





- The title tells it like it is. Sherman Alexie was born a Spokane Indian. He grew up where the book is set, on a reservation - the "rez" - in Wellpinit, Washington state. He was, like his central character, hydrocephalic at birth, "with too much grease inside my skull". And in his teens he attended Reardan High School, off the reservation, near the rich farm town, where all the other students were white. Many authors hum and ha when asked if their fiction is in any way autobiographical. This one makes no bones about it and yet skilfully manages to transform his actual experience into a novel. True fiction. Absolutely.
- Diane Samuels, The Guardian, "A brave life."





US Policies Towards Native Americans:

1st Contact to 1830 --
Intermingling or Conversion

1830-1850 – Removal

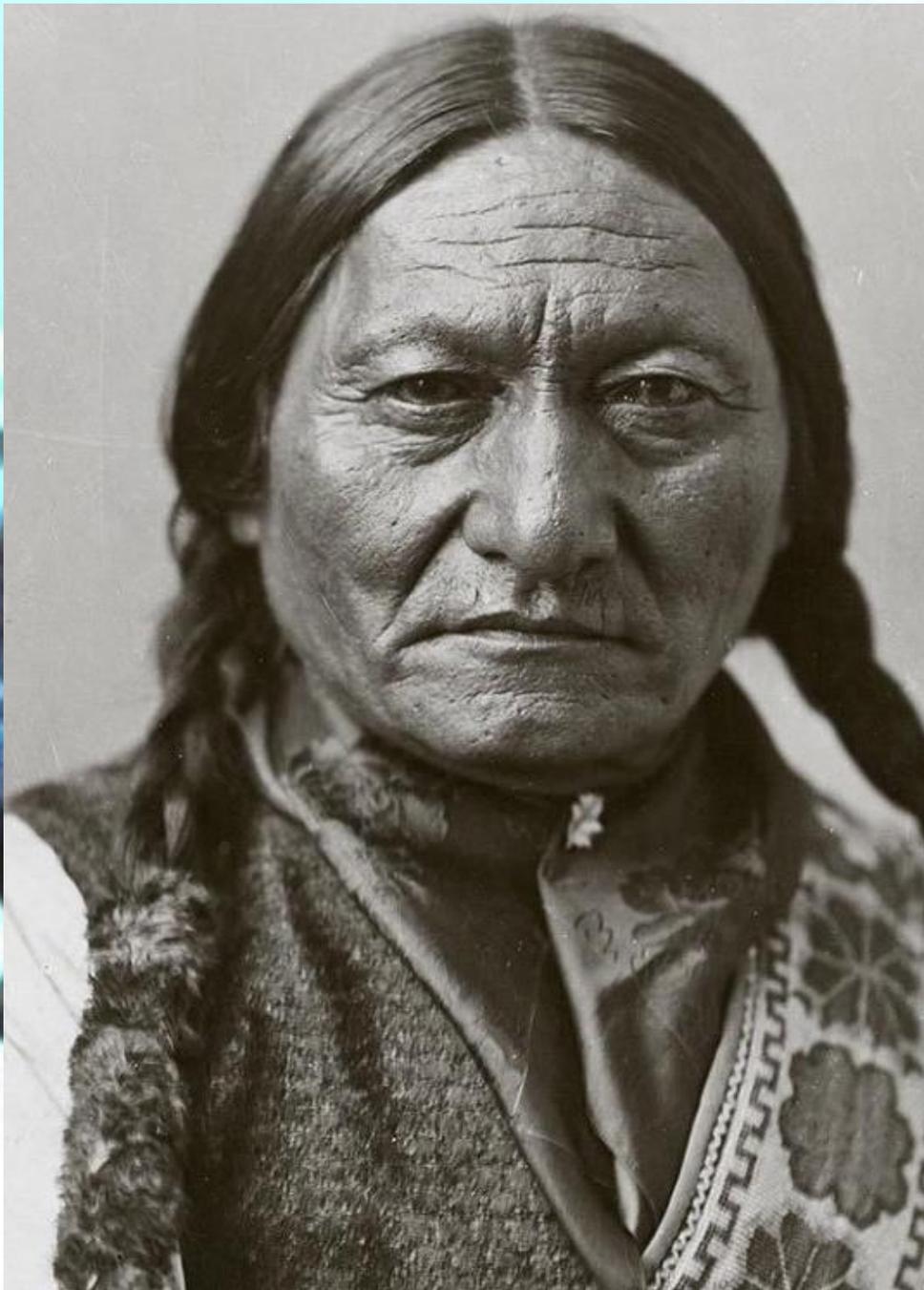
1850-1887 – Reservation

1887-1934 – Allotment

1934-1970 –
Termination or Assimilation

1970-Present –
Self-Determination





- “We Indians really should be better liars, considering how often we've been lied to.”
 - — Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*
- “They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one; they promised to take our land, and they took it.”
 - — Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*
- “What treaties that the whites have kept, that the red man broken? Not one. What treaties that the white man gave to us they kept? Not one.”
 - — Sitting Bull



“I heard him call to the people not to be afraid, that the soldiers would not hurt them; then the troops opened fire from two sides of the camp.”

— Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*





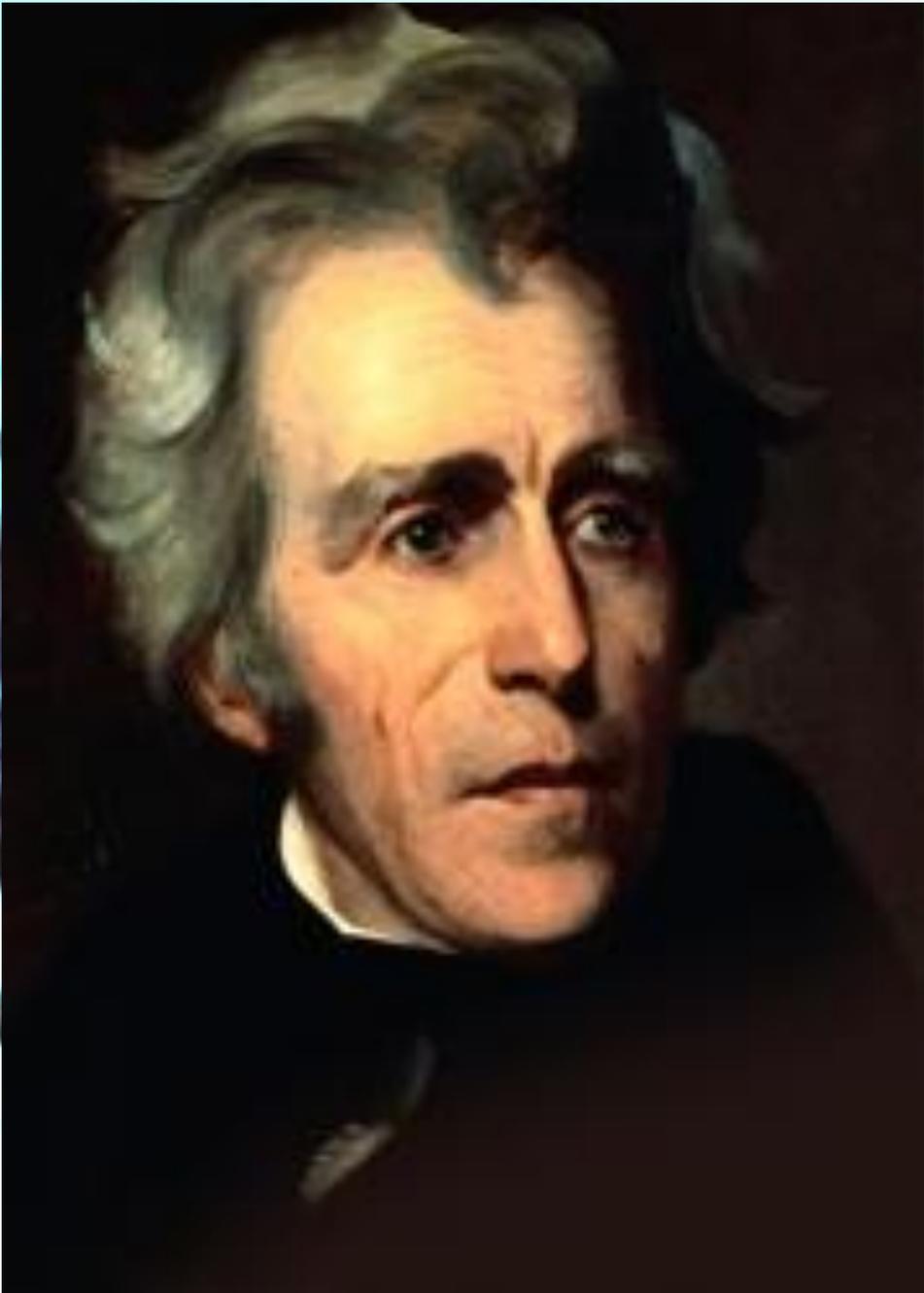
Marshall Trilogy:

Johnson v. M'Intosh (1823), holding that private citizens could not purchase lands from Native Americans.

Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831), holding the Cherokee nation dependent, with a relationship to the United States like that of a "ward to its guardian".

Worcester v. Georgia (1832), which laid out the relationship between tribes and the state and federal governments, stating that the federal government was the sole authority to deal with Indian nations.





- “Jackson began raids into Florida, arguing it was a sanctuary for escaped slaves and for marauding Indians. Florida, he said, was essential to the defense of the United States. It was that classic modern preface to a war of conquest. Thus began the Seminole War of 1818, leading to the American acquisition of Florida. It appears on classroom maps politely as “Florida Purchase, 1819”—but it came from Andrew Jackson’s military campaign across the Florida border, burning Seminole villages, seizing Spanish forts, until Spain was “persuaded” to sell. He acted, he said, by the “immutable laws of self-defense.”
- — Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492 to Present*

**“The Army is the
Indian's best friend.”**

— George Armstrong Custer



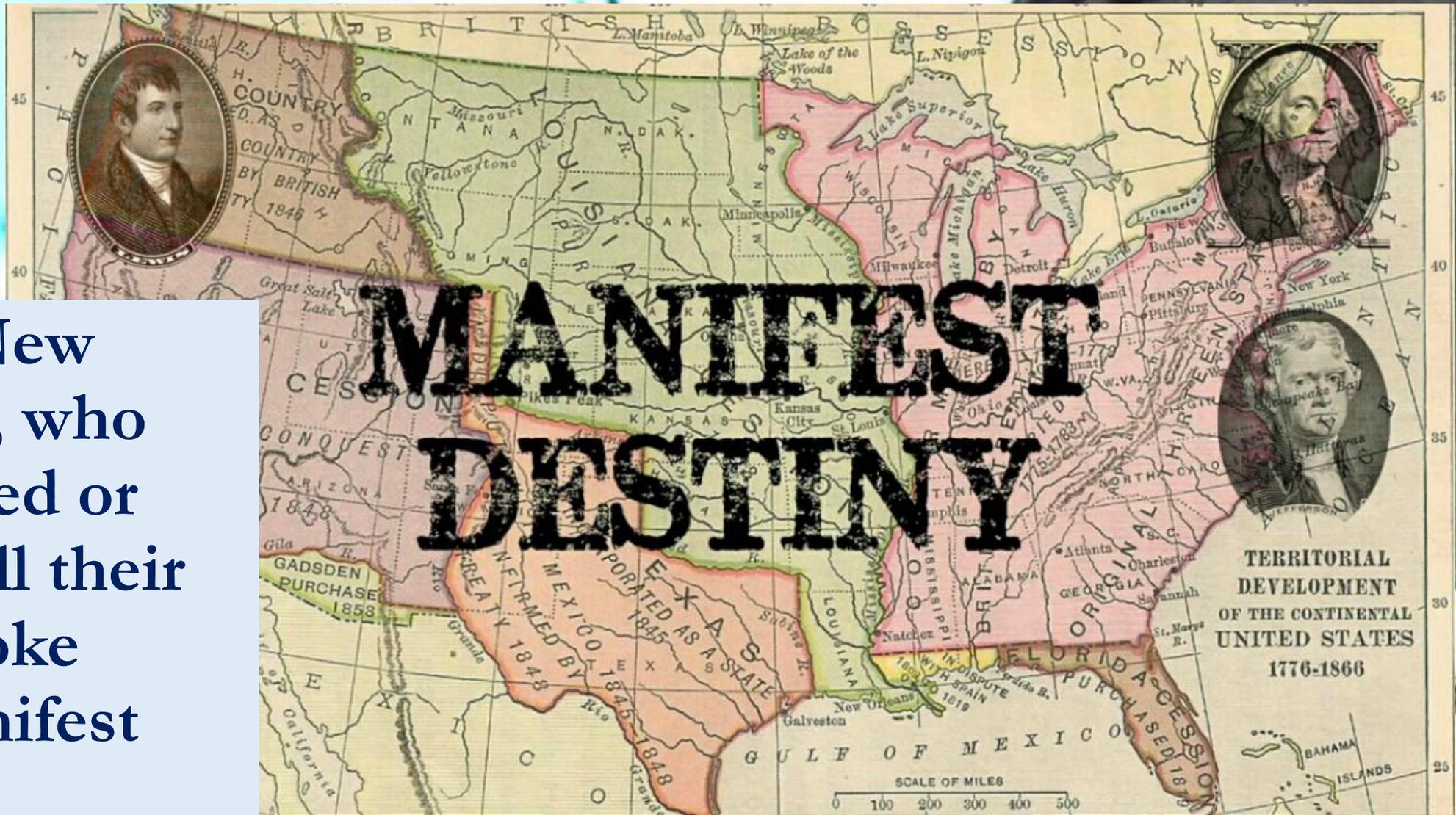


- “I expect Custer was crazy enough to believe he would win, being the type of man who carries the whole world within his own head and thus when his passion is aroused and floods his mind, reality is utterly drowned.”
- — Thomas Berger, Little Big Man



“Only the New
Englanders, who
had destroyed or
driven out all their
Indians, spoke
against Manifest
Destiny.”

— Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart
at Wounded Knee: An Indian
History of the American West*





- “Despite all of the time he spent in Big Heart's, Wilson had never come to understand the social lives of Indians. He did not know that, in the Indian world, there is not much social difference between a rich Indian and a poor one. Generally speaking, Indian is Indian. A few who gain wealth and power as lawyers, businessmen, artists, or doctors may marry white people and keep only white friends, but generally Indians of different classes interact freely with one another. Most unemployed or working poor, some with good jobs and steady incomes, but all mixing together. Wilson also did not realize how tribal distinctions were much more important than economic ones. The rich and poor Spokanes may hang out together, but that doesn't necessarily mean the Spokanes are friendly with the Lakota or Navajo or any other tribe. The Sioux still distrust the Crow because they served as scouts for Custer. Hardly anybody likes the Pawnee. **Most important, though, Wilson did not understand that the white people who pretend to be Indian are gently teased, ignored, plainly ridiculed, or beaten, depending on their degree of whiteness.”**
- — Sherman Alexie, Indian Killer



“A significant number of people believe tribal people still live and dress as they did 300 years ago. During my tenure as principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, national news agencies requesting interviews sometimes asked if they could film a tribal dance or if I would wear traditional tribal clothing for the interview. I doubt they asked the president of the United States to dress like a pilgrim for an interview.”

— Wilma Mankiller – Cherokee Chief 1985 to 1995



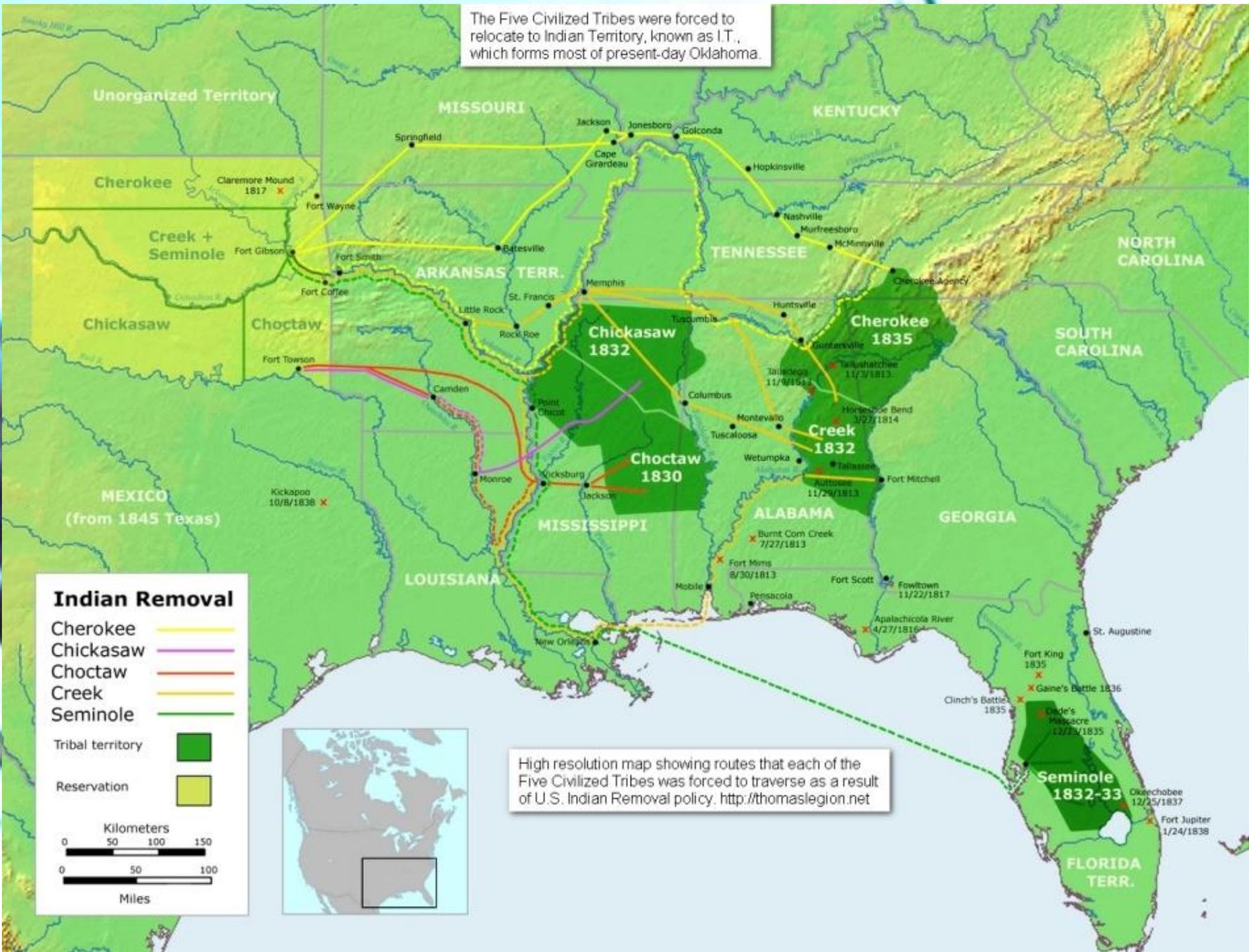




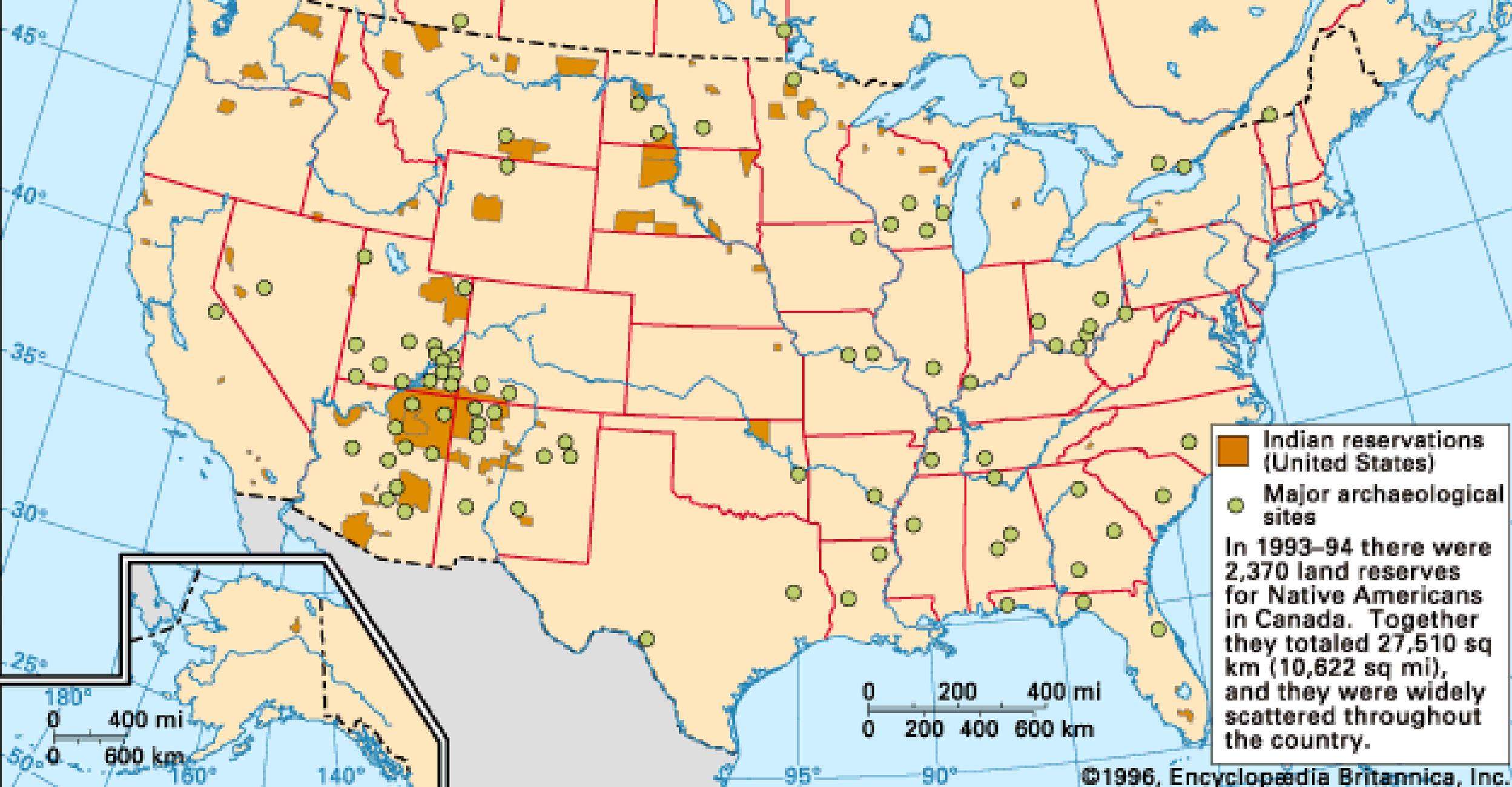
- “Another Chief remembered that since the Great Father promised them that they would never be moved they had been moved five times. “I think you had better put the Indians on wheels,” he said sardonically, “and you can run them about whenever you wish.”
- — Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*



The Five Civilized Tribes were forced to relocate to Indian Territory, known as I.T., which forms most of present-day Oklahoma.



NATIVE AMERICAN RESERVATIONS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES



- Indian reservations (United States)
- Major archaeological sites

In 1993-94 there were 2,370 land reserves for Native Americans in Canada. Together they totaled 27,510 sq km (10,622 sq mi), and they were widely scattered throughout the country.



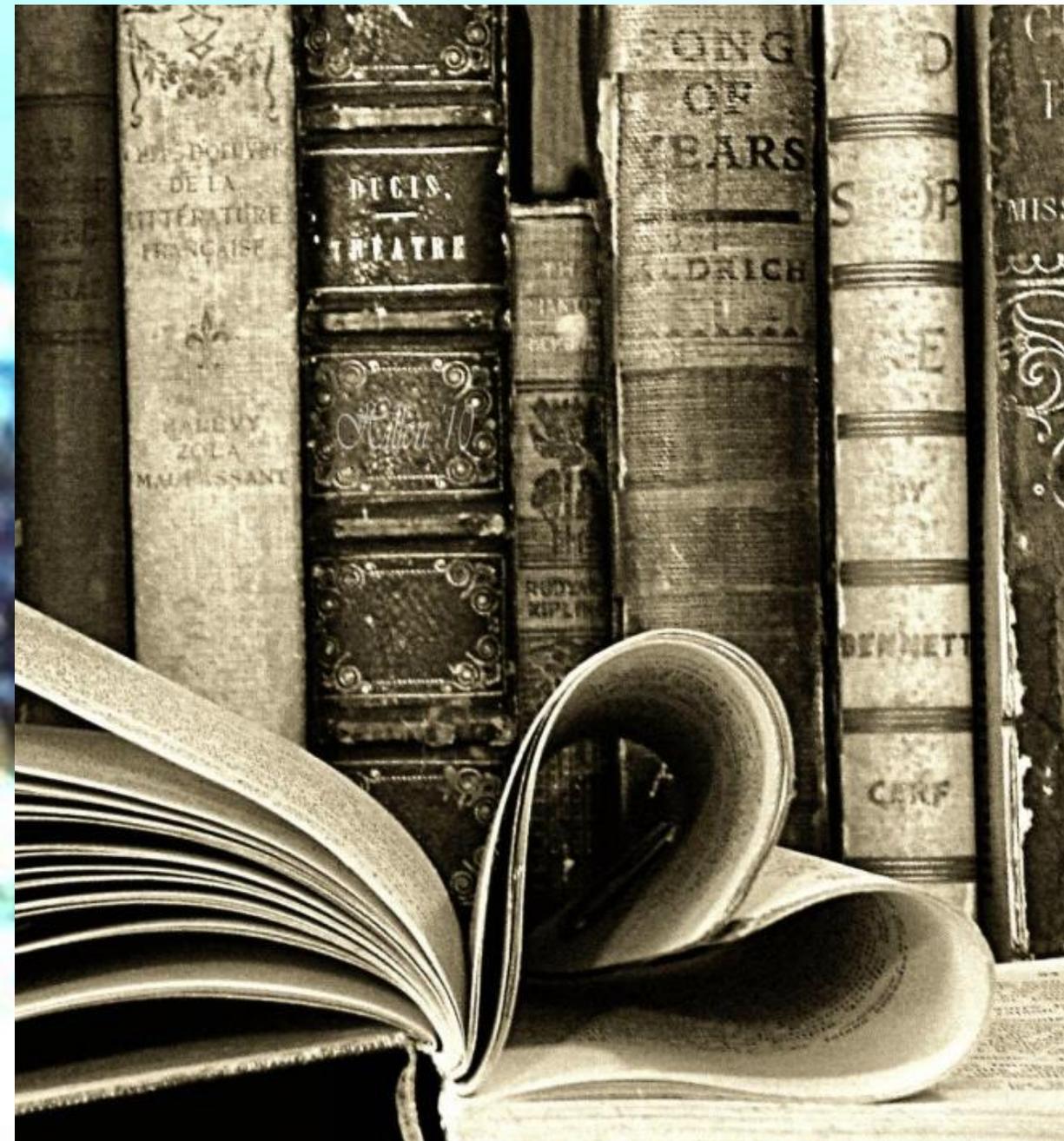
- “It sucks to be poor, and it sucks to feel that you somehow deserve to be poor. You start believing that you're poor because you're stupid and ugly. And then you start believing that you're stupid and ugly because you're Indian. And because you're Indian you start believing you're destined to be poor. It's an ugly circle and there's nothing you can do about it.”
- — Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*



“My school and my tribe are so poor and sad that we have to study from the same dang books our parents studied from. That is absolutely the saddest thing in the world.”

— Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*





- “I grabbed my book and opened it up. I wanted to smell it. Heck, I wanted to kiss it. Yes, kiss it. That's right, I am a book kisser. Maybe that's kind of perverted or maybe it's just romantic and highly intelligent.”
- — Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*



“Life is a constant struggle between being an individual and being a member of the community.”

— Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*



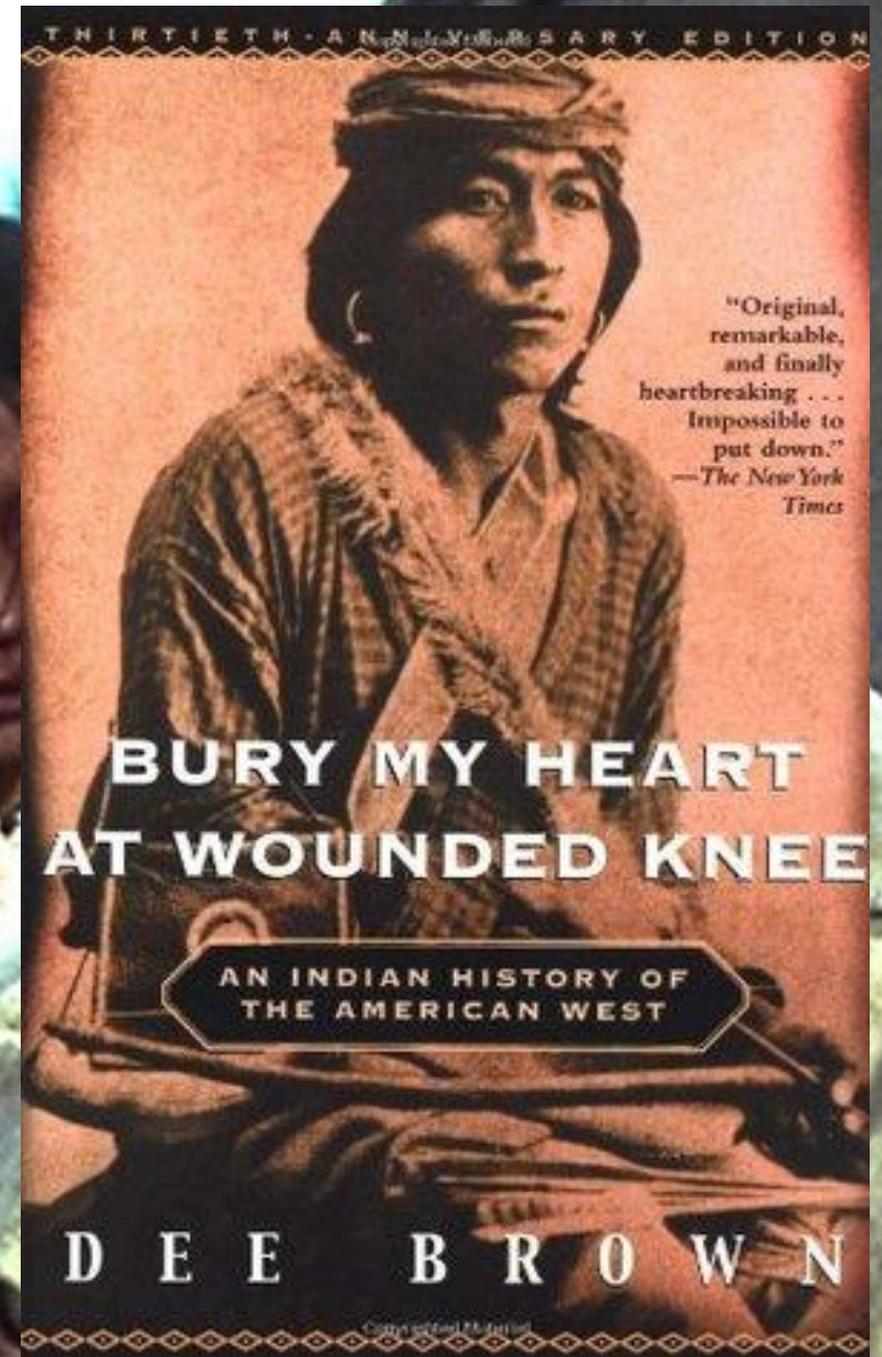


- “I realized that, sure, I was a Spokane Indian. I belonged to that tribe. But I also belonged to the tribe of American immigrants. And to the tribe of basketball players. And to the tribe of bookworms. And the tribe of cartoonists. . . . And the tribe of teenage boys. And the tribe of small-town kids. And the tribe of Pacific Northwesterners. And the tribe of tortilla chips-and-salsa lovers. And the tribe of poverty. And the tribe of funeral-goers. And the tribe of beloved sons. And the tribe of boys who really missed their best friends. It was a huge realization. And that's when I knew that I was going to be okay.”
- — Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*



“Treat all men alike.... give them all the same law. Give them all an even chance to live and grow. You might as well expect the rivers to run backward as that any man who is born a free man should be contented when penned up and denied liberty to go where he pleases. We only ask an even chance to live as other men live. We ask to be recognized as men. Let me be a free man...free to travel... free to stop...free to work...free to choose my own teachers...free to follow the religion of my Fathers...free to think and talk and act for myself.”

— Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*





- “I cannot think that we are useless or God would not have created us. There is one God looking down on us all. We are all the children of one God. The sun, the darkness, the winds are all listening to what we have to say.”
- — Geronimo



“Inside of me there are two dogs. One is mean and evil and the other is good and they fight each other all the time. When asked which one wins I answer, the one I feed the most.”

— Sitting Bull





- “Whenever the white man treats the Indian as they treat each other, then we shall have no more wars. We shall all be alike, brothers of one father and one mother with one sky above us and one country around us and one government for all. Then the Great Spirit Chief who rules above will smile upon this land and send rain to wash out the bloody spots made by brothers' hands upon the face of the Earth.”

- — Chief Joseph

